

JOURNAL OF THE CALIFORNIA COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES

# Religion and the Public Schools

Articles originally appeared in *Social Studies Review, Religion and the Public Schools*, Volume 40, No. 2

T H E F I R S T A M E N D M E N T

*Congress shall make no law  
respecting an establishment of religion,  
or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;  
or abridging the freedom of speech,  
or of the press; or the right of  
the people peaceably to assemble,  
and to petition the government  
for a redress of grievances.*



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## From Battleground to Common Ground: The New Consensus on Religious Liberty in Public Education

by Charles Haynes

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*“Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..”*

Religious Liberty clauses of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

Culture wars over religion in public education have no winners. Divided communities and bitter lawsuits hurt everyone — parents, students, teachers, administrators — and undermine the educational mission of the schools.

Consider the poor educator. Caught in the crossfire of critics from the right and the left, teachers and administrators are favorite targets for the extreme voices from both sides. One end of the spectrum shouts that public schools ignore religion while promoting atheism and secularism. From the other end, we hear that kids should leave their religion at the schoolhouse door, and religion must be kept out of the curriculum because teachers can't be trusted to get it right.

Much of the ammunition for these culture-war attacks comes from a few bad stories that re-enforce arguments from both sides of the debate:

- o A teacher in Oklahoma uses school time to organize after hours religious activities for his students.
- o A North Carolina teacher mocks the Christian faith of a child during a social studies lesson.

- o A California district orders Christian materials for classroom use.
- o A teacher in New York leads her class in prayer.
- o A Texas teacher refuses to let a child write a report about Jesus, even though the assignment is to write about your favorite hero in history.

Isolated incidents like these get exaggerated media attention--and then enjoy a long afterlife in direct-mail fundraising letters.

After 15 years of working with thousands of teachers throughout the nation to address religion in public schools, I know that the stereotypes of teachers and schools perpetuated by culture-war rhetoric are inaccurate. The vast majority of teachers and administrators are caring, dedicated professionals who want nothing more than to uphold the rights of all students and to address issues of religion and values with fairness and respect. At the same time, I have also observed that many educators are often unclear (and anxious) about how to deal with religious liberty issues. Many school districts have few or no policies concerning religion because school administrators and board members are often reluctant to address the underlying problems before a crisis erupts. Ironically, this avoidance is precisely what causes conflicts and lawsuits--either because religion is being ignored or because it is being improperly promoted by school officials.

Many educators are also unclear and confused about the place of religion in the schools because of the virtual silence about religion and the First Amendment in most teacher education programs. As a consequence, administrators and teachers are ill prepared to tackle religious liberty questions much less to deal with religion in the curriculum.

In our religiously diverse nation, this confusion about religion in schools has not gone unnoticed. Many religious conservatives are outraged by it; they take the absence of policies protecting religious expression by students and the silence about religion in the curriculum to imply hostility to religion. At the same time, many civil libertarians point to the examples of schools that continue to promote religion. Fairly or unfairly, growing numbers of parents on both sides feel that the public schools are tone-deaf to their concerns about religion and values. And this perception fuels the push for vouchers and contributes to the rapidly expanding homeschooling movement.

If public education is going to move from this battleground to common ground, and rebuild trust where it has been lost, then religious liberty and religion must be taken seriously.



## TWO FAILED MODELS

Clearing away the confusion about how to apply First Amendment religious liberty principles in public education will not be easy given that Americans have been arguing about the role of religion in schools since the beginning of the common school movement. The early history of public education was characterized by Protestant-dominated schools, a state of affairs that led to Bible wars in some parts of the country (over whose version of the Bible would be read each morning) and the exodus of many Roman Catholics from public schools.

In the 20th century, expanding religious pluralism and the growing secularization of our society contributed to the gradual “disestablishment” of the Protestant tone of the schools. Nevertheless, some school districts continue to cling to the vestiges of the “sacred public school” where one religion (the majority faith) is preferred in school policies and practices. Allegiance to this model for religion in schools continues to trigger fights over such issues as the “December dilemma,” prayers at graduation, or the posting of the Ten Commandments in classrooms.

The Supreme Court decisions of the early 1960s declaring state-sponsored religious practices unconstitutional ended the Protestant hegemony in many places. But some Americans, including many educators, misunderstood the Court to mean that religion had no place in the schools, including the curriculum. As a result of this confusion (or out of fear of controversy), many public school educators and textbook publishers have avoided religion as much as possible, replacing the sacred public school with something that looks more like a naked public school.

From the 19th century Protestant schools to the religion-free zones that characterize many schools in more recent decades, we have failed to find a proper, constitutional role for religion and religious expression in public education. Today, in various forms, these two models persist in various parts of the country — and both are unjust and, in some cases, unconstitutional.

## BUILDING A THIRD MODEL

Fortunately for educators and all stakeholders in public education a third model - what might be called a “civil public school” — has emerged in recent years that is consistent with the First Amendment and fair to people of all faiths and none. This model is outlined in a series of consensus guidelines on religion in the curriculum, religious holidays in the schools, the

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Equal Access Act, and other issues that have been agreed to during the last decade by a broad range of religious and political groups from across the religious and political spectrum (Haynes and Thomas, 1998).

The shared vision of the First Amendment represented in these guidelines is most clearly articulated in *Religious Liberty, Public Education, and the Future of American Democracy: A Statement of Principles* issued in 1995 by twenty-four advocacy groups ranging from the Christian Coalition to People for the American Way and all of the major educational organizations, including the American Federation of Teachers, the National School Boards Association, and the American Association of School Administrators. At the heart of the agreement is the following statement:

Public schools may not inculcate nor inhibit religion. They must be places where religion and religious conviction are treated with fairness and respect. Public schools uphold the First Amendment when they protect the religious liberty rights of students of all faiths or none. Schools demonstrate fairness when they ensure that the curriculum includes study about religion, where appropriate, as an important part of a complete education.

## **NEUTRALITY MEANS FAIRNESS**

The Statement of Principles demonstrates that there is now surprising consensus concerning the relationship of religion to public schools under the Establishment clause of the First Amendment (“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion”): Public school officials must be neutral in matters of religion, neutral among religions (they can’t privilege one religion over another) and neutral between religion and nonreligion (they can’t privilege religion generally over nonreligion).

But neutrality doesn’t mean ignoring religion. Of course, public schools cannot be in the business of religious indoctrination; faith formation is properly the province of the family and religious institutions. But at the same time, teachers and administrators have a First Amendment obligation to make sure that religious liberty is taken seriously. Neutrality requires fairness to religion.

## **THE RIGHTS OF STUDENTS**

Strong agreement has also been reached about the meaning of the Free Exercise clause (“Congress shall make no law

prohibiting the free exercise [of religion]”) in public schools. In 1995, thirty-five religious groups, conservative and liberal, issued a joint statement on what is and isn't permissible concerning religion under current law. President Bill Clinton used this agreement as the basis for a directive sent to all public-school superintendents in 1995 and again in 1998. The National PTA and the First Amendment Center published a guide explaining these agreements to parents.

What may surprise many educators and parents about this new consensus is just how many ways that current law protects the free exercise rights of students in a public school. As Oliver Thomas and John Ferguson explain in this issue, some areas of the law remain in dispute, but the consensus about most of the rights of students in public schools is an extraordinary achievement--and a historic opportunity for educators to accommodate the religious convictions of parents and students.

## FINDING COMMON GROUND IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

National consensus statements mean little, however, unless they are translated into local school district policies and practices. That's why the California Rights, Responsibilities, and Respect Project (3Rs) is so important. As you will discover by reading the case studies included in this issue, a growing number of California school districts are using the principles of the First Amendment to find common ground on the proper role of religion in the schools.

The starting point for schools and communities must be a commitment to work together in the spirit of the First Amendment. This means agreeing to some version of the following civic “ground rules” that will shape the process:

- o **Rights:** Religious liberty is an inalienable right for all. Public education must make every effort to protect the conscience of every parent and student.
- o **Responsibility:** As American citizens, we have a civic responsibility to guard that right for every person, including those with whom we deeply disagree.
- o **Respect:** All parties involved in public schools should agree to debate one another with civility and respect, and should strive to be accurate and fair.

But neutrality doesn't mean ignoring religion. Of course, public schools cannot be in the business of religious indoctrination; faith formation is properly the province of the family and religious institutions.

These ground rules only work if all of the key stakeholders, teachers, parents, administrators, and community leaders, are fully represented in the process and the wider community is informed of the results. The “common ground” committee or task force must include parents and community leaders with a broad range of perspectives, including those critical of the schools.

Where this process has been most successful, school leaders make sure that the community is informed and involved as the new policy is developed. Through town meetings and use of the media, citizens know what is going on and are able to participate in the discussion. Once the policy is adopted, the school boards disseminate it widely to school officials and parents. In-service programs and classroom resources are given to administrators and teachers to help them carry out the religious-liberty provisions of the policy and to address religious issues in the curriculum.

Finding common ground isn't easy, and it doesn't happen overnight. As Jan Vondra explains in these pages, the school district in Snowline adopted a strong set of civic guidelines and worked hard to include all sides in the process. But disputes about a range of issues, from self-esteem programs to prayer, will still occur. What has changed, however, is how these conflicts are addressed. With a new civic framework, the district is able to find a way forward with fewer bitter fights and lawsuits. A shared commitment to work for fairness and a concern for the rights of conscience now shape how a school district like Snowline seeks solutions.

## **TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION**

Consensus also exists about the importance of teaching about religion in public schools. Guidelines issued by a coalition of 17 major educational and religious organizations, ranging from the American Federation of Teachers and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development to the Christian Legal Society and the American Jewish Congress, put it this way:

Because religion plays a significant role in history and society, study about religion is essential to understanding both the nation and the world. Omission of facts about religion can give students the false impression that the religious life of humankind is insignificant or unimportant. Failure to understand even the basic symbols, practices and concepts of the various religions makes much of history, literature, art and contemporary life unintelligible.

Study about religion is also important if students are to value religious liberty, the first freedom guaranteed in the bill of Rights. Moreover, knowledge of the roles of religion in the past and present promotes cross-cultural understanding essential to democracy and world peace (Haynes and Thomas, 1998).

At the heart of this agreement are three major principles:

1. The Supreme Court has made clear that study about religion (as opposed to religious indoctrination) in public schools is constitutional.
2. The study of religion is important if students are to be properly educated about history and culture.
3. Public schools must teach about religion objectively or neutrally; their purpose must be to educate students about a variety of religious traditions, not to indoctrinate them into any particular tradition. (Nord and Haynes, 1998)

“Neutrality” concerning religion in the curriculum is sometimes misunderstood to mean silence about religion. But if public schools are to remain truly neutral, then the curriculum should include religious as well as secular ways of understanding the world. Excluding religion, or barely mentioning it, is hardly neutral or fair. For many parents, the failure to take religion

seriously in the curriculum is strong evidence that public education takes sides against religion.

Except for brief treatments of religion in history and sometimes literature, most subjects are taught with little attention to religious ideas or ways of seeing the world.

Of course, many teachers know from experience that including accurate, balanced study of religion in the curriculum can be done, in spite of the poor treatment of religion in most textbooks. For years, Irvine High School teacher Jim Antenore has led in-depth study of religions in his elective course in world religions. In San Diego, Kim Plummer has handled many religious-liberty issues in her diverse classes of middle school students and has managed to teach them a great deal about

religion in the process. And in Utah, Eric Holmes has demonstrated that study about religion in elementary school is not only possible, but essential for a good education. Religion is treated with fairness and respect each day in these and in many other classrooms--all without parental complaints or legal challenges.

The efforts of outstanding individual teachers notwithstanding, the public school curriculum largely ignores religion. Except for brief treatments of religion in history and sometimes literature, most subjects are taught with little attention to religious ideas or ways of seeing the world. The conventional wisdom in public education seems to be that students can learn everything they need to know about whatever they study (other than a little in history or literature) without learning anything

about religion (Nord and Haynes, 1998).

But surely this is wrong. Genuine neutrality under the First Amendment should mean making a good faith effort to include religious as well as secular perspectives especially when teaching history and literature. Again, it is neither neutral nor fair to leave religion out and thus implicitly convey the sense that religion is irrelevant in the search for truth in the various domains of the curriculum.

In addition to the First Amendment argument, there are significant educational reasons for taking religion seriously. A broad and balanced education should expose students to the major ways humanity has developed for making sense of the world--and some of those ways of understanding are religious. "Mentioning" religion isn't enough; we must find ways to acknowledge the importance and complexity of religious voices particularly in history and literature. This is equally true in teaching both world and United States history.

Fortunately, there are signs that religion may soon be taken more seriously in the social studies curriculum. A new report released in November 2000 found that national and state social studies standards now mandate considerable teaching about religion (Douglass, 2000). Unfortunately, however, religion mostly disappears after the Civil War in U.S. history standards. World history standards do include the major religious traditions, but the treatment is often superficial. And in some social studies standards, notably economics, religion is barely mentioned. Nevertheless, the inclusion of study about religion in history standards is good news for advocates of fairness under the First Amendment.

## **THE CHALLENGE OF TAKING RELIGIOUS LIBERTY SERIOUSLY**

Even if we agree about the importance of study about religion, we still have much to put in place before it can be done properly in public schools. Teacher education will have to change so that teachers of subjects like history and literature get adequate preparation in the study of religion. Textbooks and supplementary materials will need to be written that offer an accurate, academic treatment of religious perspectives. And, if religious studies electives are to be offered in greater numbers, certified teachers must be available to teach them.

Is all of this realistic? It's too soon to tell. But rethinking of the curriculum, though difficult, can be done. After all, not many years ago textbooks largely ignored the contributions of African Americans and women. That's now changed. The same must be done concerning religion in the curriculum. If educators are to be neutral and fair under the First Amendment--and are determined to offer a liberal education--then ways must be found to take the academic study of religion seriously.

Fortunately, a number of states and local districts are now developing programs much like the California 3Rs project designed to help schools and communities deal with religion in the curriculum, and to find common ground on a wide range of conflicts and concerns involving religion and public education.

There are also new classroom resources that make it possible for teachers to enrich the existing curriculum with substantive and scholarly study of religion (Haynes and Thomas, 1998). In this issue, Marcia Beauchamp discusses two of the most outstanding examples of these new resources: *Religion in American Life*, published by Oxford University Press, and *On Common Ground: World Religions in America*, a CD-ROM developed by Diana L. Eke at Harvard University and issued by Columbia University Press.

## **THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER**

However good the teaching materials, fairness and neutrality toward religion in the curriculum are only possible when teachers have a clear understanding of their role under the First Amendment. Teachers in public schools are employees of the government (or, better, they are there to act on behalf of all citizens). That means that they are subject to the Establishment clause and thus required to be neutral concerning religion while carrying out their duties as teacher.

Of course, teachers have the freedom, indeed the obligation, to expose students to the marketplace of ideas. They may not, however, either inculcate or denigrate religion. When teaching about religion, the teacher, like the curriculum, does not take sides concerning religion.

But what should teachers do when students ask about their faith? The legal consensus appears to be that teachers are free to answer the question with a brief statement, without turning the question into an opportunity to proselytize for or against religion. Before answering however, teachers should consider the age of the students. It's easier for middle and high school students to distinguish between a personal view and the position of the school; it's harder for very young children.

On their own time, before and after their contract day, teachers are just as free as other citizens to be as religious or non-religious as they chose. Some teachers are in a public school classroom during the week and in front of a Sunday school class on the weekend. And some of those kids in the Sunday school may be from their public school class. There is nothing unconstitutional about that.

Even during the school day, there are some ways in which teachers are free to practice their faith. In my view, the Establishment clause doesn't prohibit teachers from reading a religious book during non-instructional time, saying a quiet grace before meals, or wearing religious jewelry. If a group of teachers wishes to meet for prayer or study of scriptures during the

school day, I don't see any constitutional reason why they shouldn't be allowed to do so, as long as the activity is outside the presence of students and doesn't interfere with the rights of other teachers.

Here's the constitutional bottom line: People of all faiths or none who decide to teach in a public school need to put on their "First Amendment hat" when they go to work. That doesn't mean they cease to hold their convictions (or stop modeling the values of their faith). It does mean that they don't proselytize for or against religion in the presence of students during the school day. All teachers must strive to be the fair, honest brokers who are there to protect the rights of every student.

## **BEYOND THE CULTURE WARS**

The new consensus on religious liberty in public schools offers educators an unprecedented opportunity to move from battleground to common ground in the culture wars. Unfortunately, getting school districts to be proactive when it comes to religion or religious liberty isn't easy. Either they are currently violating the First Amendment by promoting religion and don't want to rock the boat, or they are ignoring religion and have little motivation to call attention to religious issues. Often only when a crisis, or a lawsuit, erupts do these districts finally act.

The failure of schools to be proactive concerning religious liberty isn't surprising in view of the all the legal battles, recall elections, and divided communities. Why risk stirring up controversy? Because the greater risk is not to act. This is true for two important reasons.

First, the survival of public education may be at stake. The exodus from public schools will continue to grow, fueled in large measure by dissatisfaction with the way in which many schools address religious convictions and rights. By acting now, school leaders may reverse the distrust and alienation that many Americans feel toward their schools.

Second, and even more important, upholding the First Amendment in public schools is not only the right thing to do, it is also necessary if we are going to live with our deepest differences in the 21st century. As our religious diversity continues to explode, it will be increasingly vital that public schools be places where religious liberty works for all citizens--and, where we learn as much as possible about one another. In the words of the Statement of Principles:

Our nation urgently needs a reaffirmation of our shared commitment, as American citizens, to the guiding principles of the Religious Liberty clauses of the First Amendment to the Constitution. The rights and responsibilities of the Religious Liberty clauses provide the civic framework within which we are able to debate our differences, to understand one another, and to forge public policies that serve the common good in public education.



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### Free Materials

Free copies of the full statement, *Religious Liberty, Public Education, and the Future of American Democracy*, are available from the First Amendment Center by calling (615) 321-9588.

The President's directive is available from the U.S. Department of Education (800-USA-LEAR). The PTA guidelines are available free from the First Amendment Center (615) 321-9588.





## Finding Common Ground in the Most Diverse Society in the World: California

by John Brophy

John Brophy has spent 28 years in education as a teacher, Director of Special Education, Associate Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, and was elected Calaveras County Superintendent of Schools in 1997. He served as the Steering Committee Chair of the California 3Rs Project for eight years.

In the past decade, California has made a concerted effort to “raise the bar” academically for its almost six million K-12 students. Reform efforts have included the adoption of rigorous content standards for each grade level in the core subject areas, implementing an assessment system that includes nationally-normed standardized tests in second through eleventh grade, a new high school exit exam, and providing intensive staff development for teachers and administrators on both the “science” and the “art” of teaching.

While this focus on improved academic skills was necessary to prepare students to be successful in the twenty-first century, there was an equally important challenge to be faced: “How can we teach our students the skills to identify and debate their differences civilly, find common ground, and live together peacefully in what is perhaps the most diverse society in the world?”

California recently became the first “minority majority” state with slightly over 50% of its populace non-Caucasian. Immigrants have flocked to the Golden State since the mid nineteenth century in search of employment, wealth, and abundant opportunity. While migration has brought a richness of diversity unparalleled in the world, it has also brought challenge.

Over 140 different languages are now spoken in California and nearly 25% of the students are classified as English language learners. Within a single elementary classroom, it is not unusual to find as many as seven languages spoken. When addressed proactively, the challenges of teaching and learning in such an environment can be ameliorated by the rich cultural diversity that the students experience.

California’s school districts range in size from isolated, rural, one-room schools with multiple grades and as few as 25

students to urban districts such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, and Fresno with hundreds of thousands of students. As might be expected, many rural schools are non-diverse while suburban and urban schools reflect the polyglot nature of the general populace. While some students live in areas rich with differences (and the challenges that can bring), others may not experience other cultures or ethnic groups until they leave home and venture into higher education or the work force.

Racial, religious, and socioeconomic differences and conflicts from all parts of the globe, and from within our own national borders, could create a divided society if not addressed. The prejudices of parents, often passed on to their children, sometimes boil over into school-based conflicts that threaten the security of the school community and hinder learning.

Assaulted daily by a background of “uncivil discourse” on the TV and radio, and sensitive to the demands and concerns of advocacy groups, many educators worried that it was becoming almost impossible to openly deal with the frustrations and conflicts that were beginning to surface in classrooms and schools. In addition to the more traditional conflicts based on racial and ethnic lines, California’s schools were increasingly caught in a crossfire between religious groups who feel schools are hostile to religion and those who espouse complete separation of church and state and that schools should be religion free zones.

Teachers, with classrooms of students from all over the world with differing religious traditions, were unsure how to address “traditional” holidays such as Christmas and Easter. School choir directors were unclear on how much sacred music could be included in their concerts. Dress codes designed to alleviate gang attire sometimes conflicted with students’ desire to wear religious clothing. In addition, even though the *California History Framework* called for teaching about the great religious traditions of the world, many teachers felt academically unprepared. Most had never had a course on comparative religions and those who had reported that the class focused primarily on the Jewish and Christian traditions most prevalent in the United States. Most important, where conflict did exist between groups of students from varying ethnicities or cultures, it was difficult to get students to talk openly about their differences and to address them directly.

Almost ten years ago, as these issues began to come to the forefront in many school districts, Charles Haynes approached the California Department of Education to share his program “Finding Common Ground” Haynes believed the California, “melting pot” (or “salad bowl” as it is sometimes called) provided an ideal setting to introduce the civic responsibilities that come with living in a diverse democracy. The Department referred Haynes to the County Superintendents organization for assistance. As an intermediate service agency, the County Offices of Education provide fiscal oversight, curriculum expertise, and regionalized trainings to the nearly 1000 school districts within California’s 58 counties. Most have curriculum and instruction specialists who provide assistance and training on effective teaching techniques, content matter training, textbook selection, and staff development. As the History/Social Studies liaison from the County Superintendents organization, I met with Haynes and formed a committee of teachers, curriculum specialists, and administrators to tailor a program to meet

California's needs. From these meetings emerged the California 3Rs Project: Rights, Responsibilities, and Respect.

We found that the philosophy, and many of the materials in "Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Education," could be integrated into a staff development program tailored to meet California's needs.

First, it has provided content and curriculum highlighting the basic tenets of the world's major religions and the role of religious beliefs in shaping American history. Case studies, lessons based on historical research, primary source documents, and support activities were chosen that meet the requirements of the *California History Framework*. The importance of religion in world history, art, music, and belief systems have been discussed and are no longer marginalized. Teachers who attended workshops have become more effective in teaching about the role of religion in history.

Second, it has promoted the philosophy of dealing with differences through civil discourse that allows for disagreement while still respecting the other person's right to their opinion. This ideal of respecting another's "right to be wrong" was a novel concept when compared to the normal TV and radio fare of people shouting at and past each other and rarely seeking common ground. While such programs provide "entertainment" and can be switched on and off with the touch of a remote, schools beset by concerned parents and community members do not have that luxury and need to promote and practice this philosophy.

Third, it has prepared teachers, administrators, and local school boards to address the concerns of those with deeply held feelings about the role of religion in schools and to develop community based policies and procedures before conflicts arise. With the support of the county superintendents organization and grants from various foundations, the California 3Rs Project has provided a four-day training to district teams composed of teachers, administrators, school board members, and community representatives. Local school board policies have been developed that are in line with recent court rulings and law. University resources are utilized to provide follow-up sessions for teachers where in-depth study of comparative religions can be explored. Teachers who have experienced the training feel much more prepared to teach about the religious traditions enumerated in the *California History Framework* and that they have district resources and support in place if parents question them.

Fourth, the California 3Rs Project has served as a gateway to programs that complement the teaching of the civic virtues of Rights, Responsibilities, and Respect. For example, Conflict Resolution programs at the site level are a practical application of these virtues and allow students to practice what they are learning in the classroom.

Finally, the 3Rs Project has established a framework for dealing with other potentially divisive issues that crop up in public education on a regular basis. The practice of civil debate, seeking common ground, and developing policies with community input and buy-in serves as a blueprint for addressing challenges in a proactive manner.

As we enter the twenty first century and America becomes more diverse, the California 3Rs Project can continue to serve as a blueprint for addressing and resolving many of the religious, ethnic, and socioeconomic tensions that will challenge our schools and society.



## Finding Common Ground: One District's Story

by Janet Vondra

Janet Vondra recently retired after working in public education for 28 years. She has served in a variety of roles, including high school and middle school English teacher, counselor, and site administrator at both the high school and elementary level. Most recently, Jan completed a ten-year term as Assistant Superintendent of Instruction in the Snowline Joint Unified School District. She is currently working as an Instructional Accountability Associate for the Pulliam Group.

*"All good people agree,  
And all good people say,  
All nice people, like us, are We  
And everyone else is They;  
But if you cross over the sea,  
Instead of over the way,  
You may end by (think of it!) looking on We  
As only a sort of They"*

From: *We and They*  
Rudyard Kipling

Rudyard Kipling's whimsical verse about "we-ness" and "they-ness" capture the heart of the religious and culture conflicts which exist today in California - the most ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse state in the country (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1990). The vision of the American democracy—a government of the people, by the people, and *for* the people—carries with it the understanding that we, "the people," are composed of religious, ethnic, racial, and cultural groups whose differences may be deeper than that which unites us.

Because public schools are part of the fabric of society, it is not surprising to witness the same religious and cultural clashes in public education. Whether the issue is school prayer or Christmas plays, the question remains the same: how can we find common ground on the issues that divide us in ways that protect the conscience of every student and parent in our schools? How do we create a common vision for the common good?

The Snowline Joint Unified School District, like many districts in southern California, has dealt with conflicts over school prayer, sex education policies, Christmas concerts, evolution vs. creationism, and multicultural education. In our area, conservative Christians, who often feel that public educators do not recognize their point of view, many times bring these issues to the table. We are acutely aware of the damaging effects of negative publicity and an “us against them” climate, and have worked to avoid having the district split into opposing factions.

The proactive work to develop support systems that could diffuse religious or values conflict began in the fall of 1990 with the advent of a potentially explosive issue - the adoption of social studies textbooks based on the controversial *California History-Social Science Framework*. The protests conducted in Sacramento before the State Board of Education in October and November focused on charges of unfair treatment of minorities and inaccurate portrayals of religious issues. Although the controversy had not yet moved to the local level, we anticipated that our religious leaders and our conservative constituency might have grave concerns about the teaching about religion and multicultural inclusions in the new instructional materials.

In an attempt to prevent misunderstand regarding the *History-Social Science Framework* and the textbook adoption; Snowline District personnel attended California 3Rs Project training in 1991. The use of this program over several years has

Because public schools are part of the fabric of society, it is surprising to witness the same religious and cultural clashes in public education.

provided the necessary framework to reduce and/or avoid conflict over the clashes resulting from differing religious beliefs. The project, as implemented through the work of Charles Haynes, Oliver Thomas, and the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools, is centered on a return to the guiding principles of the First Amendment - the 3Rs of religious liberty - rights, responsibility, and respect. Within this philosophical framework, each voice, even the dissenting voice, has a right to be heard and respected, and the path for finding the com-

mon good begins with the acknowledgment of our deepest differences. Haynes emphasizes that we, as educators, must commit ourselves to trust-building and respectful dialogue with all of the major players in the community and to decision-making by consensus agreement.

Few would disagree with the idea of using First Amendment principles to solve religious and values conflicts in public school settings, but one might legitimately ask, “What do those principles look like in the day-to-day operations of a school district? The chart (see Figure 1), developed by Peg Hill from the San Bernardino County Office of Education, structures the focus of 3Rs work in three major areas: Community-School Relations, School and Classroom Policies, and Curriculum.

This article highlights Snowline’s ten years of experience using 3Rs principles in each of the three areas. It should be noted, however, that these concepts are utilized throughout the district wherever there are issues of conscience at stake. The Board’s decision to work collaboratively with the home-schooling population, for example, results in part from the district’s



respect for all parents' rights to determine the appropriate learning environment for their own children. The examples described in this article relate specifically to religious issues.

## **COMMUNITY SCHOOL RELATIONS**

### **Snowline Reaches Out to Local Religious Leaders**

One of the most significant developments of this decade is the mutually supportive relationship that has developed between the local religious leaders and the school district. During the History/Social Science adoption process in 1990, we invited all of the local heads of churches to a meeting at the district office where we encouraged review and discussion about the *History-Social Science Framework* and its new requirements to teach about religion, the state-approved textbooks, and the district's desire to have ongoing dialogue with the Tri-Community Ministerial Council. That first meeting began a ten-year relationship that has benefited the school district as well as the community by preventing conflict through misunderstandings and misinformation. Whenever a particularly sensitive issue is being raised in the school district, we try to meet with the Ministerial Council to get their feedback. This process, for example, has helped us successfully implement a Snowline Crisis Response Plan that utilizes our local ministers, implement an elementary health curriculum focused on child safety from abuse, and, most recently, establish a Board policy specifically spelling out religious rights of students and educators.

## **SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM POLICIES**

### **The Establishment of Relevant Board Policies**

Although all teachers in the district have received training on 3Rs Principles, incidents involving misunderstandings regarding the religious rights of students and parents still occur. An example is cited below.

### **Key Club Prayer**

The determination of what constitutes the "inculcation or inhibition of religion" in schools is a continuing issue for discussion. The local high school chapter of the Key Club, an offshoot of the parent organization, Kiwanis Club, experienced a difficult situation regarding student-led prayer. During one of the meetings, the president of the organization suggested that each meeting begin with prayer. After some discussion, it was decided that the suggestion would be voted upon, with the understanding that those students who did not feel comfortable with prayer could stand outside during the prayer session. The vote was taken by secret ballot, and there was a majority vote for student-led prayer. The club's advisor, who was not present during the meeting, talked to the officers the next day about First Amendment rights which protect students of all or no faith.

After considerable discussion, the officers agreed to present a proposal of having moment of silence as a satisfactory solution to the dilemma.

After experiencing several of these kinds of issues, the Board decided to adopt a policy which clearly defines the role of parents and the community in public schools, the role of teaching about religion in schools, and the role of civic debate about controversial issues. This board policy, Appendix A, reflects current law regarding religious rights and responsibilities in public schools, and is supported by our local Ministerial Council.

## **CURRICULUM**

### **Staff Training**

The Snowline District is fortunate to be in San Bernardino County where Margaret Hill and Janice Hamner began offering in-depth training early in the 1990s. Using a trainer-of-trainer model, we are able to in-service teachers in two important areas: (1) for history social science teachers, how and what to teach about the particular religion covered in their content area, and (2) for all teachers, how to teach about and respond to all religious issues in the classroom in a way that is respectful to the consciences of all students and parents.

### **New Teacher Training**

Ongoing in-services to new teachers and board members ensure that general awareness about 3Rs principles are kept current. Several teachers and administrators have been able to participate in San Bernardino County-sponsored action research program which enabled them to expand the use of the principles beyond focus of religious rights and responsibilities. In addition, an in-service on 3Rs principles is built into our regular BTSA Program when teachers are working on California Teaching Standard #2: “Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning.” This particular standard focuses on helping teachers establish a classroom climate that promotes fairness and respect—a perfect goal for 3Rs work!

## **WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?**

During the past ten years, we have learned many lessons, some of which are shared here in hopes that other school districts might benefit from our experiences.

- One of the major obstacles to finding common ground is the attachment to “labels” or educational jargon.

One of the outcomes from the past several years is an increased sensitivity to the use of terms or words that trigger emotional responses but carry different meanings depending on the listener’s perspective. “To teach students to think critically,” for example, is a term much used in California Frameworks and is a recognized goal among educators. Among some members of the conservative community, however, it means, “to teach children to criticize or question authority.” Another term, “the separation of church and state,” is frequently used but can mean anything from the complete absence of any religious term or reference in the classroom to interpretation of First Amendment based on Supreme Court decisions. If people do not clarify what they mean when they use these terms, misunderstandings often result in alienation and anger. The use of one strategy in particular has enabled us to make progress in these kinds of situations. When we describe the classroom setting and students’ specific behaviors instead of resorting to descriptive labels, we find we can reach clearer understandings of each other’s perspective. If our discussions include questions like “What does a classroom look like where the legal mandates of separation of church and state are enforced? What are students doing? What is the teacher doing?” we are able to move forward.

- People of widely differing beliefs who are willing to commit time and energy to

Perhaps the most significant learning for many of us has been our personal journeys of self-discovery.

working together almost always can find common ground; those who represent the extremes often choose not to work in collaborative settings and thereby isolate themselves.

We have found that some of our initial conflicts were promoted by individuals who may have had personal or political motivations that went beyond trying to do what is best for our local community and our students in Snowline. Once the actual work of finding common ground began, these individuals chose not to participate, and consequently are no longer in leadership positions.

- As we find commonalities among ourselves, our religious differences seem less threatening.

As all of us spend more time together, the recognition of our commonalities has enabled us to see our religious and values differences as another part of our relationship - by no means the defining variable.

- The learnings can be very personal, and frequently deal with our own unrecognized prejudices.

Perhaps the most significant learning for many of us has been our personal journeys of self-discovery. It is easy to pay lip service to the concept of compromise and trying to reflect the community's values and beliefs - easy as long as you agree with the community and the compromise! To actually "give" sincerely on a position which you feel is important, to publicly support a philosophical stance, which you personally do not support, all because we believe in the parents' religious rights and in their responsibility for the upbringing of their children, is difficult sometimes. With the effort to include and understand the many different voices in our community comes the opportunity to more clearly understand and define our own beliefs and values, surely a benefit for us all.

As we find commonalities among ourselves, our religious differences seem less threatening.

## **Rights, Responsibilities and Respect**

### **Three Applications in Our Schools**

#### **Community-School Relations**

- Citizenship in a diverse community means living with our deepest differences by committing ourselves to work for public policies that protect the rights of all.
- Public schools must model democratic processes where each citizen has an equal voice to decide public policy. Each person's beliefs and world views influence their policy ideas but no one belief or religion can force their beliefs on others.
- How people debate is as important as what they say.
- Each community and each generation must revisit the civic values that underpin public education.
- Ability of people to work together applying the 3Rs is fundamental to the survival of the American experiment.

#### **School & Classroom Policies**

- Policies and procedures provide a real place for community views and input.
- Schools/classrooms have opt in/out policies.
- Religious needs are accommodated when possible.
- Curriculum selection processes and committees include parents in meaningful ways.
- Classroom and campus rules are built on shared civic values.
- Religious holidays are studied about, not celebrated.
- Religious groups are given equal access to campus facilities as other community groups.
- Rights and restrictions on the expression of religious values and beliefs of faculty and staff are clear and fair.

#### **Curriculum**

- Include the study of religious beliefs and values where they naturally occur in the curriculum: history, art, music, literature and health
- Integrate the study of constitutional principles at all grade levels, especially in United States history.
- Treat religions, values and beliefs academically, not devotionally—teaching about beliefs versus teaching to believe.
- Directly teach the shared civic values of democratic society and why they are important.

**These principles and practices build the trust and provide the framework to resolve conflicts related to other issues of diversity.**

## Appendix A

### Snowline Joint Unified School District Recognition of Religious Beliefs and Customs

Any discussion of the place of religion in public education must be grounded in the principle of religious liberty or freedom of conscience, particularly as it is embodied in this nation's First Amendment to the Constitution which states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." This inalienable right to religious liberty depends neither upon political authority nor upon any election but is rooted in the inviolable dignity of each person.

The Board of Education endorses teaching about religion where the curriculum guides indicate it is appropriate and when the classroom atmosphere encourages both teachers and students to be responsible and to respect the rights of each person.

Such teaching must foster knowledge about religion, not indoctrination into religion; it should be academic, not devotional or testimonial; it should promote awareness of religion, not sponsor its practice; it should inform the students about the diversity of religious views rather than impose one particular view; and it should promote understanding of different religious views as well as respect for the rights of persons who hold such views.

#### **Rights and Responsibility of Student and Staff**

Students have the right to pray individually or in groups or to discuss their religious views with their peers so long as they are not disruptive. Because the Establishment Clause does not apply to purely private speech, students enjoy the right to read their Bibles or other scriptures, say grace before meals, pray before tests, and discuss religion with other student listeners as long as the listeners do not feel coerced or harassed. However, the right to engage in voluntary prayer does not include, for example, the right to have a captive audience listen or compel other students to participate.

Teachers and school administrators, when acting in those capacities, are representatives of the state, and, in those capacities, are themselves, prohibited from encouraging, or soliciting student religious or anti-religious activity. Similarly, when acting in their official capacities, teachers may not engage in religious activities with their students. However, teachers may engage in private religious activity in faculty lounges.

As a general rule, students may express their religious viewpoint in the form of reports, both oral and written, homework and artwork. Teachers may not reject or correct such submissions simply because they include a religious symbol or address religious themes. Likewise, teachers may not require students to modify, include or excise religious views in their assignments, if germane. These assignments should be judged by ordinary academic standards of substance, relevance, appearance and grammar. As noted, however, teachers should not allow students to use a captive classroom audience to proselytize or conduct religious activities.

Students have the right to distribute religious literature to their schoolmates, subject to those reasonable time, place and manner or other constitutionally—accepted restrictions imposed on the distribution of all non-school literature. Thus, a school may confine distribution of all literature to a particular table at particular times. It may not single out religious literature for burdensome regulation.

Student participation in before and after school religious events is permissible. School officials, acting in an official capacity, may neither discourage nor encourage participation in such an event.

Students have the right to speak to, and attempt to persuade, their peers about religious topics just as they do with regard to political topics. But, school officials should intercede and stop student religious speech if it turns into religious harassment aimed at a student or a small group of students.

Student religious groups in secondary schools are permitted to meet and to have equal access to campus media to announce their meetings. Teachers may not actively participate in club activities and “non-school persons” may not control or regularly attend club meetings.

### **School Calendars**

The school calendar should be prepared so as to minimize conflict with religious holidays of all faiths. Where conflicts are unavoidable, care should be taken to avoid test, special projects, introduction of new concepts, and other activities that would be difficult to make up on religious holidays. Students are expected to make up missed assignments without loss of status or penalty.

### **Religion in Curriculum and Instruction**

Students may be taught about religion, but public schools may not teach religion. As the U. S. Supreme Court has repeatedly said, “It might well be said that one’s education is not complete without a study of comparative religion, or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization.” It would be difficult to teach art, music, literature and most social studies without considering religious influences.

The history of the religion, comparative religion, the Bible (or other scripture) as literature (either as a separate course or within some other existing course) are all permissible public school subjects. It is both permissible and desirable to teach objectively about the role of religion in the history of the United States and other countries.

As part of the curriculum, students may be asked to read selections from sacred writings for their literary and historical qualities, but not for devotional purposes. The approach to religion shall be one of instruction, not one of indoctrination. The purpose is to educate, not convert. The focus shall be on the study of what all people believe and must not be on teaching a student what to believe.

At all levels, the study of religious music as part of a musical appreciation course, as a musical experience, as part of a study of various lands and cultures is to be encouraged. Seasonally appropriate religious music may be studied during the season when interest is the highest. In all public school programs and study, care must be taken to avoid presentation of the music as a celebration of a particular religion or religious holiday, and to ensure that there is no bias shown for or against any religion or non-religion.

Schools may teach civic virtues, including honesty, good citizenship, sportsmanship, courage, respect for the rights and freedoms of others, respect for persons and their property, civility, the virtues of moral conviction, tolerance and hard work. Although schools may teach about the role religion may play in character and values formation, schools may not invoke religious authority.

## **Religious Symbolism**

Religious messages on T-shirts and the like may not be singled out for suppression. Students may wear religious attire, such as yarmulkes and head scarves, and they may not be forced to wear gym clothes that they regard, on religious grounds, as immodest.

The use of religious symbols that are a part of religious holidays at the appropriate times of the year are permitted teaching aids or as resources, provided such symbols are displayed as examples of broad cultural and religious heritage of celebration and are limited to a brief or temporary period of instruction.

## **School Ceremonies and Activities**

School officials may not mandate, organize, or encourage prayer at graduation or other school activities or dedications, nor may they organize a religious baccalaureate ceremony. The school district may rent facilities under the School Communities Facilities to community groups who wish to sponsor such events. At certain occasions at which it is appropriate to set a solemn tone, a time of silence may be appropriate.

## **Parents' Rights to Excuse Students for Religious Reasons**

Students will be excused, when feasible, from lessons/activities which their parents find objectionable for religious reasons. Alternative assignments will be substituted.



# Common Ground...How we found it, how we use it

by Joseph Annicharico, Jr.

Joseph Annicharico has been an educator in the private, public, and post-secondary settings for the past 30 years. His career has involved work with developmentally delayed children and adults, seriously-emotionally disturbed incarcerated adolescents, public school elementary and high school students, as well as with graduate students at the university level. Annicharico has worked extensively with the First Amendment Center at the Freedom Forum in San Francisco and presented nationally, regarding religious liberty issues in the curriculum and on school campuses. He is currently Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and Planning in the Ramona Unified School District in California.

Not all stories about how schools and school districts initiated promising practices or successful strategies evolve from a near catastrophic situation. Sometimes, a set of circumstances is present and school staffs seize the opportunity to take some calculated proactive steps. Despite some of the negative, and sometimes deserving criticism, about how our schools are seemingly always responding to their needs in a knee jerk fashion, there do exist examples of foresight, timely prevention, and strategic planning steps. This is one of those stories about a school district that happened to be in the mode of surveying the climate of its current culture and along comes the opportunity to participate in a workshop series which appears to be specifically targeted for their needs. Little did we realize the significant and timely impact of our involvement.

To those school leaders, teachers, and parents who understand the vital importance of developing new solutions to old debates about public education and religious and ideological differences, the concept of finding common ground can be powerful. Certainly, as pointed out by scholar Charles Haynes of The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, there is some risk in taking a proactive approach to “religion in the schools” issues that have divided Americans since the founding of public schools. However, the greater risk according to Dr. Haynes is to ignore the distrust and discontent harbored by many parents towards public schools they view as hostile and, at the very least, unappreciative of their values and faith. At issue for schools is the basic and profound question: How will we live with our deepest differences?

To those school leaders, teachers, and parents who understand the vital importance of developing new solutions to old debates about public education and religious and ideological differences, the concept of finding common ground can be powerful.

As our district learned through training and experience, the answer to that question lies within the framework of the

concept of finding common ground. It has become the basis for resolving conflict, developing district policy, and adjusting curriculum. The notion of finding common ground has provided our school community with a common language which communicates a harmonious working relationship with parents, regardless of conviction or perspective. We view this perception of the schools working with the community as a vital part of our mission.

Although we were attempting to be proactive and forward thinking, it has been an experience over the last five years which has faced some tense moments and critical decision points over district and personal policy, principle, and practice. In retrospect, we in the Ramona Unified School District (a K-12 district serving 7000 students within a rural community of 35,000 people) have been extremely fortunate to become involved with the California 3Rs Project. The project has afforded us the opportunity to find workable solutions to contentious issues without damaging the integrity of those involved. It has provided us with a basis for resolving disputes and reexamining tenets of practice.

Here are the circumstances and events that have contributed to our efforts to seek common ground and promote civic responsibility in the schoolhouse. It all really started with the recognition that the recent school board elections had resulted in seating individuals of very different political, philosophical, and religious backgrounds together. It was readily apparent that unless some efforts were put forth, a very real possibility existed that the ensuing interaction and subsequent actions of the local governing board could

quickly turn into a culture war with the schools as our battleground. Not too long prior to this occurrence, a district team com-

It was readily apparent that unless some efforts were put forth, a very real possibility existed that the ensuing interaction and subsequent actions of the local governing board could quickly turn into a culture war with the schools as our battleground.

posed of two teachers, the superintendent, a school board member, and myself participated in a two day workshop presented by Charles Haynes and Oliver Thomas on religious liberty issues in the schools, the First Amendment, and a notion of the civil public school. It was presented within the context of the California 3Rs Project. It was a departure point and model for us to begin to discuss and eventually successfully tackle issues that could have become major reasons for division within the school community versus pieces for unity. Simply, the major focal points of the project made good common sense. The principles guiding the project seemed to be at the core of what we needed to include in our classroom civic education and school cultures. It also appeared that the project could offer a common set of principles for members of our school board and community from diverse viewpoints and convictions to work within.

Recognizing the circumstances which we inherited as the result of a local election and attempting to view our district through some self-critical lenses, it was determined that we would take active steps to prevent potential conflicts of ideology about teaching, curriculum, and the process of schooling. The political winds of change and concern had kicked up and we

wanted to ensure that our navigational skills were keen, fundamentally sound, and possessed integrity.

The first steps were to host a training session of the California 3Rs Project within our own district. We invited six neighboring school districts teams, worked with Haynes and Thomas to ensure their presence, included numerous local teachers along with three additional members of our school board, and put into action all the other details for a powerful staff development event. And, we made sure it was an “event”! It turned out to be the first of four such events for us. We adopted the strategy of bringing the wisdom to us rather than packing our bags for travel to seek out the wisdom. It worked! The training included two days of content related to the First Amendment, the Religious Liberty clauses, the Equal Access Act and their implications for schools. The content also included a rich and thought provoking insight into the civic principles upon which our founding fathers labored as they developed our Constitutional heritage. An additional two days followed for teachers with resources and strategies to incorporate the teaching of civic virtues, issues related to religious liberties, and the experiences of the developers of the Constitution and their influence on our sense of freedom.

But as any good staff developer knows, the real value and long lasting effect of staff development is what occurs after the training to integrate it into the organization.... follow-up. The follow-up was considered our next steps. It was decided to formulate a Common Ground Task Force, composed of those who had participated in the trainings, with the purpose of determining how we should proceed as a result of the exhilaration of the training. The Task Force met many times and is still a viable venue to strategize action for issues related to civic education or religious liberty. The Task Force identified two immediate charges. First, the development of district policies relating to the recognition of religious beliefs and customs and the teaching of multiculturalism. Second, the compilation of an instructional resources guide for teachers to teach civic traits as identified by the community.

This first task immediately required our school staff and community to test this notion of finding common ground when working with sensitive issues. We were fortunate to have some initial assistance from Haynes and Thomas as we constructed the basic policy on recognizing religious beliefs and customs. However, as draft after draft was revised, long after Haynes and Thomas had departed, our advocacy in finding common ground was tested. The policy was of interest to many. We also approached and met with the local ministerial association within our community on several occasions. They scrutinized the policy, provided suggestions, asked clarifying questions about it, and eventually endorsed its adoption at the school board meeting. They were pleased that we had included them as valued stakeholders in the process and perhaps more importantly, were impressed that we were recognizing the existence of religious convictions, rights, and customs as appropriate on our school campuses. The model of a “civil public school,” where people of all faiths or no faith are treated with fairness and respect was launched.

While the Task Force was busy working on these two projects, more opportunities presented themselves for us as a

school community to test our notion and training on finding common ground on sensitive issues. One such opportunity surfaced when the parent of a high school student enrolled in a biology course contacted her child's teacher with a concern about course content. The course initiated the school year with the study of evolution as a theory for examining patterns of change within our universe. The parent viewed this unit as a study of the theory of evolution as a religiously based explanation. The parent requested that their child be excused from this portion of the course and be offered alternative assignments. While as a school district we were willing to accommodate such a request, the test for finding common ground surfaced when the parent requested that as a final project, their child be permitted to submit a report on the theory of creationism. After collaborating with the science department of the school, we responded by indicating that we would accept a report that demonstrated knowledge of patterns of change within a scientific context. Our rationale was based in the notion that the unit on the theory of evolution as a scientific context was teaching how patterns of change affect the development of living and nonliving organisms and occurrences. We indicated that the unit in question was not promoting a particular conviction with religiously based doctrines and that the parent request was based in a faith conviction. Acknowledging the student's right to their belief system, we stressed our intent to teach academic content versus personal ideology. Once the parent and student were comfortable with the fact that the teacher and course were not intended to proselytize in any way, common ground was achieved and the alternate assignment requirement was accepted.

Additional challenges, or opportunities as we prefer to refer to them, have come forth. However, utilizing the framework of respecting the rights and

convictions of others, we have been successful in working with parents and students to find solutions acceptable to all stakeholders. These opportunities have involved the challenge of a book on our district literature list, students and staff gathering at the flagpole to demonstrate unity in faith, the development of a family health and life district curriculum policy, subject area policies, and the decoration of our district office during the month of December. In each instance, the key was for all sides to step back from the debate and to give fresh consideration to the democratic first principles that bind us together as a people espoused by the 3Rs Project.

Each opportunity allowed us to engage in the debate and review our convictions with the recognition that each of us bring to the public square inalienable rights, a need for respect, and the responsibility to work for policies and practices in public education that best protect the conscience of every student and parent in our schools. We openly acknowledge that if controversies about public education are to advance the best interests of our community, then how we debate, and not only what we debate, is critical.

I believe we are strongly committed to the conviction that finding common ground on many of the issues that divide us is possible within the civic framework provided by the Religious Liberty clauses of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution as advanced by the 3Rs Project.

Today our district continues to use such language as we communicate about sensitive issues. We will draw upon the principles of the project as we embark upon reviewing current policies addressing the teaching of controversial issues and challenges regarding textbooks and instructional resources. Our Common Ground Task Force has continued to refine our teacher resources guide for the teaching of civic values and will seek governing board adoption in the near future.

Our school community recognizes that this task of finding common ground is ongoing. I believe we are strongly committed to the conviction that finding common ground on many of the issues that divide us is possible within the civic framework provided by the Religious Liberty clauses of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution as advanced by the 3Rs Project. As long as we maintain that conviction and are dedicated to the mission of helping to build our nation within the schoolhouse, our efforts will be fruitful and give our school community a hopeful sense of future.

Haynes, C., & Thomas, O. (1994). *Finding Common Ground, A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Education*. Nashville, TN. Freedom Forum First Amendment Center





## The 3Rs in the Inland Empire

by Peg Hill

Margaret “Peg” Hill is currently the history-social science coordinator for San Bernardino County Schools. She has been active at all levels of technology integration with the social studies, having served as Director of the SCORE project. Hill guest edited the Fall/Winter issue of the *Social Studies Review*, bringing together outstanding authors for an issue of technology. She taught history-social science for 18 years in the Chaffey Joint Union High School District in Ontario, California.

Although the California 3Rs Project’s primary mission is to address religious liberty concerns in public education by applying the Religious Liberty Clauses of the First Amendment, in the Inland Empire we have tried to expand the application of those fundamental principles to address a number of other issues of concern to public schools.

*Living with Our Deepest Differences*, the name of the first curriculum developed by the founders of the California 3Rs Project, is the phrase that most describes the need addressed by the program in Inland Southern California. This region is not only one of the most diverse parts of the globe ethnically, but also in its extremes of political and religious perspectives. Added to this is the fact that it is also one of the fastest growing regions of the nation.

On first glance the region’s fresh new streets and dwellings seem like an area filled with hope and upward mobility. In reality, it means parents with long commutes and latch key kids; parents who don’t know their neighbors nor trust their local schools. They spend hours each day bombarded with the extremism and conspiracy theories expressed on talk radio. Many have mortgaged themselves to the hilt to move away from what they consider the problems of the cities.

A new approach to conflict resolution in public education was needed — one based upon principles all could embrace, ideas that transcended ethnic, religious and cultural differences, and that could inspire people to work together.

However, they find that schools in their new communities are overcrowded and scrambling to provide just the basics of classroom space and bathrooms. It is these public schools, overstressed and under-funded, that must help bridge the differ-

ences and build community in these new exurbs.

Knowing this new and essential role, during the last ten years public schools have been attempting to better serve diverse populations by making the curriculum more inclusive and global. For example, beginning in 1987 the history-social science curriculum included a three-year study of world cultures and religions beginning in Grade Six. However, during this same era a wave of neo conservatism hit the political foreground with a goal of reversing the social excesses of the 60s and 70s. Neo-conservatives blamed many of these excesses on moral relativism in the media and in schools. On the lookout for evidence of this in public education, some blamed multiculturalism and values clarification programs for the increase in violence and decline in test scores. Some leaders were advocating a new religiously-based morality that was both sectarian and inappropriate for public schools.

A new approach to conflict resolution in public education was needed — one based upon principles all could embrace, ideas that transcended ethnic, religious and cultural differences, and that could inspire people to work together. The civic principles of the California 3Rs Project (rights, responsibilities, respect) filled this need. These “3Rs” are the ideals of human rights and the responsibilities of citizens and government at the center of the American Experiment. This is the best in history-social science education made real in classrooms and communities. These are the civic principles that Americans share as citizens, and which derive from the First Amendment of the United States *Constitution*; principles often discussed in textbooks but rarely applied in real world settings.

**Rights**—religious liberty and freedom of conscience are fundamental rights of all human beings. Society is only as just and as free as this right is protected.

**Responsibilities**—if freedom of conscience is to remain a universal right, then it is the responsibility of everyone to guard that right even for groups or individuals with whom they disagree.

**Respect**—conflict and debate will always be present. If conducted with respect for each disputant’s basic right to conscience, then conflicts can be conducted in a manner that does not tear the society apart.

## **APPLYING PRINCIPLES TO SCHOOL CONFLICT**

Something as philosophical as the 3Rs principles is not easy to transfer into practical school settings fraught with conflict and diversity. The work of Charles Haynes and Oliver Thomas to forge agreements nationally among leading educational and religious organizations on how diversity of belief should be handled in schools made this process much easier. “Consensus Documents” (Religion in the Public School Curriculum, Religious Holidays in Public Schools, Guidelines for Implementing the



Equal Access Act) provided a leg up on the debate in the local school communities by providing not only suggestions for resolution of conflict, but a belief that consensus on the toughest issues could be reached in the local setting as it had been at the national level.

So the first step in “Applying the Principles” came in the form of countless awareness workshops and presentations to teachers, PTA, religious leaders, school boards and administrators, explaining the principles, their origin, their application in the consensus documents and the school’s special role in ensuring democracy. This step is vital, as a basic knowledge of the issues provides all interested parties an understanding of multiple perspectives.

Charles Haynes, Oliver Thomas, and Nicholas Piediscalzi, spent much of two years in California doing these presentations, training a core of teachers and administrators as project leaders. The ideal overview session was for teams of teachers, administrators, school board members and parents. In two days the teams explored the meaning and history of the principles, learned current legal interpretations of the First Amendment religion clauses, and talked reflectively across the table about what was best for students and schools. In the Inland Empire, each session used the consensus documents to provide models of what the principles meant in practice and applied them to real conflicts in classrooms and schools in our region.

Teachers always called for more. They knew if they were to serve the needs of Inland Southern California’s diverse student population, they needed information about how to include diverse perspectives in their classroom management, and to include religious points of view into the curriculum. But they needed help in how to teach about different belief systems in a constitutionally and academically sound manner.

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For deeper levels of training and to develop a core of regional leaders, we formed a team of interested 3Rs leaders in Inland Southern California. We continuously assessed local needs and sought multiple sources of funding for training programs. Haynes and I received a small grant from the National Council for the Social Studies in the early 1990s to put on the first institute. As site director, I made the 3Rs programs part of the diversity initiative of the local California International Studies Project, Inland Empire Consortium for International Studies. Al Wolf and I also made in-depth training on 3Rs part of one of the summer institute offerings of the Inland Area History-Social Science Project. Altogether we provided in-depth training for about 150 teachers and administrators.

Each in-depth workshop involved not only a review of the meaning and origin of the 3Rs principles, but sessions on specific religious traditions present in the curriculum and among the region's populous served by the schools. We discussed how to handle special diet, prayer and social needs of conservative Muslim students, as well as how to teach the seventh grade unit on Islamic civilization without getting the facts wrong or antagonizing the conservative Christian populations. We also reflected on ways to handle religious restrictions on patriotic expressions for Jehovah's Witness students and countless other topics.

We also made an ongoing connection to the religious studies scholars at local universities to help us thread the path between teaching about religion and proselytizing. We learned a scholarly approach to teaching about holidays, rather than observing them. We reflected on the expansion of First Amendment rights of students and the restrictions on those of teachers in their role as representatives of government.

At each institute we offered special sessions for teachers, administrators and community members so that bridges could be built to enable teachers to implement these ideas in schools at the close of the training. The connection to religious studies, constitutional scholars, and trained teacher leaders provided help to districts as they formed commissions to study holiday observances or created textbook and curriculum adoption committees.

## FINDING THE RIGHT METHOD

The ideals of the 3Rs principles have broad appeal to the education-thinkers, but some school leaders responded that the principles were too nebulous to be useful in the day-to-day operation of schools and classrooms beyond the infusion of a few lesson activities. We needed models of what "rights", "responsibilities" and "respect" looked like in school practice. My colleague in the International Studies Project, Janice Hamner, had been looking at the Teacher as Researcher process as a tool for improving instruction. As part of our International Studies Project diversity initiative, we decided to apply the Teacher as Researcher model to the 3Rs. It was a big commitment of both school and project staff time for teacher researchers to attend meetings, keep records, and write up their findings, and for us to provide the follow-up support that teachers and schools might need in implementing the principles in their unique environments. However, it was successful beyond our greatest expectations.

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difference by acting as researchers. They look at events or behavior from three or more vantage points, they record what they see, and they make adjustments in programs or methods as called for by those observations. Their plans this time would be related to the real world application of the 3Rs principles.

After a week of working together on the principles, and bringing in multi-ethnic parent and student groups to discuss their issues and concerns, we examined the success or failure of programs already available at the schools. Institute participants thought deeply about how the 3Rs might be used to address problems or conflicts arising from different values, norms and beliefs. Our institute training provided the idea, their skill as educators led to the implementation of the principles in their individual institutional settings and roles. Each developed a plan for resolving an identified conflict in their own “sphere of influence.” This “sphere of influence” concept proved most significant. If a plan involved “fixing” other people, it was doomed to failure. If the project involved adapting some aspect of classroom or school management over which the person could exercise real control, amazing achievements were made. Here are a few examples.

### **3RS AS A BASE FOR CLASSROOM RULES**

Several teachers decided that it was the students themselves who could make the most difference in improving the human interactions in their classrooms. So, they replicated what they had learned in the institute in their classrooms. Students developed and abided by rules based upon the principles of rights, responsibilities, and respect, such as “no put-downs,” listening when others talk, and being courteous. The difference was that these were rules the students created and in which they had a vested interest. With the rules and principles posted in the classroom, the teachers took the opportunity throughout the year to apply them. Sometimes these applications were to some behavior

in the classroom, but later every teacher indicated that students began to use the principles themselves to evaluate issues in the news, events in the school, or the actions of characters in the literature or history they were studying.

The day-to-day application of the 3Rs principles by most of the fellows of the training programs occurs in the curriculum.

One teacher took the principles one step further into a realm now called character education. As a professionally active middle school teacher, frequently out of the classroom for these responsibilities, she found that students lapsed into old behaviors when she was not present. After bringing this up for classroom discussion, the students decided to make the concept of “Integrity” their class value. They defined “integrity” as doing what was right even when no one was watching.

This teacher studied the impact on the classroom in a more formal manner than most Teacher Researchers. For a university class in diversity, she monitored not only the behavior but academic performance of the class that had taken the 3Rs principles to heart and found that there was a distinct increase in performance in the class that used integrity as its year long

theme in applying the Principles.

## **THE 3RS AS A BASE FOR SCHOOL-WIDE STUDENT PROGRAMS**

Institute fellows in one junior high and one senior high school used the principles as whole school reform tools. They used the 3Rs as a method to improve school climate by bringing diverse student voices into the social and student government milieu on campus. The goal was to systematically bring more perspectives to the table and provide open opportunity for planning and discussion of school policies and programs as recommended in the *Finding Common Ground* 3Rs handbook. Aware that many youngsters distrusted and disliked the faction of popular kids involved in student government at the school, these 3Rs educators set up venues to invite students of all ethnic and social groups to participate in planning a series of on-campus events to build dialogue among students.

One school held four such events each year for several years at the middle school level. Students were selected based on who faculty and student leaders observed as being disenfranchised members of the schools. These identified students came together in small groups, talked about things they saw as unfair about their school, learned skills in active listening, and made recommendations for how to correct problems in a manner that respected everyone's right to be themselves. The 3Rs Teacher Researcher (actually an administrator) found that attendance improved, more students participated in extra curricular events, incidents of campus discipline declined, and new students participated in leadership roles on campus. His project may have strayed pretty far from the idea of religious liberty but was squarely in line with the idea of freedom of conscience as interpreted by the students.

## **THE 3RS AS A BASE FOR INVOLVING PARENTS**

Other 3Rs institute fellows wanted to apply the principles in outreach to parents. Aware that attendance at the required Parent Advisory Committee for its Bilingual Program was very low, the Teacher Researcher at one school decided to try what she called a 3Rs approach. Following the advice in the *Finding Common Ground* manual, she made personal contacts with parents in their homes or when they came to school to register or to pick up their children. She led the staff to reach out to the parents in their own language and on their own terms. Her team made it very clear that the formerly disenfranchised voice of these parents was essential in planning programs that served the needs of all children. Again, as a Researcher, the 3Rs project fellow recorded these parent perspectives, discussed them with colleagues and included them in the creation of a new Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee. Improved parent attendance allowed school personnel to learn more about community needs and perspectives to the benefit of the school and the students.

At the district level, the 3Rs principles were also used to involve parents in the development of policies. One district

had been practically disrupted each December by factions who either wanted or opposed a Christmas program. Again, using the step-by-step 3Rs model of bringing as many community and educational stakeholders to the table as possible, the 3Rs institute fellow led the process of conflict resolution so that the district was able to develop and pass a board policy on a religious holiday observance that was clear and constitutional.

## **THE 3RS AND CLASSROOM CONTENT**

The day-to-day application of the 3Rs principles by most of the fellows of the training programs occurs in the curriculum. As a result of their participation in the 3Rs training, one educator team developed a workshop for elementary teachers with suggestions for how to teach about holidays that avoided some of the divisive celebratory approaches to Halloween, Christmas and Easter used in many classrooms. Another team of participants reviewed textbooks for inclusion and fairness in the treatment of religion and culture. One institute group wrote a set of lessons to infuse teaching about religion where it naturally fell in the curriculum. This material, Religion in History, was reviewed for accuracy by religious studies scholars, printed and distributed by San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools.

From the original *Living With Our Deepest Differences* materials developed by Charles Haynes, Oliver Thomas and others in the early stages of the program, much has improved in the availability of resources for the natural inclusion of religion in the California curriculum. Through the 3Rs Project's work at the state level, the study of religion and its influence on society is solidly embedded in the *History-Social Science Framework and Content Standards*. Textbook companies have followed suit by including coverage of religion in their state adopted programs. Oxford University Press recently published a new series, *Religion in American Life*, for secondary school students.

## **WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED**

The above discussion shows many achievements resulted from the study and implementation of the 3Rs civic principles that are fundamental to America's democratic structure in our schools. The most important one, I think, is the vision it gives to educators as to how important their work is in the achievement of the promise of America's experiment in liberty. The value of that sense of mission is not to be underestimated in a era of extremely negative educational press.

It is not to be assumed that the implementation of the California 3Rs principles in Inland Southern California Schools has either been easy nor eliminated problems. Issues and staffs change. New voices and ethnic mixes appear and disappear in the community. Just when one thinks that, after so much effort, everyone must be talking together rationally, a new dilemma pops up from nowhere to challenge the system. The frequency and brutality of some of these challenges to schools can under-

mine the confidence of even the staunchest 3Rs advocate. This results in a continuous need for new awareness programs and efforts to institutionalize the principles in all decision-making with a network of 3Rs advocates who can offer support and guidance. Even with the negative newspaper headlines, the positives outweigh the negatives. Rights, Responsibilities and Respect offer an approach to diversity that doesn't begin with

anger but with hope. Where many multicultural programs start with the assumption that people need to be fixed for holding biases, the 3Rs begins with the need to set up a forum for listening to perspectives, however diverse, that people have a basic human right to hold. Rather than glossing over prejudice, each person with whom we have

worked in-depth during the last nine years of this program has said that the 3Rs has caused them to re-examine their own biases and allowed them to be more open and constructive in areas well beyond the issue of religion. In addition, the program has resulted in community members once critical of schools to step forward as allies. This has been immensely helpful in parts of the Inland Empire where ministers once used their pulpits to lash out at the moral relativism of schools but have now been brought together to discuss how the schools and churches can work together to improve the educational system and student performance in it. There has been no more important contribution of the California 3Rs Project than in its creation of a sense that schools and communities can work out their differences in this era when the future of public education is fundamentally at risk.

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# Strategies for Finding Common Ground

## Agree on the Ground Rules

In any public-policy debate, all sides need to recall that, as citizens, each of us has already agreed to the democratic first principles that govern our common life.

These principles are the “ground rules” within which we negotiate our differences.

## Ground Rules that flow from the First Amendment

The Statement of Principles from the Williamsburg Charter provides a good place from which to draw ground rules for public debate.

## The Three R’s of Religious Liberty:

Rights  
Responsibilities  
Respect

Include All of the Stakeholders

Policies developed by a broad cross-section of the community are widely accepted.

## Listen to All Sides

Establishing a climate of listening requires that people go beyond labels and rebuild trust.

## Work for Comprehensive Policies

Begin where agreement is most likely.

Broad policies allow almost all participants to agree to at least part of the policy.

## Be Pro-Active

Act before there is a controversy that divides the community.

## Follow Through

Keep everyone informed, and the meetings ongoing.

Provide staff development and apply the policies consistently and fairly.

*Finding Common Ground* pp. 5.1-5.4







## The 3Rs in Manhattan Beach, California

by Margaret Y. Davis

Margaret Y. Davis received her bachelor's degree from the University of California at Los Angeles. She worked for many years as a registered nurse. She is now a homemaker who is very active in her school community, most recently having served as the chairperson of the School Site Council at her children's elementary school. She is married and has two children ages 11 and 8.

I have to admit I never gave much thought to the First Amendment or its role in our public schools. I am a wife and mother of two young children and that keeps me very busy. We live in Manhattan Beach, a closely-knit family oriented community in the suburbs of Los Angeles. I had always been very satisfied with our schools because they are excellent academically. Then an incident occurred in my daughter's second grade class that shook me out of my complacency.

It was during the Christmas season and one of the parents had an artificial Christmas tree that they wanted to bring into the classroom. The teacher agreed and the tree was set up, along with such other symbols of the season as a Chanukah menorah. Then, however, some parents began to complain that they found the presence of the tree in the classroom to be offensive. Without consulting with anyone, the school administration decided to dismantle the tree in front of the classroom.

I was shocked at the insensitivity displayed by this reaction and knew instinctively that something was deeply wrong with how our school had dealt with this issue. I wasn't the only one—news of the incident spread like wildfire and it became a major controversy. Amazingly, the story was reported on in the *Los Angeles Times*, became a subject of talk radio debate and was even mentioned on CNN's *Crossfire* program. Our little incident had obviously touched a nerve that extended beyond the boundaries of our community.

I was shocked at the insensitivity displayed by this reaction and knew instinctively that something was deeply wrong with how our school had dealt with this issue.

In the parent teacher meeting that was called to address the controversy, many different opinions were expressed, often heatedly. Many parents felt that any reference to religion in public schools was improper, that public schools should be completely secular. Others felt just the opposite. Opinions were expressed with a great deal of anger, but parents often struggled to

justify their beliefs on this very sensitive subject. Although I disagreed with the removal of the tree, I also realized that my strong feelings on this subject were not necessarily based on legal or constitutional principles. I left that meeting feeling dejected and confused. I wondered which interpretations were right and felt ashamed for not knowing more about the Constitution or the First Amendment. More importantly, I felt that our children were being deprived of something very important because we as adults did not have a clear understanding of our heritage. I also felt that if the secularization of our schools prevents our children from knowing and appreciating the religions and cultures of others we would be creating artificial barriers preventing them from getting to know their neighbors. I firmly believe that in order to love your neighbor, you must know your neighbor.

From the issue of the Christmas tree the issues broadened to how to address holiday observances, what could and could not be taught about religion in public schools, and how this impacted our ultimate right to freedom of conscience. It was then I realized that well-meaning people could have radically different ideas about this subject. I was surprised by the magnitude of the furor that resulted from the tree's hasty removal.

I decided to try and locate resources to educate myself on what the First Amendment stood for. I discovered that not only locally, but also throughout this nation, the Religious Liberty Clauses of First Amendment in public education is a difficult and controversial subject. To my surprise, I found article after article discussing the confusion and misunderstanding that arises when the basic principles of our country are not well understood. I learned that it is a recurring challenge to public school educators to properly deal with religious issues in schools and that every December there is renewed discussion about whether religion is a taboo subject, or whether the First Amendment prohibits stifling of religious beliefs.

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In the course of researching public education policy guidelines on the district, county, state and federal level, and news reports, I noticed the name of the First Amendment Center based in Nashville,

Tennessee and their Religious Freedom Programs, lead by Charles Haynes, coming up again and again on the subject of religion in public schools. The First Amendment Center is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to fostering a better understanding and appreciation of First Amendment rights and values. The work of the Center has been praised by President Clinton, the United States Department of Education, and has garnered support from across the religious and political spectrum. It brought me a ray of hope to discover the existence of such an organization, but I wondered how they could really help our local community.

I picked up the phone and called the First Amendment Center office in Nashville, Tennessee. I was referred to their

West Coast Coordinator Marcia Beauchamp. From the first moment, I was impressed with the First Amendment Center's genuinely caring attitude as well as their deep knowledge of their subject. I am still amazed at how this nationally acclaimed organization was ready to jump into action to help us. It seemed too good to be true, but as Haynes put it in one of his lectures, "The local community is where the rubber hits the road." (Haynes & Thomas, 1996). Haynes had written, "The public schools in America have become the battlefields in the culture wars that deeply divide our nation." This certainly struck home with me. Thus, it is a priority of Haynes and his team to help local communities directly. I learned that Haynes is the nation's leading authority on religious liberty issues in public education. He travels along with his partner Oliver Thomas, an attorney and legal expert on First Amendment issues, and other members of the First Amendment Center team, to school districts throughout the country lecturing and leading workshops on this topic.

Marcia sent us their main publication, *Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Education* (Haynes & Thomas, 1996). She informed us that the First Amendment Center cosponsored a program entitled The California 3Rs Project: Rights, Responsibility, Respect with the California County Superintendent's Educational Services Association which helps school districts and communities create guidelines for religion in schools based on the democratic and civic framework that is provided in the Religious Liberty Clauses of the First Amendment. Workshops are held in school districts where issues arise. She invited us to their upcoming workshop for the L.A. City Schools on "Holiday Observances and First Amendment Rights."

Janna Catalina, another concerned parent, and I then met with our school district Assistant Superintendent of Education Sara Content, to introduce her to the work of First Amendment Center. She studied the handbook and other materials and liked what she saw. Content decided that she and other educators from Manhattan Beach would attend the L.A. City Workshop. I was elated. She gave a very enthusiastic and positive review after attending that workshop and praised the work of the First Amendment Center presenters Oliver Thomas and Marcia Beauchamp.

However, the next phase of what was to be would prove to be the most difficult. The First Amendment Center was willing to come to our community to conduct a conference for the entire region. Content and her successor Olivia La Bouff were very supportive of this idea. Janna and I then took on the monumental task of organizing this conference. So, with the constant moral and material support of La Bouff and Marcia Beauchamp, Janna and I went door to door to the district leaders surrounding Manhattan Beach inviting them to study the material and come to the workshop. Anything with the word religion in it spooks many people, and we were initially met with skepticism. However, to lend credibility to the workshop Bill Shane of the National Conference of Community and Justice (formerly National Conference of Christians and Jews), agreed to help sponsor the event. We had first met him at a 3Rs workshop for Orange County educators he just finished organizing and were impressed with his energy and enthusiasm for the subject. Finally after a year of meetings and many follow up phone calls and personal appeals from La Bouff, we gathered a significant number of teams from the South Bay, the Moreno Valley School

District, and the Los Angeles County Office of Education.

Finally, on a beautiful October day in 1998, the day arrived for the Manhattan Beach/South Bay Conference of the California 3Rs Project at the Torrance Hilton. Charles Haynes and Oliver Thomas came to our town and gave an awesome and unforgettable presentation about the First Amendment and our duty to reaffirm this great ideal. Their goal was to share and provide a civic framework and guidelines worked out on the national level to our local community. Educators, they said, “Are charged with transmitting the identity and mission of the United States from one generation to the next. If we fail in our school policies and classrooms to model and teach how to live with differences, we endanger our experiment in religious liberty and our unity as a nation.” The fruit of religious freedom or freedom of conscience, which is the cornerstone of our democratic society, is entirely dependent on treating each other fairly according to the democratic civic principles which flow from the First Amendment of the Constitution.

Every person attending sat listening in rapt attention to these fundamental ideas on the critical relationship between our democratic civic principles and our freedom of beliefs, and how they must work together. The principles of our Founding Fathers rang out loudly and true as these presenters spoke. It felt as though our collective memory was jogged into recalling and appreciating our heritage and the hard won right to freedom of conscience. The call was made to carry the torch of our Founding Fathers vision without extinguishing it.

I sat at the reception table at the door to the ballroom and watched the attendees stream out at the end of the conference with a sense of energetic enthusiasm. All were engaged in lively discussions about the valuable knowledge gained, and how to apply it. Two rewarding memories stand out. One is of a parent participant who was publicly critical and negative of the conference and who walked out at one point. She was talked into staying by Bill Shane of the NCCJ. This parent actually sought me out at the end of the conference and thanked me for organizing the conference. The other is that the same administrators who had dismantled the Christmas tree attended the conference and later sent me a thank you note for the insights it had provided.

I will always be grateful to the hard-working members of the First Amendment Center and the California 3Rs Project for the indelible impact that have had on my children’s community.

Following the conference, The *Finding Common Ground* handbook was distributed to all administrators and principals. Excerpts from *Finding Common Ground* were given to all teachers in Manhattan Beach. After the enthusiastic reviews for the conference, our Superintendent of Schools Gerald Davis established a Holiday Observance Committee. First Amendment Center materials were provided to this committee, which, after holding community input meetings throughout the district, reported a need for more information on legal guidelines and training for teachers. Superintendent Davis then sent a letter to all parents

addressing issues of religious diversity in the schools, and included a copy of *A Parent's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools* published by the First Amendment Center and endorsed by the National Congress of Parents and Teachers. I learned that the central message of the religious liberty clauses of the First Amendment is to take an evenhanded approach to religion that does not indoctrinate but does not make its mention taboo either. Symbols of the beliefs that are so important for so many are worthy of a place in our schools, as is the study of the importance of religion in our national history.

It was truly gratifying to have effective guidelines in place. I knew my community had come a long way from the first angry debates about a lone Christmas tree. Now, any visitor strolling into the lobby of the Manhattan Beach School District administrative offices, or any school office in the City would find neatly stacked copies of the green First Amendment Center's Parents Guide to Religion in Public Schools (First Amendment Center, 1995) on prominent display. I will always be grateful to the hard-working members of the First Amendment Center and the California 3Rs Project for the indelible impact that have had on my children's community.

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# Maelstrom in Modesto: Developing a Common Ground Policy for the Protection of Gay and Lesbian Students in Public Schools

by David S. Doty

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## Introduction

Among the culture wars currently raging in American school communities, the most fierce may be those being fought over issues of sexual orientation. Whether forced to deal with applications for Gay-Straight Alliance clubs (Ritter, 2000; Walsh, 2000; Whitaker, 2000), complaints of sexual harassment (Jacobson, 1996; Ruenzel, 1999), or changes to nondiscrimination policies (Argetsen, 1999; Portner, 1994), school boards across the country are finding themselves embroiled in heated and protracted controversies whenever they attempt to address the unique concerns of gay and lesbian students. Perhaps not surprisingly, many of these battles have religious overtones, as parents, clergy, and other people of faith fight to ensure that school boards do not undermine their values or promote a “homosexual agenda” in classrooms.

It is also not surprising that many of these battles end up in court, resulting in lengthy and divisive litigation. The cost of such litigation can be significant; in addition to imposing financial burdens on schools, court edicts can strip school leaders of their autonomy to craft compromise policy that is responsive to local concerns (Heubert, 1997, p. 539; Tyack & Hansot, 1982, p. 247).

Yet these conflicts can be resolved a different way. Showing the way is the Modesto City Schools, which recently undertook a bold and innovative process to formulate a consensus agenda for the safety and protection of gay and lesbian students.

## Rough Waters in Modesto: A Community in Turmoil

In August 1996, the parents of a gay student in Modesto scheduled a meeting with Jim Enochs, Superintendent of the Modesto City Schools, to inform him about some of the abuse and harassment their son was facing on a regular basis at his high school. By his own admission, Superintendent Enochs entered the meeting with baggage. Specifically, he carried into the room a general toleration for gay jokes and an attitude that was relatively unsympathetic to the concerns of gay and lesbian people (J. Enochs, personal communication, June 22, 1998).

However, by the time the meeting was over, he had experienced a fairly dramatic change of heart. Describing the meeting, and his reaction to it, Superintendent Enochs (Personal communication, June 22, 1998) explains:

You'd have to have a heart of stone to not be moved by what those parents told us that day. I was ashamed by my past behaviors and attitudes. I can't imagine the pain of sending my child off to school every morning knowing his books might be thrown about, his gym clothes torn, that he would be shoved, pushed and insulted day after day. I can't imagine going to school and facing that sort of thing on a daily basis. I knew that I wouldn't be superintendent of a district where that kind of thing was going on and being tolerated.

Consequently, Superintendent Enochs promised action addressing the parents' concerns and immediately set to work with his senior staff and the school board to effect some changes in the district. What followed was a conflagration that would test the mettle of any school leader.

Four events inflamed the conflict; the first could be described as the match that started the fire, with the other three serving as accelerants. The flame was lit when Superintendent Enochs and Sharon Burnis, the Associate Superintendent for

Administrative and Pupil Services, decided to send a group of thirty employees and school board members to a Bay Area conference billed as the "West Coast Conference on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues in Education." Their purpose in sending the team to the conference was to gather information about the issues facing gay and lesbian students. Associate Superintendent Burnis felt that a keynote speech by California State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Delaine Eastin, as well as workshops like those titled "Homophobia and Heterosexism," "Support Services for

Recognizing that the new policy was essentially worthless without parental and community support for its enforcement, the Board decided to invite a broad group of stakeholders to develop guidelines for the policy's implementation.

Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Youth," and "Responding to Anti-Gay Rhetoric" would provide insight to district officials and ideas about new policy directions they should consider.



Unfortunately, the good intentions of Superintendent Enochs and Associate Superintendent Burnis were overshadowed by complaints from parents and religious leaders in Modesto who learned about the conference and characterized it as a gay advocacy event. Focusing on workshop titles such as “Logging On/Coming Out: Youth Activism Online,” “E-mail for Activists,” and “Gay Teacher Rights,” members of Christian congregations throughout Modesto viewed the conference, and the district’s participation therein, as the impetus for promoting the “gay lifestyle” in district classrooms.

Gas was poured on the fire when the Board of Education decided to purchase seven copies of a \$54 video produced by the Gay Lesbian Straight Educators Network (GLESN) titled “Teaching Respect for All.” After seeing the video at the conference, the district had purchased the video, described in its promotional materials as a “a video on why teachers, administrators, parents and schools need to care about issues of sexual orientation,” to use only with board members and district-level administrators who were working to develop an action plan to reduce harassment of gay and lesbian students. However, because they believed the video mocked religion generally, and their Christian beliefs specifically, parents and clergy lobbied aggressively to persuade the board to prohibit its use in any setting.

More fuel was added to the fire when the district proceeded to explore a new anti-discrimination policy behind closed doors. Due to the sensitive nature of the concerns that had originally been expressed by parents to Superintendent Enochs, as well as the increasingly angry tone of community rhetoric, Associate Superintendent Burnis wanted to create a “safe forum” in which the situation of gay and lesbian students could be freely discussed without fear of condemnation or retribution from the district’s vocal critics (S. Burnis, personal communication, June 23, 1998). Therefore, Christian parents and clergy who demanded to be a part of the district’s initial policy discussions were told they were not welcome, which intensified their feelings of hostility and distrust.

Finally, the conflict’s heat reached inferno levels when the Board of Education, after several months of ugly public meetings, negative press, and unbridled criticism from parents and churches, adopted a new policy titled “Principles of Tolerance, Respect, and Dignity to Ensure a Safe School Environment.” This policy, while legally and educationally justifiable, caused the Modesto community to come unglued, because it required school staff and students to adhere to principles of “tolerance, respect, and dignity;” specifically protected students from discrimination and harassment based on “sexual orientation,” and promoted a school environment in which “differences are accepted.” Many clergy and parents interpreted this language as placing students on the horns of an untenable dilemma—one which required them to either accept and believe in the “correctness” of homosexual behavior in violation of their religious beliefs, or vigorously oppose homosexuality and risk being labeled “discriminatory.”

## From War to Peace: Bringing Stakeholders to the Table

By the time it adopted this policy in March 1997, the Board of Education had endured over seven months of bruising combat with parents and churches, which probably would have continued indefinitely had the Board not reached a pivotal realization that would eventually lead it into much calmer seas. Recognizing that the new policy was essentially worthless without parental and community support for its enforcement, the Board decided to invite a broad group of stakeholders to develop guidelines for the policy's implementation. Subsequently, Associate Superintendent Burnis and her staff put together a policy task force known as the "District/Community Safe Schools Project Committee," which began with 90 participants and eventually grew to 115 members. This committee, organized into three subcommittees dealing with student support services, curriculum, and staff development, was charged with reviewing the core policy language adopted by the Board and recommending specific steps needed to make the policy effective in district schools. It was hoped that a consensus recommendation could be reached.

Since many of the stakeholders invited to sit on the committee had been some of the district's most ardent critics, policy discussions were not automatically pleasant. Hostility and accusations peppered the first few meetings, demonstrating the reality that despite the best of intentions, a "hot tub" method of policy negotiations does not work (Harter, 1982, p. 42); the process must involve much more than simply throwing a diverse group of people in a room and expecting them to work it out.

Based on this powerful demonstration of unity, the Board voted to adopt all of the policy recommendations, thereby giving its resounding approval to the committee's consensus decisions.

Fortunately, the process did involve much more and the end result was tremendous. On January 28, 1998, the committee presented to the Board of Education a proposal for new policy language and an implementation framework that the 115 committee members unanimously endorsed. Based on this powerful demonstration of unity, the Board voted to adopt all of the policy recommendations, thereby giving its resounding approval to the committee's consensus decisions.

## The Modesto Miracle: Constitutional Principles in Action and the Power of Alternative Dispute Resolution

That the district was able to assemble such a massive number of diverse stakeholders, broker their differences, and forge consensus, may appear nothing short of miraculous. Yet the incredible outcome was not achieved by magic or coincidence. Had several key decisions not been made by school officials, the district might still be foundering in the chaos of conflict.

## Public Engagement

First, the Board made an important course correction when it decided to experiment with public engagement. Because it is an umbrella term used to describe a host of different processes, public engagement is not easily defined with precision. In general, the term stands for an “inclusive and dialogue-driven process” (Annenberg, 1998, p. 21) in which community stakeholders are meaningfully involved in school policy decisions. The key, of course, is on the understanding of “meaningful involvement” and the degree to which everyone is satisfied with the process. One of the better explanations of public engagement comes from the Annenberg Institute for School Reform (1998), which notes:

Engagement initiatives work to establish common ground and then move toward broad consensus around school-related issues. They aim to broaden and deepen the conversations about these issues that occur in the larger community—whether supermarket aisles, the pages of the newspaper, the local Kiwanis club, or city hall—and increase community capacity to frame options that can work even when the choices are difficult. (p. 21)

The Modesto process clearly reflected this approach. Significantly, the 115-person District/Community Safe Schools Project Committee not only sought, but expected, the active participation of virtually all sectors of the Modesto community, and provided the forum for a multi-way conversation among these sectors. District officials played a crucial role in facilitating the conversation. Associate Superintendent Burnis, who chaired the committee, worked diligently with her staff to invite and welcome committee members who reflected the racial, ethnic, religious, socioeconomic, sexual, and political diversity in Modesto.

## Education About the First Amendment and the 3Rs

Another key to Modesto’s success was the insistence of Superintendent Enochs that committee members receive instruction on First Amendment principles; his stance on this point proved instrumental in moving the committee beyond impasse. After the committee’s first few meetings yielded nothing but contention and frustration, the superintendent realized that a higher level of dialogue was necessary. Therefore, he invited Dr. Charles Haynes of the Freedom Forum’s First Amendment Center to present a day-long seminar to the entire committee on the importance of “rights, responsibility, and respect,” otherwise known as the 3Rs in a democracy (Haynes, Thomas, Leach, & Ferguson, 1998, ch. 1, p. 4).

Following Haynes’ presentation, the committee agreed that its future deliberations would be guided by three “ground rules” stemming from the 3Rs. These rules, which were ultimately incorporated in the consensus policy revisions, as replacements for the previously objectionable terms “tolerance” and “acceptance,” were: 1) “Rights: Religious liberty, or freedom of

conscience, is a precious, fundamental right. A society is only as just and free as it is respectful of this right for its smallest minorities and least popular communities;” 2) “Responsibilities: Central to the notion of the common good, and of greater importance each day because of the increase of pluralism, is the recognition that religious liberty is a universal right joined to a universal duty to respect that right. Rights are best guarded and responsibilities best exercised when each person and group guards for all others those rights they wish guarded for themselves;” 3) “Respect: Conflict and debate are vital to democracy. Yet if controversies about religion and politics are to reflect the highest wisdom of the First Amendment and advance the best interest of the disputants and the nation, then how we debate, and not only what we debate, is critical” (Modesto, 1998, p. 9).

The second rule, addressing responsibility, was especially critical with parents and clergy who had felt prior to Haynes’ training that they were the ones suffering from discrimination. Once these stakeholders realized that their own beliefs and liberties were inextricably tied to their willingness to safeguard the beliefs and liberties of others, including gay and lesbian students, they quickly saw the need for school policy protecting such students from abuse.

## Mediation

Finally, the district made a critical decision when it enlisted the help of Haynes as a neutral. Even though he was initially asked to be involved more as an educator than a mediator per se, Haynes did in fact conduct mediation as classically defined by Ury, Brett, and Goldberg (1988): “Mediation is negotiation assisted by a third party. . . . A mediator may be able to move the negotiations beyond name-calling by encouraging the disputants to vent their emotions and acknowledge the other’s perspective. A mediator can help parties move past a deadlock over positions by getting them to identify their underlying interests and develop creative solutions that satisfy those interests” (p. 420).

Haynes accomplished several tasks often performed by mediators. For example, he helped committee members understand their common interests, which he did by reviewing the origins of religious freedom under the Constitution and the concern that early Americans had with factions. By providing committee members with this history lesson, as well as a set of ground rules for civic dialogue, Haynes enabled them to move away from hard positions and toward negotiation based on interests. (Fisher & Ury, 1983).

In the end, the Modesto City Schools adopted a consensus policy that not only accomplished the original goal of protecting gay and lesbian students from harassment, but that also achieved the unexpected outcome of increased community support for, and confidence in, all of the district’s programs and objectives.

In addition, Haynes was able to recast the issues in a manner that was workable for all stakeholders. Mathews (1996)

points out that “[w]ho names the problems in a community and the names that are chosen—even the language that is used—are critically important” (p. 32). By helping the committee frame the issues in a broad context with acceptable terms, that is, one dealing with each person’s right to live peaceably and enjoy freedom of conscience, Haynes helped committee members get past the divisive rhetoric on homosexuality and develop a policy solution they could all support.

## Conclusion

In the end, the Modesto City Schools adopted a consensus policy that not only accomplished the original goal of protecting gay and lesbian students from harassment, but that also achieved the unexpected outcome of increased community support for, and confidence in, all of the district’s programs and objectives. What remains to be seen is whether other school districts in California and elsewhere will follow Modesto’s lead and seek the “third side” (Ury, 2000) to address the complex moral, educational, and legal issues that surface when homosexual students are the center of discussion.

To ignore stakeholders and refuse to explore some process of public engagement will almost certainly lead school districts into a swirling vortex of litigation and media wars from which they cannot escape unscathed (Doty, 2000, in press). At the same time, the future of public education, as well as the nation, may depend on the willingness of school leaders to jump in and do the tough work needed to forge consensus. There is no reason why school districts throughout America cannot discover, as Modesto did, the following truth articulated by Carter (1997):

The common objection that Americans cannot agree on values is not only false, it is dangerous nonsense. True, we have trouble on such issues as abortion (although even there, . . . , our differences tend to be exaggerated). But on the basics, our agreement is broad. Samuel Rabinove of the American Jewish Committee has argued that the values of our public institutions (including our schools) reinforce should be consensus values—those shared across religious traditions. This is not as hard to accomplish as one might think. Some very basic values—the Golden Rule, for example, and an ethic of loving one’s neighbor—are common to every major American religious group. If we cannot agree on such basic truths as these, we will in years to come be unable to resolve the moral crisis threatening our nation.

As it turns out, more than 90 percent of American adults do agree on an American Core—not only on the rules I mentioned but on such notions as respect for others, persistence, compassion, and fairness. It is not that hard to work out such a Core. And if we can’t do it, we are not a nation—or at least, we cannot expect to be a successful one. (pp. 237-38)

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# Religion in the Public Schools: What Does the Law Say?

by Oliver Thomas and John Ferguson

Oliver Thomas is a lawyer, minister, author and school board member. He has written and lectured extensively on the subject of religion and public education and has consulted with hundreds of school districts. Thomas has been involved in litigation at every level of state and federal courts including the United States Supreme Court. In addition to representing numerous evangelical groups, he coauthored the ACLU handbook on church-state law.

John Ferguson is currently the Religious Freedom Specialist for the Freedom Forum First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University. While at the First Amendment Center, Ferguson has participated as associate editor on the newest revisions of *Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion in Public Schools*, and has an article due out soon in *Liberty Magazine*. He speaks to educators and civic groups around the nation about religious liberty issues in the public schools.

Consider it one of the miracles of American history. Asked to draft a provision on religion, the framers of our Constitution — many of whom were lawyers—gave us just sixteen words: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Yet these sixteen words, together with the “no religious test” clause found in Article VI, have provided Americans with all they need to enjoy the blessings of religious liberty.

These twin bulwarks of liberty are designed to ensure safe harbor for the consciences of all Americans. They ensure that the public square, and the marketplace of ideas found there, is not made sacred (a theocracy) nor is it naked (excluding all religious influences). Instead, these clauses guarantee a civil public square where people of all faiths are welcome, but none is promoted by the state.

The Establishment Clause keeps government out of religion. Sometimes referred to as the separation of church and state, the Establishment Clause requires that the government be neutral among religions and between religion and non-religion. The state is not allowed to advance or inhibit religion. Government is to be the fair, neutral, honest broker for believers and non-believers alike. (Particularly in the public school context, keep in mind that the Establishment Clause prohibits government, not students, from endorsing religion.)

The Free Exercise Clause also protects the consciences of all by ensuring that citizens are free to practice their religion

with a minimum of government interference. This includes the right of students to practice their faith within the public schools. Only if a student's religious behavior is disruptive or infringes upon the rights of others (such as being coercive) should it be prohibited.

## School's Role

In order to uphold the First Amendment, public schools have a special responsibility to protect the conscience of every student and parent. This will include children of various religious faiths, as well as those of no religious faith. Only by maintaining a posture of neutrality can the school be fair to all.

Government neutrality does not mean that schools should ignore religion in the curriculum or censor religious perspectives in the classroom. To the contrary, schools must teach about religion if students are to understand the world in which they live. Similarly, schools should respect the rights of students to think and speak in religious terms. Teachers and administrators have the freedom, and even the obligation, to be fair, honest brokers of the First Amendment by exposing students to the broad marketplace of ideas. Such an environment is required for student's to have the full measure of freedom they are guaranteed under the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses.

Government neutrality does not mean that schools should ignore religion in the curriculum or censor religious perspectives in the classroom.

## Recurring Issues

Beyond the general principles of no establishment and free exercise, widespread agreement now exists on many of the specific church-state questions that arise in public schools.

## School Prayer

Students generally are free to pray alone or in groups, as long as the activity is not disruptive and does not infringe on the rights of others. Of course, these religious activities must be truly voluntary (i.e. the school may not provide the students with a captive audience of their peers). School employees may not lead or participate in such on-campus religious activities during the school day (Engel v. Vitale, 1962).

A recent Supreme Court decision clarified the parameters of prayer at school sponsored events held after hours. The question of prayer before football games has vexed members of many communities for years. In *Santa Fe v. Doe* (2000) the

Court found that such school-sponsored prayers violated the Establishment Clause, even when the prayers are given by a student. Policies that encourage student prayer, such as the one in Santa Fe, are unconstitutional.

A neutral moment of silence, on the other hand, is usually constitutional. School employees can even lead it as long as they do not promote prayer over other types of quiet contemplation. Similarly, a school may create a free speech forum at a

The Supreme Court long has recognized that teaching about religion is an appropriate function of the schools.

school-sponsored event during which students might express themselves religiously or otherwise. However, such a forum cannot be skewed toward religion by the school, and speech critical

of religion or, for that matter, critical of the school would also have to be permitted (Wallace v. Jaffree, 1985).

## Teaching about Religion

The Supreme Court long has recognized that teaching about religion is an appropriate function of the schools. In 1948 Justice Jackson went so far as to state, “One can hardly respect a system of education that would leave the student wholly ignorant of the currents of religious thought that have moved the world society for a part in which he is being prepared” (McCollum v. Board of Education, 1948).

A recent study by the Council on Islamic Education and the First Amendment Center found that all new state and national social studies standards now include religion (Susan Douglass, 2000). This demonstrates education officials are recognizing that the Constitution allows, and sometimes may even require, academic study of religion in the public schools.

Yet, teaching about religion in a public school is different from teaching in a Sunday School or in a private religious academy. When included, such teaching should be academic in nature and a normal part of the school curriculum (Abington v. Shempp, 1963). Study about religion may not be used as an opportunity to proselytize or indoctrinate in a particular faith. Public school teachers generally teach by attribution (e.g., many Hindus believe) and should not assume the historical accuracy or inaccuracy of sacred texts. Good instructional materials as well as proper teacher training can help schools avoid problems associated with the academic treatment of religion.

## Student Clubs and Equal Access

The federal Equal Access Act guarantees the rights of students to form religious and political clubs on public school campuses if the school has created a “limited open forum” where other noncurriculum-related student clubs are allowed to

meet (Equal Access Act, 20 U.S.C. 4071-74). The act is designed to protect the rights of students only and prohibits outside adults from leading, directing or even regularly attending such meetings, although occasional outside speakers are permitted.

In addition, while teachers must be present at religious club meetings, they must do so in what the courts have called “a nonparticipatory capacity” only. This means these clubs must be initiated and led by the students, not by the faculty sponsor. School officials must also remember that they cannot require a teacher to sponsor or attend such a group.

## Religious Holidays

While having made no definitive ruling on religious holidays in the schools, the Supreme Court let stand a lower federal court decision stating that recognition of holidays is constitutional if the purpose is to provide a secular instruction about religious traditions rather than to promote the particular religion involved (*Florey v. Sioux Falls*, 1980). This includes the use of religious music and symbols as long as they are part of the academic program.

Students who for religious reasons ask to be excused from classroom discussions or activities related to particular holidays should be accommodated whenever possible. Similarly, students who need to be absent from school to celebrate their own religious holidays should be granted a reasonable number of excused absences.

## Character Education

Schools can and should promote moral and civic values throughout the school culture. But which values? Those expressed in our Constitution and Bill of Rights (e.g. freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly and petition; equal protec-

A thoughtful teacher, however, will try to permit as much student expression as possible as long as students are respectful of the fact that other students may have other viewpoints and beliefs.

tion/nondiscrimination; due process/fairness), as well as the shared values of local communities (e.g. honesty, kindness, courage, responsibility and respect for others) can and should be reinforced.

Schools may not invoke religious authority when teaching these concepts. However, they can and should recognize and respect the fact that most Americans derive their values from a religious tradition. For that reason, schools should be careful not to undermine those traditions by teaching students that values are merely a matter of personal choice or that there are no moral absolutes. Remember that the primary moral educators of children are their parents, and schools should try to cooperate in that endeavor. More information can be obtained from the Character Education Partnership at: [www.character.org](http://www.character.org).

## Lingering Disagreement

Despite the new consensus that has emerged on most questions of religion and schools, at least one area of disagreement persists. Not surprisingly, it involves drawing a line between the right of the speaker to share his or her religious viewpoint and the right of the audience to be left alone.

A classroom is not a public forum (*Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier*, 1988). The teacher maintains discretion to exercise reasonable judgment over what she or he believes is appropriate in the classroom. Recent court decisions indicate that a teacher may prohibit a student from delivering a sermon to a captive audience of schoolchildren (*Bethel v. Fraser*, 1986). On the other hand, some teachers may be jumping to this remedy too soon, needlessly stifling legitimate student expression simply because it is religious (*C.H. v. Oliva*, 2000). The mere fact that a school can censor religious viewpoints does not mean that a school should.

Most would agree that a student who is asked to give a speech on the topic of his choice should be allowed to recount his experience at a Catholic youth camp where he learned to pray the rosary. On the other hand, we would not allow the student to distribute beads and have the entire class say the rosary together. At some point the teacher must step in to protect the rights of the captive audience of young, impressionable children.

A thoughtful teacher, however, will try to permit as much student expression as possible as long as students are respectful of the fact that other students may have other viewpoints and beliefs. In our hypothetical, the teacher should step forward and say something like this: “Thank you for that inspirational speech, but we will not be able to pray the rosary together. Those of you who would like a set of the beads Johnny brought for you may see him after class.”

Recent court cases addressed similar issues of student speech at school sponsored events such as football games and graduation ceremonies (*Santa Fe v. Doe*, 2000; *Cole v. Oroville*, 9th cir., 2000). While these rulings clarified the boundaries of what is and is not allowed, the narrow middle ground has become increasingly divisive. As mentioned earlier, the Supreme Court found in *Santa Fe v. Doe* that a school cannot, through policy or other means, encourage children to pray at school sponsored events. In effect, the school cannot use students as a proxy to do that which they cannot. In response, many schools have amended their policies to reflect this decision. Some schools have opted to create a more open public forum for students. This method requires the school to allow students to express themselves any way they wish, with no prior review or instruction by the school. The 11th circuit is currently reviewing just such a policy (*Adler v. Duval County*, 2000). Yet, beyond the legal consequences of this approach, many school officials are uncomfortable with the idea of giving students a genuinely open mike, where they might say a prayer or give a religious message, or they could criticize religion, the administration, or their teachers. Other schools have chosen to have a moment of silence before school events, instead of opening with a prayer, thus providing a moment of solemnization where each person can pray or reflect according to the dictates of their own conscience.

A far better approach, particularly to the annual graduation prayer dilemma, would seem to be a privately sponsored, voluntarily attended baccalaureate service held after school hours, perhaps at a local church. The school can announce the event and even allow it to be held on campus if other community groups are given similar privileges. In fact, a school is prohibited from discriminating against religious groups in the after-hours use of its facilities. If a school board continues to insist on some accommodation of religion at the graduation ceremony, a genuinely neutral moment of silence might be considered.

## **A New Accommodation**

By being the fair, neutral, honest brokers in matters of religion, schools fulfill one of the highest ideals of a democratic society. And by accommodating the religious beliefs and practices of students as best we can, schools build trust with parents and communities.

The good news is that school districts from rural North Carolina to Los Angeles are demonstrating that this new common ground approach to church-state issues works. Religious conservatives as well as civil libertarians are voicing their support for an educational model based on inclusion, fairness and mutual respect. The U.S. Department of Education has similarly recognized the value of proactively addressing questions of religion in public education. In 1995 President Clinton instructed the Department of Education and the Attorney General to draft guidelines for religious expression in public schools. This document was updated in 1998 to address recent court decisions. The response to these guidelines eventually led to the mailing of a packet of information and guidelines on religious liberty to every public school principal in the United States. (As ever increasing numbers of schools around the country are realizing, there is an emerging consensus that religion and its role in public education is not the legal morass that it is so often thought to be. The new consensus guidelines on religion in public schools provide a legal safe harbor for school officials.

By being the fair, neutral, honest brokers in matters of religion, schools fulfill one of the highest ideals of a democratic society. And by accommodating the religious beliefs and practices of students as best we can, schools build trust with parents and communities.

Administrators can reap substantial gains for their school districts by taking advantage of this emerging consensus. Board policies should be drafted drawing upon a range of community leaders for input and support. In-service training should ensure that First Amendment principles are understood clearly. Finally, quality resources should be made available to all.

With communities working together, America can move from the battleground to the common ground.

## Resources

Haynes, Charles C. and Thomas, Oliver (2001). *Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religious Freedom and Public Education*. Nashville, TN: First Amendment Center.

The Freedom Forum Web site at: [www.freedomforum.org](http://www.freedomforum.org)

## Court Cases

- Abington v. Shempp, 374 U.S. 203 (1963)
- Adler v. Duval County, 206 F.3d 1070 (11th cir., 2000)
- Bethel v. Fraser, 478 U.S. 675 (1986)
- C.H. v. Oliva, 226 F.3d 198 (2000)
- Cole v. Oroville, 228 F.3d 1092 (9th cir., 2000)
- Engel v. Vitale, 370 U.S. 421 (1962)
- Equal Access Act, 20 U.S.C. 4071-74
- Florey v. Sioux Falls, 619 F.2d 1311 (8th cir., 1980)
- Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier, 484 U.S. 260 (1988)
- McCollum v. Board of Education, 333 U.S. 203 (1948)
- Santa Fe v. Doe 530 U.S. 290 (2000)
- Wallace v. Jaffree, 472 U.S. 38 (1985)

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## General Note

This material is intended for general informational purposes and should not be viewed as legal advice or as a substitute for appropriate legal counsel. Portions of this article were previously published in *The School Administrator*, January, 1999.

This packet included: *A Parent's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools*, *A Teacher's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools*, *Public Schools and Religious Communities*, *Religious Expression in Public Schools*, and *How Faith Communities Support Children's Learning in Public Schools*. To order one of these packets, contact Director, Office of Non-Public Education, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20202.







# Perspectives of American History Through Portraiture: Evolution of Religious Freedom in Colonial America

by Rhoda Coleman

Rhoda Coleman taught for 29 years in the Lennox School District. For the last three years she has been a K-12 reading consultant at the Los Angeles County Office of Education. She taught reading and writing in the social studies and was an assistant director of Beginning Teacher Institute and English Language Learner Institute for the History-Social Science Project at Cal. State Univ., Dominguez Hills. Coleman is also on the steering committee for the California 3Rs Project and was a member of the California Reading Literature Project Policy Board. She has received outstanding teaching awards, including the Milken National Educator Award in 1996.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TOPIC

Many teachers hesitate to discuss religion in their classrooms because they are not sure if it is allowed, or if it is, how to teach it. The position statement from the National Council for the Social Studies states that the study of religion has a rightful place in the public school curriculum because of the pervasive nature of religious beliefs, practices, institutions and sensitivities. In its 1963 decision in the case of *Abington vs. Schempp*, the United States Supreme Court declared that study about religions in the nation’s public schools is both legal and desirable. The key distinction is the difference between teaching religion, which is unconstitutional, and teaching about religion, which is an important part of a complete education. Our history, in fact, cannot be separated from study about religion.

Since the birth of our nation, America’s challenge has always been to live with our deepest differences. The promise and protection of freedom have attracted immigrants of all faiths from

Portraits are a form of record that a person lived and that s(he) affected the lives of others.

many countries and has fostered a wide diversity of religions. Religious liberty, or freedom of conscience, is a precious, fundamental and inalienable right and America’s “First Liberty.” It existed prior to and quite apart from the Bill of Rights protecting it. From the beginning, religious liberty has been the driving force for individuals and groups in this nation. Expanding pluralism was and continues to be the American story. Unless Americans respect and protect this right for all people, they compromise the nation’s promise of individual freedom and justice. “Our society is only as just and as free as it is respectful of this

right for its smallest minorities and least popular communities.” (Charles Haynes, Finding Common Ground )

## Rationale

Today, the camera—through photographs, film, and videotape—is able to record what people today look like and do. Families document the birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, and events of their lives, so that this information can be retained, relived, and passed on, often in the form of albums and videotapes. Before the invention of photography in the late 19th century, wealthy or powerful people commissioned artists to draw, paint, or sculpt a portrait for them. In this way, generations later would know what the person looked like and how important he was in his community. People depended upon the artist’s skill in rendering an accurate likeness of the subject.

The story of the Puritans in the 17th century is important in light of their enduring influence on American literature, education, and in attitudes toward life and work.

Portraits are a form of record that a person lived and that s(he) affected the lives of others. They are important on various levels: personally, culturally, historically, and as a form of art expression. Portraits reflect the time, place and ideology of a people. They were symbols of power, privilege, and prestige. Portraits are a record of a person’s appearance, a record of one’s place in society or a record of one’s role in a particular event. Students can learn about the various purposes of portraiture in American life, including documentation, commemoration, glorification, and as a means of self-expression.

## Framework for Visual and Performing Arts

Experiences in this unit will implement the State Framework for Visual and Performing Arts. When students look at and respond critically to works of art, they will develop their skills of artistic perception and aesthetic valuing (Components 1 and 4). They will also learn about the intent of the artist and the social/cultural/historical context of the artwork (Component 3). As students engage in creating original art, they will be developing their creative expression (Component 2).

## LESSON PLAN

### Background information

The story of the Puritans in the 17th century is important in light of their enduring influence on American literature, education, and in attitudes toward life and work. Inspired by their religious zeal, Puritans sought to establish a new Zion, a city

upon a hill, where they might live out their religious ideals. Led by John Winthrop, they founded the city of Boston and within ten years had opened Harvard College and the first common school in Massachusetts. They valued hard work, social obligation, simple living and self governing congregations. Their religious views shaped their way of life, their clothing, their laws, their forms of punishment, their educational practices and their institutions of self-government. While they came in pursuit of freedom of religion, however, the Puritans were intolerant of dissent. People were banished, imprisoned and executed. Anne Hutchinson was banished for her beliefs. Mary Dyer was executed by the Puritans for her Quaker beliefs. Many others were executed during the Salem Witch Trials. The first dissenter was a Puritan named Roger Williams (c1603-1683). He argued that God did not give divine sanction to the Puritan colony and that every individual's conscience must remain free without interference from the state.

Focus Question: What role did the Puritans play in the evolution of Religious Freedom in America?

## Procedure

**Motivation** (see photo at the end of this article)

- What is the subject of this sculpture? (The Puritan was created as a statue in honor of Deacon Samuel Chapin, 1595-1675, one of the founders of Springfield, Massachusetts.)
- Discuss the Puritan's clothing, facial expression, and posture. (He is wearing a broad-brimmed hat, large-collared cape, long jacket and knickers with many buttons, long stockings, and shoes in the fashion of the day. His stern features and lowered eyes show him in deep thought. He strides forward with confident determination.)
- How does the overall shape, or form, of the sculpture contribute to the man's stability or determination? (The composition of the sculpture is a strong, stable triangular form anchored to a rocklike platform.)
- What might be symbolic of the objects he is holding? (The Bible he carries in his left hand symbolizes authority and morality; the walking stick may be for support and may also symbolize authority.)
- What is the mood or feeling of this work? (strength, determination, confidence, nobility, security/protection, mystery or intimidation)
- How does the play of light and shadow help to convey this mood? (The shadows cast by the broad-brimmed hat highlights the man's facial features while the cape opens to

reveal his figure and clothing. Both the hat and the enveloping cape give the figure an air of mystery or protection. The shadows cast by the broad brimmed hat and the enveloping cape give the figure an air of mystery, perhaps even of intimidation.)

- Why do you think this sculpture was created? (In 1883 the artist Saint-Gaudens was commissioned to create a life-sized portrait of Deacon Samuel Chapin as a memorial to him as one of Springfield's founders, to be placed in the city's Stearns Park. Since the commission was 200 years after the Deacon's death, Saint-Gaudens based the face upon that of one of the Deacon's descendants, and he used the family's research on 17th century costume.)
- What materials and methods did the artist use to create this work? (The sculpture is cast in bronze. The prototype was probably modeled in clay; a plaster model was made into which molten bronze was poured.)
- Why are sculptures called three-dimensional art? (Sculptures have length, width, and depth. You can walk around and see all sides of a sculpture.)
- Do you think this sculpture is true to life? (Tell why. Have students write at least one or two paragraphs.)

## Development

1. Begin Illustrated Timeline Activity: Include King Henry the VIII breaking away from the Catholic Church and starting the Church of England (Anglican Church), Pilgrims arrival in 1620, Puritans arrival and John Winthrop's "city on a Hill," Roger Williams banishment, Anne Hutchinson's Banishment
2. Map Activity: Have students trace path of Puritans to Massachusetts. Identify Rhode Island.
3. Read each primary source, stopping to discuss key underlined phrases -or-Each expert group gets a simplified version of a primary source to study and role play for the class.
  - John Winthrop's "City on a Hill" (Appendix A)
  - Roger Williams "Tenets" (Appendix B)
  - "Puritan mother" (Appendix C)
  - Trial of Ann Hutchinson by John Winthrop (App. D)
4. All student's record the views of each person on a Voices Graphic Organizer.

5. Ask the students the following, “Based on what we have learned, do you think the artist was successful in communicating the personality of the Puritan?” (Saint-Gaudens demonstrated his greatness as an artist in taking a risk. Instead of the conventional portrayal of a Puritan as quiet and meditative, he endowed this sculpture with the vigor, confidence, and stern energy of a strong religious leader. Therefore, the sculpture became more than a portrait of one man, but was the embodiment of the ideal.)
6. Again, do you think this sculpture is true to life? After examining the primary sources, do you agree with his interpretation of the Puritan? Tell why or why not.

## Application

Writing Projects: Using the information on the Voices graphic organizer about John Winthrop, Roger Williams, Anne Hutchinson and Mary Dyer:

- Create a Readers Theater from primary sources.
- Create a dialogue between two of the subjects.
- Create a “Found Poem”
- Create an “I Am Poem”

Art Project:

Materials: Paper for drawing and writing, pencil

Discuss what Saint-Gaudens must have had to do in preparing his proposal for *The Puritan*, such as reading about the Puritans in general and the Deacon in particular. He had to study images of Puritans—how they looked and what they wore. Have them consider any other methods for the preparation of this piece. Finally, he modeled the facial features based on a descendant of the Deacon.

Commission students to draw a plan for a sculpture of a historical person or group. They are to capture his or her spirit in sculpture.

Commission students to draw a plan for a sculpture of a historical person or group. They are to capture his or her spirit in sculpture.

Why have they chosen this person? What kind of research will they need to do? What symbols will be included in the portrait? What characteristics and mood will they impart to this person? How will they convey those characteristics and mood in the sculpture? What kind of base will the statue stand or sit on? What will be on the commemorative plaque? What would be the proposed location for the statue? Students are to write a paper

responding to these questions and submit an 8 1/2" x 11" pencil drawing of their proposed statue.

Assessment of drawing

- What criteria did students use for their selection of the historical person or group?
- Did students include symbols in their drawing?
- To what extent did the drawing communicate the subject's characteristics and mood?

## General Resources for Teachers

Haynes, Charles C., *Finding Common Ground*, The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, 1994. A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Education. This handbook addresses issues pertaining to religion involving diversity, natural inclusion in the history curriculum, the law, holidays, religious practices of students, and resources for teaching about religion in U.S. and world History.

Haynes, Charles C., *Religion in American History, What to Teach and How*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria, Va.. 1990. Primary Source Documents dating from 1790 to modern times, transcripts of these documents, historical background and suggestions for using the documents to teach about the evolution of religious freedom in America.

Haynes, Charles, C., Michael Cassity, Os Guinness, John Seel, Timothy Smith, and Oliver S. Thomas, *Living with our Deepest Differences, Religious Liberty in a Pluralistic Society*, First Liberty Institute, Learning Connections Publishers, Inc., Boston, 1990. A teacher's manual with five inquiry based, or constructivist, lessons that address "Big Ideas" in the evolution of religious freedom in America. Abundant primary sources and integrated language arts activities accompany these lesson plans.

Miller, William Lee, *The First Liberty, Religion and the American Republic*, Paragon House Publishers, New York, 1988. Excellent background information on the evolution of religious freedom in America.

Pearson, Jim, *A Society Knit as One, The Puritans, the Algonkians, and Roger Williams*. National Center for History in the Schools, University of California, Los Angeles, 1992. Ready to teach unit of study using original and paraphrased primary sources.

*The Puritan Experience*, The Learning Corporation of America. Each 30-minute cassette about the quest for religious freedom is beautifully photographed with authentic settings, costumes and professional acting. This video tells of the Puritan's imprisonment in England for daring to criticize the Anglican Church. The

episode, “Making a New World,” tells about the conflict between conscience and authority, the plight when Puritan settlers disagree with strict church doctrine.

Tames, Richard, *The Mayflower and the Pilgrim Fathers*, Jackdaws Prints, No. 8, Golden Owl Publishing Co., Inc., Amawalk, New York, 1991. A collection of primary source documents suitable for display.

Wheeler, William and Susan D. Becker, *Discovering the American Past, A Look at the Evidence*. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1986. This book contains transcripts of the trial of Ann Hutchinson, as she is interrogated by John Winthrop, with accompanying suggestions for classroom use.

### **Resources for Students**

Bowen, Gary, *Stranded at Plimoth Plantation, 1626*, Harper Collins Publishers, New York, 1994. A fictional yet well researched story of a 13-year old orphan boy stranded at Plimoth. Told in diary form, the tale vividly describes many aspects of Pilgrim life.

Bradford, William, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647*, Edited by Samuel E. Morison, Knopf, 1952. This primary source consists of Governor William Bradford’s own documentation of his colony’s history and is a useful teacher’s resource.

Harness, Cheryl, *Three Young Pilgrims*, Bradbury Press, New York, 1992. Beautifully illustrated story of the Plymouth experience through the eyes of three children. Most useful are the explanations of the “Saints” and the “Strangers” at the end of the book.

Krensky, Stephen, *Witch Hunt: It Happened in Salem Village*, Random House, 1989. The drama and terror of the Salem Witch Trials come through in this easily read narrative. This book is recommended for independent reading by students.

Speare, Elizabeth, *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, Houghton Mifflin, 1958. A young colonial girl moves in with her Connecticut relatives and comes into conflict with their Puritan beliefs and their extreme prejudice toward an old Quaker woman. Intermediate level.

Waters, Kate, Sarah Morton’s Day, *A Day in the Life of a Puritan Girl*, Scholastic, 1989. Photographed at Plymouth, Massachusetts, this book is based on the lives of real people in seventeenth-century New England. Primary Sources display the importance of religion to a Pilgrim’s everyday life.

## Resources in the Arts

Fitzpatrick, Shannon, *American Artists Reflect American History, Colonial America, Vol. II*, Creative Teaching Press, Cypress, Ca., 1994. Five prints of the work of famous artists can facilitate discussion of the colonial experience. Included are classroom activities for teaching history through art.



*The Puritan* (1899), by Augustus Saint-Gaudens  
Courtesy: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Art  
Museum Council Fund



**Appendix A**  
**A Model of Christian Charity**  
**by John Winthrop**

The Puritan leader John Winthrop and his followers left England in four ships on March 22, 1630. They set sail for Massachusetts but did not arrive until June 12. Before leaving his flagship, the *Arabella*, Winthrop wrote a statement of what he believed the colony should be about. The following is part of this statement of belief called "A Model of Christian Charity."

Winthrop's Words

We must love one another with a pure heart fervently, we must bear one another's burdens, we must not look only on our own things but also on the things of our brethren...

Thus stands the cause between God and us: we are entered into covenant with Him for this work; we have taken out a commission, the Lord hath given us leave to draw our own articles. Now if the Lord shall please to hear us and bring us in peace to the place we desire, then hath He ratified this performance of the articles contained in it. But if we shall neglect the observation of these articles...the Lord will surely break out in wrath against us...

Now the only way to avoid this shipwreck and to provide for our posterity is...to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with our God. For this end, we must be knit together in this work as one man. We must entertain each other in brotherly affection....

Paraphrased Version

We must truly love each other without pretending to care about one another. We must help each other and should not just look out for ourselves.

This is how our relationship with God works: We have joined with Him in an agreement, but He is letting us decide the rules for that agreement. We have promised that each of us will obey these rules. Because of this we are hoping that God will help us. God has approved the terms of our agreement with Him and has brought us safely to the New World. But, if we do not obey these rules, God will be angry and punish us.

Now the only way to avoid making God angry and to protect our children and grandchildren is to be just, to love mercy, and to be true believers in God. To behave this way, we must work together as one. We must behave with each other like loving brothers and sisters.

Source: California Department of Education, "United States History and Geography: Making a New Nation," Course Model Lessons for Grade Five, (forthcoming). Paraphrased version of statement by Jim Pearson from "A Society Knit as One: The Puritans, Alogonkians, and Roger Williams," National Center for History in the Schools.

## Appendix B

### Roger Williams Bloudv Tenets of Persecution, 1644 (Bloody Rule of Persecution)

Roger Williams listed twelve points the twelve points are listed below.

First, that the blood of so many hundred thousand souls of Protestants and papists, spilt in the wars of present and former ages, for their respective consciences, is not required nor accepted by Jesus Christ the Prince of peace....

Eightly, God requireth not a uniformity of religion to be enacted and enforced in any civil state; which enforced uniformity (sooner or later) is the greatest occasion of civil war, ravishing of conscience. persecution..., and of the hypocrisy and destruction of millions of souls....

Eleventhly, the permission of other consciences and worships than a state professeth, only can...procure a first and lasting peace...

Twelfthly, lastly, true civility and Christianity may both flourish in a state or kingdom notwithstanding the permission of divers and contrary consciences....

#### Paraphrased Version

1. So many hundred of thousands of Christians, both Protestants and Catholics, have been killed by one another because of their religious beliefs. Jesus Christ, the prince of peace, would condemn this persecution.
8. God does not require that governments enforce belief in one religion. Laws that require people to believe in one religion sooner or later will cause civil war and persecution. These laws are insincere and will destroy millions of lives.
11. Freedom to practice one's religion will provide for lasting peace.
12. True Christianity can prosper in a country without denying different religious beliefs.

Source: California Department of Education, "United States History and Geography: Making a New Nation," Course Model Lessons for Grade Five, (forthcoming).

## Appendix C

### Mary Dyer: A Quaker in a Puritan Colony

The three prisoners marched under guard through the streets of colonial Boston. They tried to call out to clusters of people along the way. But Puritan officials had the three surrounded by drummers who drowned their words. When they stepped onto the Boston Common, the October afternoon sun was slanting down on the great elm tree: the hanging elm. The prisoners walked hand-in-hand now. William Robinson and Marmaduke Stevenson on the outside, Mary Dyer in the middle. As they approached the scaffold, the huge crowd rustled with tension. Many were uncomfortable that the three had been condemned simply because they were Quakers.

These Quakers had challenged the wrath of the Puritan clergy. And here, in Massachusetts Bay Colony during 1659, the Puritans were a powerful force.... The colony's official church was the Congregationalist or Puritan. Its congregations formed the fundamental social units in the villages; its chosen ministers were the foremost leaders. Only "visible saints" who had led blameless lives could become church members. Only church members could vote in town elections. The Bible served as a strict guide for life's clergy. Their interpretations became civic law—not because the ministers held public office, but because of their great influence over governmental officials. The clergy felt that their theocracy, a union of church and state, was vital to the colony's survival.

Other churches were not welcomed, especially Quakers. These crusading nonconformists would not pay tithes, take oaths, or bear arms. Preaching the equality of all men and women, they refused to take off their hats in the presence of "superiors." Even more alarming to the Puritan clergy was the Quaker belief that God communicated directly with every person. This doctrine of "inward light" posed a threat to the dominant power of the Puritan ministry: it implied that ministers were unnecessary.

To rid the Holy Commonwealth of this threat, Puritan elders waged a relentless campaign. Quakers were imprisoned, whipped, branded, and starved. Some had their ears cut off. When these measures failed, the elders urged one still harsher. Their proposed bill before the General Court, or legislature, would banish—under pain of death—any known Quaker.

At first, members of the court resisted the bill. Many felt it too radical. But according to one colonial source, the priests and the rulers were all for blood, and they pursued it in October of 1658, the measure finally passed, 13 to 12.

A year later, William Robinson and Marmaduke Stevenson and Mary Dyer became the first Quakers to be condemned under the controversial statute. All three Quaker missionaries previously had been banished from Massachusetts Bay; then they had returned precisely to "look the bloody Puritan law in the face."

Robinson was the first to die. Next came Stevenson. Then Mary Dyer climbed the scaffold. The hangman placed the blindfold over her eyes, the rope around her neck. "Stop!" shouted a voice in the crowd. "She is reprieved!" Officers rushed forward and took her down.

The General Court had planned this tactic when they sentenced Mary Dyer to die. They hoped to regain the favor of the crowd as well as to frighten her from challenging the anti-Quaker law again. Once more, Mary Dyer was banished from Massachusetts Bay. A half-year later, she returned. This time she marched to the gallows, once more to the rumble of drums, and straight-away hanged.

Source: California Department of Education, "United States History and Geography: Making a New Nation," Course Model Lessons for Grade Five, (forthcoming).

## **Appendix D**

### **The Trial of Anne Hutchinson**

#### **Boston, 1637**

Anne Hutchinson was tried for improper religious teaching and causing problems in the colony. Anne Hutchinson was found guilty and was sentenced by the court to be expelled from the colony. Governor Winthrop made the following remarks at the opening of the hearing.

Mr. Winthrop, Governor: Mrs. Hutchinson, you are called here as one of those that have troubled the peace of the commonwealth and the churches here; you are known to be a woman that hath had a great share in the promoting and divulging of those opinions that are causes of this trouble, and to be nearly joined not only in affinity and affection with some of those the court had taken notice of and passed censure upon, but you have spoken divers things as we have been informed very prejudicial to the honour of the churches and ministers thereof, and you have maintained a meeting and an assembly in your house that hath been condemned by the general assembly as a thing not tolerable no comely in the sight of God nor fitting for your sex, and not withstanding that was cried down you have continued the same. Therefore we have thought good to send for you to understand how things are, that if you be in an erroneous way we may reduce you that so you may become a profitable member here among us. Otherwise if you be obstinate in your course that then the court may take such course that you may trouble us no further....

#### Paraphrased Version

Mr. Winthrop, Governor: Mrs. Hutchinson, you are called here as one of those who have caused trouble in the colony and in our churches. You are known to be a great troublemaker and to be friendly to those the court has already uied and sentenced for the crime of false religious teaching. We have been told that you have spoken damaging things about the churches and have caused people not to listen to the teachings of their ministers. You have had meetings in your house that have been condemned by the general assembly as not pleasing in the sight of God and certainly nor fitting for a woman. Even though we have told you to stop, you have continued to preach these untruths. Therefore, we have brought you here so that you will understand how things are, if you say that you were wrong, you may again become a useful member of our colony. If you are stubborn and will not change your ways, then the court may take steps to make sure that you do not trouble us any more....

Source: California Department of Education, "United States History and Geography: Making a New Nation," Course Model Lessons for Grade Five, (forthcoming). Excerpted from William Bruce Wheeler and Susan D. Becker, *Discovering the American Past: A Look at the Evidence*. Volume 1: to 1877, (Boston: Houghton Muffin. 1986), p. 5-7.



## Teaching About Religion in the World History Classroom

by Jennifer Norton

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*“[I]t might well be said that one’s education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization.”*

—Supreme Court Justice Tom Clark, *Abington School District v Schempp* (1963)

The 1960s Supreme Court “school prayer” decisions, including the above quoted *Schempp* decision, profoundly affected American education. Among the most controversial and widely misunderstood decisions in the history of the Supreme Court, the decisions were meant to clarify and enforce the First Amendment religious liberty clauses prohibiting the establishment of religion by the government or its agents, in this case public schools, by proscribing school or teacher led prayer or devotional scripture readings in the public schools.

As Justice Clark’s quote clearly demonstrates, the Supreme Court did not intend the decisions to proscribe teaching about religion, but unfortunately, this was the outcome in most public school curricula for the next twenty-five years. While the Supreme Court justices attempted to identify those areas where teaching about religion was constitutionally permissible and appropriate, deep uncertainty about the entire issue led most teachers, administrators and textbook publishers to err on the side of caution and abandon religious content almost completely.

In the past two decades, however, increasing attention has been paid to the role of religion in public education. The “religion-free zone” model of public education, considered neutral and “safe” by some, is increasingly viewed as hostile to religious perspectives by many parents and community members. The reopening of the discussion on the appropriate role of religion in public education has resulted in an emerging consensus among educators, faith communities and political leaders and is summed up in the following quote:

Public schools may not inculcate nor inhibit religion. They must be places where religion and religious conviction are treated with fairness and respect. Public schools uphold the First Amendment when they protect the religious liberty rights of students of all faiths or none. Schools demonstrate fairness when they ensure that the curriculum includes study about religion, where appropriate, as an important part of a complete education.

—“Religious Liberty, Public Education and the Future of American Democracy: A Statement of Principles” — Principle IV

The above quote can be found on page one of *A Teacher’s Guide to Religion in the Public Schools* published by the First Amendment Center and included with other religious liberty guidelines in a U.S. Department of Education mailing to all public schools in December 1999. For a complete set of the guidelines go to: [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov)

It is clear that teaching about religion in the world history classroom is both constitutionally acceptable and educationally sound. Even a brief look at most recently published world history textbooks indicates how seriously textbook publishers now take their responsibility to address religion in the history classroom. Religious scholars are extensively consulted as contributors and content reviewers. Many states have developed standards that explicitly address the academic study of religion in social studies classes across all grade levels.

A familiarity with world religious beliefs and traditions enhances a student’s understanding of literature, art, architecture, culture and history. In addition, educators today acknowledge that an understanding of the histories and belief systems of a diversity of religious traditions is vital and necessary if students are to be able to grasp the complexity of contemporary issues such as the conflicts in the Middle East, the unrest in Afghanistan, the troubles in Northern Ireland, and the continuing struggles in the Balkans. Studying about the role of religion in history helps students value religious liberty, and helps to promote the cross-cultural understanding that is essential for living in a democracy and promoting world peace and stability.

The world history teacher, then, is faced with four challenging mandates:

- Pedagogy: Understanding what is constitutionally permissible and developing strategies for dealing with religious content in the curriculum in ways that are educationally sound, fair, neutral, objective and sensitive.
- Content: Obtaining accurate knowledge of the various faith traditions covered by the curriculum to ensure a fair and sensitive treatment in classroom lessons.

- Classroom Climate: Creating a classroom climate that is conducive to a respectful discussion of other people’s faith beliefs.
- Communication: Avoiding controversy and mistrust by communicating with administrators and parents about course content and classroom parameters when dealing with religion in the curriculum.

## **PEDAGOGY AND CONTENT**

### **Fairness, Neutrality and Objectivity**

- The school’s approach to religion is academic, not devotional.
- The school strives for student awareness of religions, but does not press for student acceptance of any religion.
- The school sponsors study about religion, not the practice of religion.
- The school may expose students to a diversity of religious views, but may not impose any particular view.
- The school educates about all religions; it does not promote or denigrate religion.
- The school informs students about various beliefs; it does not seek to conform students to any particular belief.

—*A Teacher’s Guide to Religion in the Public School*

This is the essence of teaching *about* religion as opposed to the teaching of religion. Teachers must be especially mindful not to appear to be taking a position of advocacy in regards to religion. An excellent way to ensure this is to always teach by attribution when discussing religion, such as, “According to the Quran” or “Many Buddhists believe” or “Early Christians taught that Jesus was the son of God”

### **Content Knowledge and Factual Accuracy**

The content knowledge required of a high school world history teacher is vast. The emphasis in most undergraduate social studies curricula is political, economic, military and social history; the likelihood that a credentialed high school teacher possesses broad and detailed knowledge of world religions is slight. Yet the high school world history teacher may be expected to cover the history and belief systems of Judaism, Christianity (pre and post Reformation), Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism! Here are some suggestions for handling that task:

- Try to increase your knowledge by taking courses at local colleges, attending conferences and workshops, reading supplemental materials, especially primary sources, and using on-line resources.
- Recognize and admit your limited knowledge in certain areas. Disclaimers are important, especially when you have students of that faith community in your classroom.
- Use primary source materials whenever possible. Familiarize yourself with the sacred texts of the major religions, and select passages for students to read and discuss. There are some excellent web sites for primary source material that are ideally suited to the high school world history teacher. Probably the best and most complete are the various History Sourcebooks put together by Paul Halsall at Fordham University. All the sourcebooks can be accessed from: [www.fordham.edu/halsall](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall)
- Know the socio-cultural background of the student population served by your school district. It may prove important to obtain more accurate and in-depth knowledge of certain religious traditions if those faiths are represented in your classroom and covered in your curriculum.
- Avoid “comparing” religions in ways that lead students to classify them as being superior or inferior to one another. Pointing out similarities and differences in doctrine and practice must be done carefully.

### **Accuracy and Empathy—Terminology**

When discussing a sensitive topic such as religion in a world history classroom, words DO count! One of the best ways to help students develop the kind of empathy which allows them to understand differing points of view is to model accuracy and empathy when discussing others’ faith beliefs. Here are some examples:

—B.C./A.D. vs. B.C.E./C.E.—Whatever the designations used in the classroom text, it is useful to introduce world history students to the discussion of various ways of referring to the passage of time. Most students don’t know that A.D. means Anno Domini, A Latin phrase meaning “In the Year of our Lord”. For the many people in the world who do not consider Jesus as “Our Lord”, this way of referencing time is a problematical construct. The more neutral, and to many less offensive, way of labeling time is C.E. or Common Era and B.C.E., Before Common Era. Of course this discussion also allows the world history teacher to discuss the calendars of the Muslims, Hindus, Chinese and Jews, all referenced to events significant to their history, culture, and religion. There are many excellent sources that will help you identify these events.



—Old Testament/ New Testament—What is commonly referred to, as the Old Testament is, of course, the Hebrew Scriptures, and for Jews there is no New Testament. Many Jews prefer these books of the Bible to be called the Hebrew Scriptures, feeling that the labels “old” and “new” are unnecessarily value laden. An interesting exercise to help students grasp the Jewish perspective on this issue is to brainstorm a list of the various ways to refer to two consecutive things—First/Second, Primary/Secondary, Alpha/Beta, Number One /Number Two, etc. This helps students to see that there are definite connotations depending on the pair of words chosen. Do the titles “First Testament” and “Second Testament” have different connotations than “Old Testament” and “New Testament.”

The following examples contain inaccuracies and misstatements:

Jews living in Israel in the time of Christ believed that the Old Testament contained the law of God.

Mohammedans accept the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, and they also have their own scripture, the Quran, written by the prophet Mohammed. Jews, Christians and Muslims have the same God and are all required to live a life pleasing to God. All of these faiths are really paths to the same truth. The important thing is not which group you belong to, but the kind of life you lead.

—Jesus and Mohammed—The example above, “Jews living in Israel in the time of Christ,” refers to the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth in a devotional way as “Christ.”

Teachers should be very careful not to refer to religious figures with their sacred titles.

Instead, use attribution: “Christians believed that Jesus was the Christ or Messiah...” It is

easy to forget the above concern in class, when you are preoccupied with the content of the lesson, but making a conscious effort to use attribution will go a long way to prevent misunderstandings.

Dealing with religious content in the world history classroom requires special sensitivity on the part of the teacher.

Additionally, world history teachers must be careful when discussing Islam to use the correct terminology. Students should be corrected if they refer to adherents as “Muslims” or “Mohammedans.” Mohammed is considered by Muslims as the last in the line of great prophets, the “seal of the prophets,” but is not deified or worshiped, so the term “Mohammedans” is inaccurate and offensive to them. Similarly, Mohammed did not write the Quran, and, while acknowledging many of the

prophets in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, it would be inaccurate to say that Muslims “accept the Old and New Testaments.” An excellent source for accurate and accessible information about Islam can be found at the Council on Islamic Education’s web site: [www.cie.org](http://www.cie.org).

Finally, be very careful when discussing the similarities or differences in faith beliefs. There is always a danger that it may sound relativistic to students. To the faithful of every religious tradition, it matters very much which group you belong to and many believers would argue vehemently that all faiths are NOT really paths to the same truth!

—Oversimplification—“The people of India are Hindus. They are polytheist because they believe in many different gods.”

Try to avoid oversimplifying any country’s religious history or any religion’s doctrine. India, for example, is an incredibly diverse nation with a majority of Hindus, but significant minorities of other faiths such as Islam, Sikhism, Parsee, Jainism, Judaism, Buddhism, Anglicanism, and many others. Hinduism itself is an extremely complex religious belief system that is very difficult to “classify”. That is why it is inaccurate to characterize it as a polytheistic religion, since the concept of Brahman contradicts this oversimplification.

## **Sensitivity and Empathy**

Dealing with religious content in the world history classroom requires special sensitivity on the part of the teacher. Teachers should seek to understand the points of view of different religions from within their own historical context. Empathy helps the teacher understand why a certain view is held and why it is valuable to the adherent of the religion. Seek to help students gain this same type of empathy when they are studying unfamiliar faiths.

Many activities that you might employ to engage student interest and participation in other curricular areas may not be appropriate when dealing with the faith beliefs of others. Following are several case studies illustrating issues in world history classrooms:

- As an active learning project in a tenth grade world studies class, students learn about Judaism, Passover, and the Seder. Parents of Jewish students offer to help the class reenact a Seder, teaching the prayers, songs and meaning of each part of the meal and how these prayers related to events of the Hebrew exodus from captivity in ancient Egypt.
- A high school world history teacher wants his class to understand the importance of

prayer to Muslims the world over. He asks students to bring in small rugs, calculates the direction of Mecca, and with a recorded Arabic accompaniment, asks his students to simulate the ritual of daily prayer.

It is never appropriate to role-play the sacred events of any faith tradition. Role playing a Jewish Seder meal, Buddhist meditation, kneeling on a prayer rug and facing Mecca, or similar activities risks offending both the consciences of the student participants and adherents of the faith. Even if a parent or student offers to demonstrate or lead such an activity, it should be avoided. Just as most teachers would recognize the inappropriateness of reenacting a Catholic Mass or Holy Communion in their classrooms, so the reenactment of other faiths' sacred events is inappropriate.

- A local Episcopalian minister is invited by a World History teacher to teach a lesson on the Reformation. The teacher also plans to have a few other local religious leaders as guest speakers about other world history topics. The principal expresses concern that this might violate the First Amendment.

Teachers will often invite guest speakers to give students a more comprehensive presentation or unique perspective of a particular subject under study. When dealing with religion, however, teachers must choose speakers with special care. Of course the school and district policies regarding outside speakers must be adhered to. In addition, the speaker must be able to give a presentation which is academic not devotional. Faculty from local colleges and universities are good resources. Community religious leaders may be acceptable as long as they understand clearly that their job is to educate, not inculcate; their job is to inform and not to advocate or preach.

Teachers concerned about inadvertently offending believers in their classrooms may find response journals to be a useful tool for communicating individually with students.

- A tenth grade world history class is doing a unit on India. The teacher is not very knowledgeable about Sikhism, but has a Sikh boy in her class. Concerned about her lack of knowledge, and fearful that she will inadvertently say something inaccurate or offensive, she calls upon him to explain the history and faith beliefs of Sikhism to the rest of the class.

It is intrusive to poll or question students about their faith beliefs, but sometimes they are obvious to a teacher due to dress, dietary or other codes of behavior dictated by religious beliefs. Be very careful about asking students to explain their religious doctrines, practices or beliefs, however. Not only may this make them uncomfortable, but also students' knowledge may

be inaccurate or incomplete, or they may use the opportunity to proselytize rather than to inform.

Teachers concerned about inadvertently offending believers in their classrooms may find response journals to be a useful tool for communicating individually with students. Just as teachers may fear accidentally saying the wrong thing, students may be acculturated to avoid correcting an instructor, or may just be too inhibited to do so in a classroom discussion. Response journals allow students to privately and in writing express any concerns they might have with lesson content.

Another technique for eliciting confidential student responses when their faith is being discussed in a world history lesson is to have them write a response or critique of the textbook version of their religion. When introducing a new unit that includes discussion of a particular religious faith, invite students to read the textbook description of the religion and assess whether they feel it is an accurate and complete account of the faith. Students might also include any further information they think that other students should know about the religion's history or doctrines. Always be aware of the possibility of limitations in the student's knowledge of their own religion, and of the fact that they have learned about it in a devotional, not academic setting. It is a good idea also to have a full range of resources available for students to reference, if asked. Still, this technique helps teachers gauge how much their students know about the various faiths covered in the curriculum without questioning them directly or putting them on the spot in a classroom setting.

## **CLASSROOM CLIMATE AND PARENT COMMUNICATION**

### **Creating a Respectful Classroom Climate**

It is very important to create a classroom environment that is receptive to the examination and discussion of unfamiliar religions. Students must have clear guidelines about appropriate behavior, language and responses when the topic is religion in world history class.

Fortunately the groundwork for this type of classroom environment can be accomplished successfully in one or two class periods. Students should be apprised of the course content early in the school year and be made aware that certain topics that will be covered throughout the year are sensitive. Explain that the goal of examining such topics is to help students become better citizens in a diverse nation and world. Expectations should be supported with the creation of a classroom contract or charter that ensures student buy-in to the process.

It is very important to create a classroom environment that is receptive to the examination and discussion of unfamiliar religions.

## **A Classroom Charter**

The classroom charter is an agreement created by the entire class based on the concepts of Rights, Responsibilities and Respect. This is best undertaken at the beginning of the school year, but can actually be implemented anytime. Have students list all the annoying behaviors they have experienced in classroom settings, from other students and teachers too. Sharing lists with the class, the behaviors will fall into three broad categories:

- Physically intrusive actions (pushing, tripping etc.)
- Verbally annoying behaviors (interrupting, being a know-it-all)
- Verbally hurtful behaviors (pejoratives, put-downs etc.)

Engage in a short discussion about the fact that these are disrespectful actions and words, which have no place in a classroom. Guide the discussion to three main ideas:

- Students have a right to learn in a respectful environment.
- Teachers have a right to teach in a respectful environment.
- Everyone in the class has a responsibility to ensure that their own and others' rights are being respected.

The agreement can be referred to as a contract, charter, code of conduct, compact, declaration etc. Print a copy and have each student sign it as a guarantee of his or her agreement and adherence and post it in the classroom. Make copies to send home for parents to see and sign as well. Throughout the school year, as incidents arise, remind students of their agreement to treat others and their beliefs with respect.

## **The Parent Connection**

Parents have a right to know what their children are being taught. To earn the trust of the parent community, world history teachers should explain, either at back-to-school night or in a letter home that the course syllabus includes an examination of the world's religions. If parents trust that this is being done in a constitutionally sound way, that their child is not being subjected to proselytizing or misrepresentation of their religious traditions, the world history teacher should be able to avoid conflict and confrontation. Good communication with parents is the critical element in establishing and maintaining trust.

Of course, parents who object to certain aspects of the curriculum also have the right to excuse their child from parts of the class they feel are inimical to their own values or teachings.

## Conclusion

Teaching about religion in a constitutionally and educationally sound way can sometimes feel like an overwhelming burden to a world history teacher. It may seem easier or less controversial to just “skip over those parts.” To do so, however, hugely diminishes the students’ appreciation of the richness of human history and their understanding of the role religion has played and continues to play in human interactions, both good and bad.

Taking on the challenge of teaching about religion objectively and sensitively yields tremendous benefits for students. It helps students understand and value the diversity of the human experience. It also models for students the ability to accommodate a variety of beliefs and viewpoints in a democratic society. Students may develop a greater appreciation for the guarantees of religious liberty they enjoy as American citizens, and their educational experience will be a brighter and more vibrant tapestry due to your efforts.



## The 3Rs and Building Character in Our Students

by Diane L. Brooks

Diane L. Brooks retired in 1998 from the California Department of Education where she served as Manager, History-Social Science and Visual and Performing Arts Office; and Administrator, Curriculum Frameworks and Instructional Resources Office. She wrote California's proposal to the U.S. Department of Education in 1995-Partnerships in Character Education. Since retirement she heads D.L. Brooks Consulting where she specializes in character education, K-12 curriculum, and writing for documentaries. Her most recent book is *Readings and Activities for Character Education, Resources for Teachers and Students*, Cobblestone Publishing. She has served on the Steering Committee for the California 3Rs Project since its beginning.

### **Making the Case for Character Education**

For the past decade and a half, there has been a national surge to restore two principles that were foundations of public education in America in the 19th century: the formation of character and the development of citizenship in a democracy. As Kevin Ryan, the first Director of Boston University's Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character (CAEC) said in the early 1990s, "Rather than the latest fad, character education is the schools' oldest mission." Reasons vary for a renewed focus; and include inadequate knowledge of principles of government and civics (NAEP assessment), declining voting percentages, apathy in voluntarism and civic participation, rising number of discipline problems in classrooms or playgrounds and buses, concern about academic achievement, prejudice and hate language in school and on the streets, acts of violence in schools, and so on.

We have become a nation "on the alert" to do better for our young people and the future of our country. Many schools and districts throughout the nation are making efforts to include character education in the school culture and in curriculum and instruction. Parents are the primary educators of children in matters of character development; however, educators, religious organizations, and the community can make substantial contributions to character formation. There is no better example of the often used phrase, "It takes a whole community to raise a child," than character education. Many believe that every effort that is given to this responsibility of education will come back in the form of strengthened families, safer schools, increased academic achievement, better communities, and a stronger democracy.

## The 3Rs: A Civic Framework for Character Education

Because our civic agreement in the United States recognizes parents as having the primary right and responsibility for the upbringing of their children, including education, public schools should develop character education programs only in close partnership with parents and other citizens in the community. Identifying and putting in place the civic framework of rights, responsibilities, and respect is the best starting place for this community-school partnership.

Many communities, throughout California and the rest of the nation, have successfully used rights, responsibilities, and respect as the ground rules for making decisions about policies and practices in the schools, including the implementation of character education programs. The California 3Rs Project, working with a wide variety of experts and consultants, has defined these principles as:

Many believe that every effort that is given to this responsibility of education will come back in the form of strengthened families, safer schools, increased academic achievement, better communities, and a stronger democracy.

- **Rights** — Religious liberty, or freedom of conscience, is a basic and inalienable right founded on the inviolable dignity of the person.
- **Responsibilities** — Freedom of conscience is not only a universal right, but it depends upon a universal responsibility to respect that right for others.
- **Respect** — Debate and disagreement are vital in a democracy. Yet, if we are to live with our differences, how we debate, and not only what we debate, is critical. At the heart of good citizenship is a strong commitment to the civic values that enable people of differing ethnic backgrounds and religious convictions to treat one another with civility and respect.

The 3Rs enable citizens to work together for the common good in public education. Within this framework, all voices and perspectives have a right to be heard, each citizen takes responsibility to protect the rights of others (particularly those with whom they disagree), and when differences arise, debate is conducted with civility and respect.

Co-sponsored by the Freedom Forum First Amendment Center and the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association, the California 3Rs Project is one of the best examples of how well the civic principles work. Many articles in this journal describe how communities across California have used the principles to find common ground on issues such as the role of religion and values in the schools, school reform and character education. For more information



about the California 3Rs Project, contact Marcia Beauchamp at 415-482-9783, or email at [mbeauchamp@freedomforum.org](mailto:mbeauchamp@freedomforum.org).

## Resources for Character Education Programs

The response to the responsibility of education in the development of character comes from several sources. We now have available a continually growing number of publications that address the history, philosophy, and suggested practices that uphold character education. Some well-recognized researchers and academicians include Thomas Lickona, William Kilpatrick, Edward Wynne, Howard Kirschenbaum, James Leming, Eric Schaps, and the aforementioned Kevin Ryan. Schaps, president of the Developmental Studies Center in Oakland, California, with Marilyn Watson and Catherine Lewis, have research evidence that shows a correlation of a school “as a caring community” with a number of positive characteristics; such as, greater liking for school, greater empathy and concern for others, more frequent acts of altruistic behavior, more sophisticated conflict resolution skills, higher academic self-esteem, less use of tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana, and fewer delinquent acts.

School principals, such as Rudy Bernardo of Allen School in Dayton, Ohio, affirm the role that character education played in turning around the number of discipline problems and academic achievement at this school—from 25th in the district

School principals, such as Rudy Bernardo of Allen School in Dayton, Ohio, affirm the role that character education played in turning around the number of discipline problems and academic achievement at this school—from 25th in the district to #1!

to #1! Teachers had more time to teach and the principal had more time to be an instructional leader, rather than a disciplinarian. Mary Aranha, a principal in Maryland where character education made a dramatic difference in student achievement in a school with a very diverse student population, has evidence of the importance of principal leadership and of staff development in the implementation of a comprehensive school commitment to character education. These are just two examples of many schools across the nation that have taken efforts to include character education within the school’s mission.

In 1992 a number of national experts on character education (educators, religious leaders, business and community leaders and representatives of parent and youth groups) came together in Washington DC to discuss what might be done to further the cause of character education. How might they work together to further the development of ethics and character as an important part of schooling? The following year when they met again, these leaders formed the Character Education Partnership (CEP), a nonpartisan coalition of individuals and organizations. Through the identification and promotion of resources and annual national conferences, the CEP has shown its dedication to developing moral character and civic virtue in our young people. The CEP is one example of several organizations and centers in the country that put character development on the forefront.

In 1998 the CEP partnered with CAEC and the Fordham Foundation for the first annual recognition of National Schools of Character. Each year 10 schools are so honored because each elementary, middle, or high school, through application and site visits, has demonstrated a comprehensive approach to meet to a high level CEP's Eleven Principles for Effective Character Education, summarized below:

1. Character education promotes core ethical values as the basis of good character.
2. "Character" must be comprehensively defined to include thinking, feeling, and behavior.
3. Effective character education requires an intentional, proactive, and comprehensive approach that promotes the core values in all phases of school life.
4. The school must be a caring community.
5. To develop character, students need opportunities for moral action.
6. Effective character education includes a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners and helps them succeed.
7. Character education should strive to develop students' intrinsic motivation.
8. The school staff must become a learning and moral community in which all share responsibility for character education and attempt to adhere to the same core values that guide the education of students.
9. Character education requires moral leadership from both staff and students.
10. The school must recruit parents and community members as full partners in the character-building effort.
11. Evaluation of character education should assess the character of the school, the school staff's functioning as character educators, and the extent to which students manifest good character.

California educators should be proud that three California schools have been recognized as a National School of

Character (NSOC) in the past two years. Schools throughout the state are encouraged to participate by getting school and community members—including students—to develop a character education program and compete for recognition. For information about the CEP and its activities and resources and details about the Eleven Principles, contact 1-800-988-8081 or find them on the Web at [www.character.org](http://www.character.org).

## Conclusion

We are at a critical and opportune moment in our history to take advantage of the real need for a renewal of the original mission of public schools: to instill character and to develop in our young people the civic habits of the heart necessary to citizenship.

There is a documented groundswell of support, and a growing consensus that these efforts should be grounded in our civic compact as Americans.

As the National Council for the Social Studies statement on Character education stated in 1997:

Social studies teachers have a responsibility and a duty to refocus their classrooms on the teaching of character and civic virtue. They should not be timid about working toward these goals. The fate of the American experiment in self government depends in no small part on the store of civic virtue that resides in the American people. The social studies profession of this nation has a vital role to play in keeping this wellspring of virtue flowing.

### The 3Rs

- **Rights** — Religious liberty, or freedom of conscience, is a basic and inalienable right founded on the inviolable dignity of the person.
- **Responsibilities** — Freedom of conscience is not only a universal right, but it depends upon a universal responsibility to respect that right for others.
- **Respect** — Debate and disagreement are vital in a democracy. Yet, if we are to live with our differences, how we debate, and not only what we debate, is critical. At the heart of good citizenship is a strong commitment to the civic values that enable people of differing ethnic backgrounds and religious convictions to treat one another with civility and respect.



# Teaching about Islam in California Standards and Textbooks: A Case Study of Religion in World History Education

by Susan Douglass

Susan L. Douglass is social studies educator with experience in teaching, curriculum and instructional design. She has a M.A. in Arab Studies (History) from Georgetown University (1992) and a B.A. in History from the University of Rochester (1972). She is Principal Writer and Researcher for the Council on Islamic Education, working on textbooks, curriculum and standards, teacher workshops and resources. She is the author of the study *Teaching About Religion in National and State Social Studies Standards*, (Council on Islamic Education and First Amendment Center, 2000).

Beyond the existence of understandable guidelines published by the First Amendment Center (FAC) in *Finding Common Ground* (Haynes and Thomas, eds., Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, 1994), the most important step toward implementation of teaching about religion, is laying out the actual content through which the guidelines come to life in the classroom. Several important developments across the nation illustrate progress in this area, and show particular strength in California. A case study on teaching about Islam in the new *California Content Standards for History/Social Science* shows how trends in world history education and the guidelines for teaching about religion play out in California's history/social science program.

Advances in teaching about religion have met with other strands of change in the education field during the past decade. The principle of natural inclusion, a foundation of the guidelines for teaching about religion, places most specific discussion of religion in the K-12 curriculum in US and world history and geography studies. Among trends in history teaching

Primary sources such as scripture and religious literature are enhanced by inclusion of sacred art, architecture and music.

that have gained ground among educators, teaching across the disciplines has added dimension to the study of world religions. Primary

sources such as scripture and religious literature are enhanced by inclusion of sacred art, architecture and music. The role of primary sources in conveying first-hand knowledge of another culture finds further justification in the strong value placed on direct analysis of evidence, research and critical thinking skills. Improvements in geography education have also broadened the canvas of historical coverage and given educators better tools for understanding the spread of religions, and cultural and physical features that impeded or facilitated it.

Sufficient time is required to engage in multidisciplinary teaching and cultivate investigative skills, and no trend has

proven more helpful than the use of sequential history courses. Since the late 1980s, frustrating Stone Age to Space Age courses, have begun to fade from classrooms. When curriculum designers decided that it is better to rely on recall of content from one year to another, especially if their learning is not rushed, than to repeatedly fail to cover the material, so-called “draped” courses replaced the marathon surveys. *California’s History and Social Science Framework* laid out such a program of US history for grades 5, 8 and 11, and world history draped across grades 6, 7 and 10. Other states followed California’s lead, but none devotes three-years to world history. Mandates to integrate the disciplines in these courses provided a platform for sampling from the rich repast of recent research in history, helping to bridge the gap between advances in scholarship and the K-12 classroom.

Standards-based education has crystallized these trends in social studies. To find out how national and state standards reflect the status of teaching about religion in US public schools, the Council on Islamic Education (CIE) of Fountain Valley, CA collaborated with the First Amendment Center to produce a report entitled “Teaching About Religion in National and State Social Studies Standards,” published in autumn 2000. The report identifies and analyzes citations on teaching about religion in the national standards and other curriculum models for social studies, and shows how they influenced state standards documents. It assesses the quantity, placement and effectiveness of teaching about religion at elementary and secondary grade levels.

The best news in the report is that the standard-setting process has solidified the place of teaching about religion in United States and world history.

The study attests to the nearly universal presence of mandates to teach about religion in history/social studies and illustrates the implications of the major content models utilized by the states and the national organizations, which developed standards. It recommends

ways to make the most of current mandates on teaching about religion by supporting teacher education, instructional materials development and state testing programs, and discusses where improvement in the documents might be made in future revision cycles. Evidence from the content standards takes educators out of the realm of wishful thinking about better instruction on religions, and points toward possibilities inherent in existing state requirements as achievable goals for all students.

The best news in the report is that the standard-setting process has solidified the place of teaching about religion in United States and world history. Legislatively mandated state standards and accountability programs have raised the profile of social studies as a core subject area. Nowhere is this truer than in elementary grades, where it often took a back seat to Language Arts and Math, but in middle and high school, new world history and/or geography requirements in many states will mean increased exposure for all students.

Furthermore, specific content mandates on which students may be tested make it more likely that these topics will actually be taught, since some teachers uncomfortable with teaching about religion skipped over such units in the past. The fact

that accountability on achievement of standards is aimed at both teachers and students has focused minds in states with testing programs, though California does not yet test in history/social science.

*Teaching About Islam: A Case Study* improved teaching about religions and was a factor in development of the *California History-Social Science Framework*.

California's three-year world history sequence allows students in grades six and seven to study each major world religion and its associated cultures for several weeks. In the sixth grade, students learn about the religions of ancient civilizations. Seventh grade students continue the study to see how religions changed, such as the Reformation. Both grade levels cover religions of the World, not just with a Western focus. The state's large student population enticed a major publisher to develop textbooks specifically for the program. The Houghton Mifflin Company series was adopted in 1990, and revised editions were adopted in 1999.

The initial submission of Houghton Mifflin's *Across the Centuries*, the seventh grade textbook for California that covers Islam and Muslim history, was fraught with many of the typical errors in teaching about Islam exhibited in most United States textbooks at that time. Relying on its panel of affiliated scholars, CIE had the grade seven text reviewed, and based on their suggestions, Houghton Mifflin made the necessary changes. This exchange initiated a systematic relationship between CIE and the publisher, leading to CIE participation in several other projects. By 1994, CIE had also published the *Teachers Guide to Teaching about Islam and Muslims in the Public School Classroom* and *Strategies and Structures for Presenting World History* as resources on Islam and Muslim history that utilize the First Amendment Center guidelines for teaching about religion. The guidebooks illustrate how the guidelines for fair, balanced and accurate coverage of religion apply to Islam, addressing common errors and providing a concise expression of Muslim perspectives on Islamic beliefs and practices, as well as its role in world history. On use of terminology, for example, the guides show how the term "Islam" itself has been inaccurately used to denote cultural phenomena such as literature, arts, and governments rather than restricting its use to what pertains to the faith and its teachings, and how the worst instances produce oxymorons such as "Islamic terrorists" and "Islamic extremists." Use of non-Islamic terms such as church and clergy appear commonly in print despite the fact that Islamic tradition knows no such institutions. The guides describe a framework for discussing the faith on its own terms, and provide outlines and activities for interdisciplinary historical coverage.

Beyond ensuring the accuracy of the basic thumbnail sketch of the religion's origins, beliefs, and practices, sound discussion of the history of Muslim civilization and its diverse societies and cultures presents a challenge. Coverage of complex historical phenomena such as the role of women can help students understand the subtle relationships between religious beliefs and practices on one hand, and diverse cultures and historical events affected by the spread of Islam on the other—an exercise in critical thinking if there ever was one. The role of cities and the rise of intellectual traditions such as Islamic law, history, and

the sciences have seldom been discussed in textbooks, but are viewed by Muslims and scholars of Islam as essential to understanding. In reviewing instructional materials on Islam and other topics, CIE scholars support coverage that relies upon research in recent, specialized sources rather than rehashed summaries of political history from outdated works, or conventional wisdom about Islam.

CIE was privileged to participate in development of California's current *History-Social Science Content Standards*, preparing official reviews of several drafts. Previous assessments of the *California History-Social Science Framework* highlighted inaccuracies related to teaching about Islam, using the FAC guidelines as a standard for coverage. CIE also reviewed standards on other faiths, addressing the use of secular assumptions in describing revealed religions to young students, faulty chronological placement of content on Judaism and insufficient coverage of the spread of Christianity in early medieval Europe. Another common problem affecting coverage of faiths in the modern period was the relentless association with political conflicts, unrelieved by mention of positive contributions to contemporary life. The language used to mandate the typical "thumbnail sketch" of each world religion was highlighted in the CIE/FAC report on religion in standards documents. Unlike many state's omnibus standards on the world faiths, California's standards document details content about each faith.

Standard 7.2 incorporates various historical realms in discussion of Islam and Muslim civilization. Beginning with the geographic context of the Arabian Peninsula, including its location astride trade routes, and "the relationship between nomadic and sedentary ways of life," the student learns about "the origins of Islam and the life and teachings of Muhammad" and "the significance of the

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Qur'an and the Sunnah as the primary sources of Islamic beliefs, practice and law, and their influence in Muslims' daily life." This language encompasses the major elements of the thumbnail sketch, and includes the essential link between Islam and earlier prophetic activity and revelation. Muslims place the origins of Islam with the Creator, of course, and consider Adam its first prophet, honoring the patriarch Abraham as a major prophet who figures in daily prayer and in the hajj rituals. Further, the standard cites both primary sources to which teachers should refer, but also mentions a major tradition and institution (Islamic law) and the connection between beliefs and practices. Significantly for accuracy and authenticity, 7.2.2 requires students to learn about "Islamic teachings on the connection with Judaism and Christianity," but avoids the common misrepresentation that the link to earlier monotheisms was something cobbled together by Muhammad. Discussion of the influence of beliefs in daily life opens the door for discussion of social customs and institutions from the family to jurisprudence.

Examination of Islam in history is framed in terms of an important distinction made by historians concerning a historical process that has been the subject of Western misconceptions for centuries. Standard 7.2.4 highlights the distinction



between the “the expansion of Muslim rule through military conquests and treaties” and “the spread and acceptance of Islam.” This formulation expresses historians’ consensus that the rapid growth of territory under Muslim rule and the gradual spread of Islam to become the faith of the majority were two different historical processes separated by several centuries. Discussion of the development of Islamicate societies emphasizes “cultural blending within Muslim civilization.”

The *California History-Social Science Academic Content Standards* are weak in coverage of African history in general, and of some Asian regions, but coverage of the spread of Islam to sub-Saharan Africa is covered as part of the study of Ghana and Mali, and the language of the standard expresses the importance of the Niger River bend as a birthplace of cities, instead of positing Mali as an isolated phenomenon. The standard shows how Islam was expressed there in uniquely African ways. Coverage of Islam in Africa thus demonstrates an important aspect of coverage according to the guidelines for historical depth and accuracy. Other regions such as East Africa, Central and Southeast Asia, however, receive short shrift in the Content Standards under Islam or any other rubric.

One of the most significant current shortcomings of the “thumbnail sketch” of world religions has been failure to follow coverage of religious institutions, thought, and important individuals beyond a century or two of the “origins story.” Typical survey coverage of Islamic history after the death of Muhammad used to devolve quickly into a tedious account of political dynasties, missing altogether more important developments at the foot of the palace walls. The *Content Standards*, in contrast, promote an incursion into serious scholarship which will foster a more accurate explanation for the civilization and its world-historical influence. One of the most important elements in the development of Muslim civilization was “the growth of cities and the trade routes created among Asia, Africa and Europe” and “the intellectual exchanges among Muslim scholars of Eurasia and Africa,” which facilitated the spread of Arabic language. A basic understanding of the influence of religion in shaping social, economic and political institutions helps to explain another important element that is finding expression in many of the new standards documents across the United States requiring that students learn not only about the characteristics of discrete civilizations, many of the new standards documents mandate teaching about interactions among cultures as a distinct topic of study. As a highly appropriate topic in studying Islam, the *Content Standards* address “the products and inventions that traveled along these routes (e.g., spices, textiles, paper, steel, new crops), and the role of merchants in Arab society,” and “the contributions Muslim scholars made to later civilizations in the areas of science, geography, mathematics, philosophy, medicine, art, and literature.” These topics, of course, provide excellent opportunities to delve into primary sources.

The thread of cultural interactions is followed into study of Spain and other aspects of Christian and Jewish cultural expression in 7.9.1: “the “Golden Age” of cooperation between Jews and Muslims in Medieval Spain which promoted creativity in art, literature and science, including how it was terminated by the religious persecution of individuals and groups (e.g., the Spanish Inquisition and the expulsion of Jews and Muslims from Spain in 1492).” Discussion of the Renaissance and the Scientific Revolution illustrates how such history instruction takes students beyond the usual internal characterization of these

periods and leads to examination of the persons, places and historical artifacts involved in the transmission of ideas across cultural and religious boundaries. Standard 7.8.1 on the Renaissance, for example, cites “the way in which the revival of classical learning and the arts affected a new interest in “humanism” (i.e., a balance between the intellect and religious faith)” and 7.10 on the Scientific Revolution addresses “the roots of the Scientific Revolution (e.g., Greek rationalism; Jewish, Christian and Muslim science) among its influences and milestones. Standard 7.6 imbeds discussion of the Crusades in a context of complex cultural interactions, and relates it to the Spanish Reconquista in: “the causes and course of the religious Crusades and the effects on Christian, Muslim and Jewish populations—with emphasis on the increasing contact with the cultures of the Eastern Mediterranean world” and “the history of the decline of Muslim rule in the Iberian Peninsula that culminated in the “Reconquista” and the rise of Spanish and Portuguese kingdoms.”

Discussion of religion fades significantly from the *Content Standards* on the pre-modern period, as does coverage of non-Western regions, but a few items open the door for alert teachers to include cultural exchanges and religious influences. In 7.11, “students analyze political and economic change in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries—in terms of—the exchanges of plants, animals, technology, culture, and ideas among Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas in the 15th and 16th centuries and the major economic and social effects on each continent (the changing international trading and marketing patterns)”. Specific mention of Asian and African cultures would have been preferable, but later Muslim states such as the Mughals and Ottomans, their economic impact and cultural expressions would need to be included in the course of addressing the above requirements.

Modern history standards, which often exclude religion, contain a few interesting citations such as 10.4: “students analyze—the rise of industrial economies and their link to imperialism and colonialism —Imperialism from the perspective of the colonizers and the colonized and the varied immediate and long-term responses by the people under colonial rule—the independence struggles of the colonized regions of the world, including—the role of ideology and religion.” Study of modern nations in the *Content Standards* is selective, but includes religious aspects of contemporary life that would necessarily involve coverage of institutions and thought in modern societies: 10.10 Students analyze instances of nation-building in the contemporary world (challenges in the region, including its geopolitical, cultural, military, and economic significance and the international relationships in which it is involved) the recent history of the region, including the political divisions and systems, key leaders, religious issues, natural features, resources, and population patterns the important trends in the region today and whether they appear to serve the cause of individual freedom and democracy.” The standard is neutral in tone, allowing ample room for discussion of religion beyond the concept of conflict.

The case study of teaching about Islam in current *California Content Standards* and textbooks shows that the guidelines for teaching about religions provide a viable framework for covering a major world religion. The implications of fair and accurate coverage of beliefs and practices, as the members of the faith group understand them, combined with accuracy and atten-

tion to differentiating between the tenets of the faith and the actions of its adherents requires a high standard of scholarship, analytical skills and critical thinking. Teaching about religion, therefore, is clearly an asset in the effort to improve history education, and should not be eschewed as just another add-on to an overstuffed curriculum. Skills and knowledge gleaned in the effort to understand the development and unfolding of faith traditions, and to learn about the beliefs, spiritual experience and cultural expressions of their own and other traditions adds depth to the experience of history and provides a platform for analysis and critical thinking, in addition to its civic value. Clearly, teaching about religion as an element of the curriculum is greater than the sum of its parts.



# Religious/Philosophical Influences on American History: A Standards Based Course for Educators

by Susan Mogull

Susan Mogull, Capitol Region Leader of California 3Rs Project, has taught English and American history at the junior high and college levels. She attended all the History-Social Science meetings of the Academic Standards Commission. She served on the California Department of Education's Instructional Materials Advisory Panels for History/Social Science and Language Arts. Susan serves on character education committees for CDE, San Juan USD, and Sacramento City USD and on the United Way School Violence Task Force.

When California added religion to the *History-Social Science Framework* in 1987, interested citizens expected that teachers would be trained to handle the sensitive topic. Thirteen years later, that has not happened. As a concerned parent, former teacher, and community volunteer, I joined the California 3Rs Project to try to fill this void. In our democratic pluralistic American society, the inclusion of religion in the curriculum needs to be closely connected to instruction about our civic values that respect differences. Otherwise, religion in the curriculum could become instruction from the perspective of the religion of the majority. As Capitol Region leader of the 3Rs Project I have developed courses in Finding Common Ground: Living With

In our democratic pluralistic American society, the inclusion of religion in the curriculum needs to be closely connected to instruction about our civic values that respect differences.

Our Deepest Differences and a Survey of World Religions that hundreds of area educators have attended. These courses are presented in conjunction with the Humanities/Religious Studies Department of California State University, Sacramento and qualify for university academic credit and district continuing education credit.

Professors from CSUS, 3Rs Project consultants, and mentor teachers staff the courses. The Sacramento County Office of Education, the International Studies Project at Sacramento, the San Juan Unified School District, and the San Juan Teachers Association cosponsor these courses.

Shortly after the adoption of the *California History-Social Science Content Standards*, the San Juan Unified School District asked me to develop a course for teachers that covers the religious and philosophical influences on American history included in the standards. The first step was to examine the Content Standards to choose the ones that fit the concept. Using the cut and paste method, I selected the relevant standards. The process made clear that standards at every grade level emphasize citizenship in the introductory paragraph as well as in specific standards. An emphasis on citizenship and our national heritage is a major goal of the standards.

The American concept of religious liberty that ensures our most basic right, freedom of conscience, is the core concept of the course. How did this idea develop, and what has it meant to us? Standards that answer these questions trace the philosophical underpinnings of Western civilization. The course examines ancient legal codes, medieval and renaissance influences, and the development of religious liberty principles in America. Religious developments in America and current social issues influenced by religion are examined. Arranged in chronological order, the course includes six three-hour sessions and offers one academic credit through California State University, Sacramento.

The course helps teachers to include study about religion in the most appropriate manner, as it fits naturally into the curriculum as one of several influences on society. An analysis of the *Content Standards* made clear that this course is broader than religious views. Nonreligious worldviews, termed philosophical influences here, are equally significant to the understanding of our system of government and American culture.

Because the California history curriculum presents California history at grade four, American history at grades five, eight, and eleven, American government at grade twelve, and world history at grades six, seven, and ten, the course covers standards from all of these grades, as well as standards related to citizenship, national holidays, and heroes in grades K-3. Since the course is chronologically arranged, each session includes standards from different grade levels.

Standards are numbered here as they appear in the *California Content Standards*; the first number denotes grade level, the second number is the standard number, and the following numbers are sub-points. Thus, 6.2.4 is sixth grade, second standard, point four.

## **COURSE SESSIONS**

### (1) ANCIENT WORLD INFLUENCES

6.2.4—Hammurabi's code

6.3.1,2; 10.1.1—Jewish moral and ethical teachings including the Ten Commandments

1.1.1; 6.4.2,3; 10.1.1,2—Greek concepts of citizenship and democracy

6.7.2,8; 7.1.1; 10.1.1—the Roman Republic

1.1.2; 6.7.6,7; 10.1.1—the Christian adoption and transmission of Jewish concepts of law

7.1.3—Constantine's preservation and transmission of Christianity

## (2) MEDIEVAL EUROPE

- 7.1.3; 7.6.2,8—the development of the Roman Catholic Church
- 7.6.2,4—conflict and cooperation between the Papacy and European monarchs
- 6.7.6—the Christian roots of anti-Semitism in the Christian scriptures
- 7.6.6; 7.9.7—the Crusades, the Inquisition, expulsions, and ghettos
- 7.9.7—the Golden Age of Spain
- 5.2.2; 7.6.9—the “Reconquista”

## (3) THE RENAISSANCE AND THE REFORMATION

- 7.8—the Renaissance
- 7.9; 7.11.4,5—the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation
- 7.8.1—concepts of humanism and Deism
- 2.5; 7.8.5; 7.10—the scientific revolution
- 5.2.2; 7.9.2,3—Protestantism’s contribution to ideas of self-government; Erasmus, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and William Tindale

## (4) THEOLOGICAL/PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

- 3.4.6; 5.2.2; 5.4.2,3,4,7—immigration to the colonies; contrasting ideas of John Winthrop and Roger Williams
- 5.5.3,4; 7.11.4,5; 8.1; 8.2.2,3,4,7; 10.2.1,2; 11.1.1,2; 12.1.1—Enlightenment ideas of the founding fathers
- 8.2.5—Jefferson’s Statute for Religious Freedom
- 5.4.2,3,4; 5.6.5; 5.7.2; 8.2.3,5,6,7; 11.1.2; 11.3.5; 12.2.1; 12.5.1,2; 12.10—divergent colonial approaches to government-established religions; First Amendment separation of church and state and freedom of conscience

## (5) RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENTS IN AMERICA

- 5.4.2,3—Protestant sects
- 5.4.4; 8.1.1; 11.3.2—the Great Awakenings
- 8.6.4,5—religious influences in education
- 8.6.6; 8.12.5,6; 11.3.1—reform movements
- 8.6.7—Transcendentalism
- 3.4.6; 5.4.6; 5.6.7; 8.7.2,3; 8.9; 8.11.5—slavery/abolition

11.2.7—Social Gospel

4.4.3; 5.4.2,3,4; 8.6.3; 8.8.2; 8.11.4; 8.12.7; 11.3.3—religious intolerance and persecution

## (6) 20TH CENTURY RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENTS

1.5.1,2,3; 11.3.1,4; 12.3.1,2—religious pluralism

11.3.2, 12.5.1,2—fundamentalism

11.3.2,5; 12.2.1,5; 12.3.1,3; 12.5.1,2; 12.10—religious influences in the contentious issues of the present: creationism, school prayer, abortion, and sexual orientation

The objective of the course is to explain how religious/philosophical concepts from ancient, medieval, and early modern times led to the development of religious liberty in America. These tensions between different views of religious liberty have played a role in American culture since colonial times. Interestingly, these tensions still exist in major social issues today such as religious fundamentalism, creationism, school prayer, abortion, and anti-gay activities. As students become aware of the long history of this tension, they will better understand forces at work in our society. The examples below illustrate the sensitivity and difficulty of teaching about religion.

## **RED FLAGS IN TEACHING THIS SUBJECT MATTER**

### (1) SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

The Academic Standards Commission seriously considered removing the phrase separation of church and state from the standards. The same conflict that the Founding Fathers resolved with the first sixteen words of the First Amendment, “congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof” remains a source of dispute in the current culture wars. Some religious and political leaders contend that separation of church and state is a myth. They argue that the use of this term came much later in American history. However, students must understand that freedom of conscience is not subject to a vote; the Bill of Rights exists to protect minority viewpoints. The Center for Civic Education produces outstanding materials on this topic.

### (2) USE OF RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE IN THE STANDARDS

In a few instances the Content Standards go to some length to include religious language. Some examples are: “7.10.1 Discuss the roots of the Scientific Revolution (e.g., Greek rationalism, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim science; Renaissance humanism . . .)”



“8.1.2 Analyze the philosophy of government expressed in the Declaration of Independence, with an emphasis on government as a means of securing individual rights (e.g., key phrases such as ‘all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights’).”

“11.1.2 Analyze the ideological origins of the American Revolution, the Founding Fathers’ philosophy of divinely bestowed unalienable natural rights . . .”

David Barton, the Christian nation historical revisionist whose viewpoint is clearly indicated by the titles of his videos *The Myth of Separation* and *America’s Godly Heritage*, wrote the language for these standards (letter, 6-8-98, pp. 2,4).

Although the Declaration of Independence and other documents use religious language, it is extremely important to emphasize that the United States Constitution is a secular document that mentions religion only twice—to emphasize freedom of conscience—in Article VI, Section 3: “no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States” and in the First Amendment quoted above.

### (3) USE OF JUDEO-CHRISTIAN

One of the most interesting issues that arose in this project was defining Judeo-Christian. The term Judeo-Christian first appears in the introductory paragraph to Grade Five standards: “Students learn about the colonial government(s) sic founded on Judeo-Christian principles, the ideals of the Enlightenment, and the English traditions of self-government.” The introductory paragraph of Grade Eight standards refers to “the development of America’s democratic institutions founded in the Judeo-Christian heritage and English parliamentary traditions, particularly the shaping of the Constitution . . .” The term appears again in tenth grade:

“10.1: Students relate the moral and ethical principles in ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, in Judaism, and in Christianity to the development of Western political thought.

Analyze the similarities and differences in Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman views of law, reason and faith, and duties of the individual.”

The intended meaning of Judeo-Christian in the standards is the common ethical teachings, values, ideas, and principles found in the Hebrew Bible, adopted and disseminated by Christianity, and shared in common by the Jewish and Christian traditions. This religious heritage and the more humanistic Greek and Roman classical tradition are sources of European culture fundamental to American politics and social values. However, Judeo-Christian means different things to different people.

In fact, scholars of religious studies avoid the term “Judeo-Christian.” *The Harper Collins Dictionary of Religion* gives this definition: “Judeo-Christian tradition, recent term emphasizing the kinship of Judaism and Christianity. The notion that these two religions can be melded into a single tradition is without scholarly merit.” (Smith, Ed., 1995, p. 611). Teachers

need to be careful not to use the term to imply that Judaism developed into Christianity. It is important that students understand that although the two religions have many common values, Judaism survives as a distinctive faith system and deserves to be respected as such.

## CONCLUSION

In the early grades the Standards emphasize that students should learn about American commemorative holidays. Using holidays as learning experiences, focusing on those holidays that denote our connection as a people united by civic principles, is the appropriate approach for public schools. The standards offer teachers an opportunity and a challenge. They provide a road map for connecting the civic values of democratic pluralism with their historical roots. They also require a deep knowledge of subject matter so that hazards can be avoided. This subject matter deserves attention and respect. Teachers will be well advised to seek out appropriate instruction for themselves before they attempt to instruct their own students.

### CALIFORNIA RESOURCES

Anti-Defamation League

10495 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90025

(310) 446-8000

Contact Marjorie Green, Education Specialist

[www.adl.org](http://www.adl.org)

ADL provides information, materials, and training on religion in the public schools and sponsors the World of Difference prejudice reduction program.

California 3Rs Project

The First Amendment Center,

369 B Third St. #399, San Rafael, CA 94901

(415) 482-9783

Contact Marcia Beauchamp, Program Coordinator

[mbeauchamp@pcc.freedomforum.org](mailto:mbeauchamp@pcc.freedomforum.org)

Susan Mogull, Capitol Region Leader

(916) 944-3459

[smogull@juno.com](mailto:smogull@juno.com)

The 3Rs Project provides information, training, and resources on religion in the public schools.

Center for Civic Education  
5146 Douglas Fir Road, Calabasas, CA 91302  
1 (800) 350-4223  
www.civiced.org  
Contact Robert Leming  
We the People... Program Director Leming@civiced.org

Roy Erickson, Director of Justice Programs  
(916) 863-6614  
CACoord@aol.com

The Center for Civic Education offers curricular materials, leadership training, teacher education, and community-based programs in civic education with significant attention to the First Amendment.

Instructional Systems  
P.O. Box 163418, Ft. Sutter Station, Sacramento, CA 95816-9418  
1(800) 666-9796  
www.teachingaboutreligion.org  
Contact Mynga Futrell InstrnSys@aol.com

Teaching About Religion with a View to Diversity web site contains lessons on diversity, pluralism, tolerance, and cultural acceptance; nonreligious worldviews; and useful links to related sites.

National Conference for Community and Justice  
Silicon Valley Region, 777 North First Street, Suite 500, San Jose, CA 95112  
(408) 286-9663  
www.nccj.org  
Contact Dr. Glenn Earley  
gearley@nccj.org

NCCJ offers K-12 curriculum materials, training, and community programs to promote understanding and respect among all races, religions and cultures.

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The Constitution of the United States of America.

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## Preparing Teachers to Teach About the World's Religions: The Project on Religion and Public Education at California State University, Chico

by Bruce Grelle

Bruce Grelle is Professor of Religious Studies and Director of the Religion and Public Education Resource Center at California State University, Chico. He serves as a member of the California 3Rs Project steering committee and as a member of the American Academy of Religion's task force on "Religion in the Schools."

Shortly after my arrival at Chico State University, as a newly appointed assistant professor in 1989, I received a phone call from Bob Benoit. At that time Bob was curriculum coordinator for the Butte County Office of Education, and he informed me that the California Department of Education had recently adopted the *History-Social Science Framework* for California Public Schools Kindergarten through Grade Twelve. One of the most notable aspects about the new framework was the attention it gave to the topic of religion. The document stressed the importance of religion in human history and stated that "students must become familiar with the basic ideas of the major religions and the ethical traditions of each time and place" (California State Department of Education 1988, 7).

To understand why individuals and groups acted as they did, we must see what values and assumptions they held, what they honored, what they sought and what they feared. By studying a people's religion and philosophy as well as their folkways and traditions, we gain an understanding of their ethical and moral commitments. By reading the texts that people revere, we gain important insights into their thinking. The study of religious beliefs and other ideological commitments helps explain both cultural continuity and cultural conflict.

The cross-cultural and historical study of religion is also an integral part of education for citizenship in a pluralistic society.

After many years during which most public schools either ignored or actively avoided religion whenever possible, I was pleased to learn that the framework dealt so explicitly with the topic. As a religious studies professor, I am obviously convinced that the academic study of religion makes an indispensable contribution to historical and cultural literacy. It is impossible to achieve an adequate understanding of human history and culture (literature, art, music, philosophy, law, ethics, politics) without knowing the role that religious beliefs, practices, and institutions have played and continue to play in human life. Put

simply, we learn a lot about human beings (ourselves and others) by studying their religions (see Nord & Haynes, 1998).

The cross-cultural and historical study of religion is also an integral part of education for citizenship in a pluralistic society. Respect for religious liberty or freedom of conscience is a basic requirement of citizenship in a society such as ours. As guaranteed by the First Amendment, this respect must be extended to members of all religious communities as well as to those who are members of none. Yet, such respect is difficult to sustain without some objective knowledge of the histories, beliefs, and customs of the diverse peoples and traditions of the world. Without such knowledge, it is all too easy to caricature and trivialize the religious beliefs and practices of our fellow citizens, especially if they happen to be from a religious, racial, or ethnic community that is different from our own. A civil society cannot long survive in such a climate of ignorance and misunderstanding.

However, it is one thing to call for more attention to be given to the topic of religion. It is another thing to prepare teachers to deal knowledgeably and responsibly with the range of ethical, legal, historical, cultural, and pedagogical issues that arise in connection with this topic in a public school setting. Without proper preparation and support, teachers and schools will continue to ignore and avoid the topic due to a legitimate fear that discussions of religion are fraught with the potential for conflict and controversy.

The responsible integration of the study of religion into the public school curriculum requires teachers to have substantive knowledge of the religious histories and traditions about which they are now expected to teach. In California, the world history curriculum for sixth, seventh and tenth grade deals explicitly with the religions of India, China, and the Middle East. Other grade levels deal with the role of religion in American history and society. Some general knowledge of world religions is a necessary background for understanding many of the “current events” that are discussed throughout the K-12 curriculum.

Teachers must also be prepared to understand and cope with the religious diversity that typically exists in their own classrooms. A basic knowledge of the world’s religions will help teachers to teach more effectively about ancient civilizations, current events, or the history of the United States. It will also help them to communicate with students and parents from religious communities ranging from evangelical Protestants to traditional Hmong, from Latter Day Saints (Mormons) to Muslims, from Catholics to Sikhs, and from Bahais to Buddhists to secularists.

Bob Benoit was one educator who chose not to sidestep the challenges presented by the new curriculum framework. He initially contacted me to inquire whether my colleagues in the Department of Religious Studies and I would be willing to participate as presenters and resource people in a series of professional development workshops designed to prepare and support teachers in their efforts to teach according to the new framework.

Since our first collaborations with Bob in 1989, my colleagues and I have been involved in dozens of workshops, forums, and institutes for public school teachers. During this same time I have also become deeply involved with the California 3Rs Project, which has provided outstanding leadership in dealing with the full range of legal, curricular, and pedagogical issues that arise in connection with the topic of religion and public education. I have worked with the California History-Social Science and the International Studies Subject-Matter Projects to help prepare teachers to teach about the world's religions in a number of different curricular contexts. Both projects have selected themes for research and study that lend themselves to investigations of religion and its impact in history.

In retrospect it is clear that my initial conversations with Bob Benoit and my subsequent involvement with the California 3Rs Project signaled a new direction in my own professional career as well as a new priority for the Department of Religious Studies at California State University, Chico. In the remainder of this essay, I will briefly describe the major components of our "Project on Religion and Public Education."

## **The Project on Religion and Public Education**

There are four main components of the "Project on Religion and Public Education" at Chico State University. These include 1) the Religion and Public Education Resource Center; 2) in-service teacher education; 3) pre-service teacher education; and 4) regional coordination of the California 3Rs Project in northern California. (Because the 3Rs Project is discussed elsewhere in this issue, I will focus on the first three of these components.)

### **The Religion and Public Education Resource Center**

The Religion and Public Education Resource Center (RPERC) was established in 1995 and is the home of the materials that were formerly housed at the National Council on Religion and Public Education Distribution Center, Indiana University, Pennsylvania. The RPERC seeks to foster a greater understanding of First Amendment guidelines for dealing with the topic of religion and public education and provides resources for teaching about religions in public schools in ways that are constitutionally permissible and academically sound.

The RPERC serves both as a depository of existing materials and as a catalyst for the development and distribution of new materials relating to pedagogical and legal issues that arise in connection with the topic of religion in the public schools. For

classroom teachers, the RPERC offers curriculum guides and sample lessons in several subject areas. For administrators, school board members, members of the legal profession and interested members of the public, the Center provides brochures, back-

Teachers must also be prepared to understand and cope with the religious diversity that typically exists in their own classrooms.

ground statements, bibliographies of resources, and reprints of pertinent articles. The Center also lists resources available for purchase from other organizations and agencies.

As Director of the RPERC, I respond via phone, mail, and e-mail to numerous inquires from teachers, administrators, and students from around the United States. Many of those who contact the RPERC learn about it on the Internet. The RPERC maintains a website:

(<http://www.csuchico.edu/rs/rperc.html>) that explains the purpose and background of the Center, lists resources that are available, and provides links to other sites on the Internet that bear upon the topic of religion and public education. Future plans for the Center include the addition of expanded and annotated lists of curriculum resources and the electronic publication of curricular mini-units that have been developed by teachers who have participated in professional development workshops and institutes focused on the academic study of religion.

### **In-Service Teacher Education**

The organization of presentations and workshops for in-service teachers continues to be a major goal of the Project on Religion and Public Education. Representative titles of these presentations and workshops over the past several years have included “Values in American History,” “One Nation, Many Gods: Religious Diversity and American Public Education,” “Fact, Value, and the Process of Moral Discernment: Ethical Issues in the Science Curriculum,” “A First Amendment Framework for Thinking About Religion and Public Education,” “The Unity and Diversity of Christianity,” and “Examining the Religious Beliefs of India.” These stand-alone presentations and workshops have usually been scheduled as parts of day-long professional development conferences sponsored by local school districts in northern California, by the CSU, Chico Education Department, by the California History-Social Science Project, and by the California International Studies Project (for a discussion of similar efforts in other parts of California, see Hatfield, 1996).

In addition to initiatives that amount to remedial education for in-service teachers, a longer-term approach to the responsible integration of the academic study of religion into the public school curriculum is to include the topic of religion in teacher education and credentialing programs.

Of particular interest are several recent initiatives sponsored by RISE (Resources for International Studies Education), the International Studies Project

site for northern California. In 1998 members of the CSU, Chico Religious Studies Department gave a full-day presentation to twenty-five K-6 teachers from northeastern California who participated in a year-long institute on “Big Rivers.” This theme addressed the multiple disciplinary perspectives of geography, economics, science, politics, sociology, anthropology, and religious studies. Each session of the institute integrated California history/social science standards-based content, problem based learning pedagogy, and such international studies concepts as “context-setting,” “multiple perspectives,” “managing conflict,” and



“interconnect-edness.”

One day of the institute was devoted to a discussion of “Religion, Rivers, and the Sacred.” I began the session with background on the First Amendment and the “what, why, and how” of teaching about religions in public school classrooms. My colleague, Sarah Pike, then shared her research on the Rio Grande as a site of conflict and interaction between Native American, Spanish, and Anglo religions and cultures using a group discussion of Rudolfo Anaya’s novel, *Bless Me, Ultima*, as a point of departure. And Sarah Caldwell concluded the session with a description of her visits to the Ganges in India and an introduction to the religious mythology and symbolism surrounding that world-famous river.

RISE is currently sponsoring the second year of a three year series of institutes, “Learning to Live with Our Deepest Differences: A California Standards-Based Approach to Teaching About the World’s Religions.” The first year addressed the First Amendment and classic legal cases involving the topic of religion and public education along with sessions devoted to the religions of India (including a field trip to the Sikh Temple in Yuba City), the relationship of the Olympics to ancient Greek religion, and conflict and continuity in the histories of Judaism and Christianity. The second year of the institute, “Children of Abraham: Learning and Teaching about Judaism, Christianity, and Islam,” provides the opportunity for more in-depth attention to these three traditions which figure prominently in the new *History-Social Science Content Standards*. Year three will focus on the religions of China and the traditions of American immigrant and minority communities including the Hmong and other immigrants from Southeast Asia.

### **Pre-Service Teacher Education**

In addition to initiatives that amount to remedial education for in-service teachers, a longer-term approach to the responsible integration of the academic study of religion into the public school curriculum is to include the topic of religion in teacher education and credentialing programs. In an effort to meet this need, the CSU, Chico Department of Religious Studies has designed and implemented a new course, RS 210, “Teaching About Religions in American Public Schools.” This course introduces prospective teachers to First Amendment principles and U.S. Supreme Court decisions that set the framework for the treatment of religion in the public schools, and it introduces them to the basic beliefs, practices, and histories of several of the world’s major religions. RS 210 was first offered in the spring of 1997, and since then two sections of the course with thirty to forty students per section have typically been offered every semester. The course fulfills the “Ethical/Religious Perspectives” requirement for students pursuing the Single Subject Teaching Credential in Social Science (Track 1-Social Science Credential and Social Science Major). The course has also been approved to meet a core requirement for Liberal Studies students who plan to apply for a Multiple Subject Teaching Credential.

RS 210 has been selected for inclusion as a WebCT course in the new CSU On-Line Liberal Studies Degree Program,

which is being funded by a grant from the CSU Chancellor's Office and developed jointly by CSU, Chico and CSU, Sacramento. It has also provided the basis for discussions with Chris Jochim, San Jose State University, and with religion scholars at other CSU campuses, regarding the possibility of making similar courses available throughout the CSU system. A partial syllabus for the course appears as an appendix at the end of this article.

## Conclusion

Since its original adoption in 1988, subsequent updates of the *History-Social Science Framework*, in 1997 and now again in 2000, have included addenda designed to further clarify the place of religion in the curriculum and policies of California's public schools. The new *California History-Social Science Content Standards* also encourage teachers and students to take religion seriously (see Haynes & Beauchamp, 1999). Religion is not a topic that is going to go away, nor should it. All students, elementary and secondary, deserve an education that includes substantial information about the world's religions and about how to live in a religiously pluralistic world. And all teachers deserve the preparation and support that will enable them to deal with this topic in an academically responsible and constitutionally appropriate fashion.

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## Resources for Teaching About Religion in the Social Studies

by Marcia Beauchamp

Marcia Beauchamp is currently the Religious Freedom Programs Coordinator for The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center. In her capacity as programs coordinator, Beauchamp leads workshops for educators across the country on issues of religious liberty in public education, consults with the leaders of the state-wide civic education projects sponsored by the First Amendment Center, and consults with school districts and individuals on issues of religion in the public schools. She is responsible for coordinating the efforts of the California 3Rs Project (Rights, Responsibilities, and Respect), the largest of the state education projects sponsored by the First Amendment Center. Beauchamp has co-authored an article on “Taking Religion Seriously in the Social Studies” for *Social Studies Review*.

### Introduction

Throughout this edition of *California Social Studies Review* several articles have made arguments for teaching about religion in academically and constitutionally appropriate ways. Jennifer Norton explains the appropriate approach, and the ways teachers can create a classroom atmosphere where religion can be dealt with in a fair and academic manner. Rhoda Coleman gives a practical example of teaching about religion using art, and Charles Haynes describes the consensus on teaching about religion that has developed in recent years.

However, as Charles Haynes, Susan Douglass and Susan Mogull attested, while the standards in California and in states across the country include study about the world’s religions, there is no provision in teacher education programs or in state-run in-service education for preparing teachers to deal with the subject. Although improvements have been made to textbooks in U.S. and world history to include more and better content on religion, we still have a long way to go before they include everything that students should know about religion’s role. And textbook publishers have not even begun to address religious ways of seeing the world that could impact other areas of the school curriculum.

Good teachers understand that a classroom atmosphere free of advocacy on the part of the teacher is necessary if religion is to be discussed. Public school teachers, because of their role under the First Amendment, must not promote nor denigrate religion, but must teach about religion in an objective and academic manner. Students may express religious viewpoints

that are relevant to the discussion, but teachers must guard against injecting their own personal beliefs into these discussions.

Beyond the “how” of teaching about religion is the “what?” Which religions will be taught about? How much will be said? These decisions should be guided by the academic requirements of the course, and by state standards and frameworks. California’s standards for history-social science are very clear about where, when and how much religion should be included in the study of U.S. and world history. In other states, and in individual classrooms, teachers must make these decisions based on the needs of the course and issues of fairness and balance.

Teachers need good materials, in-service opportunities and other resources to do the job well. What follows is a review of two new resources, and contact information for learning about workshops and other support available in California.

## Two New Resources

Recently, two wonderful new resources for teaching about religion have become available. One is a series of supplementary texts from Oxford University Press called *Religion in American Life*, and the other is a multimedia CD-ROM from Columbia University Press called *On Common Ground: World Religions in America*. Both of these outstanding resources are major breakthroughs in the effort to take religion more seriously in public and private school curricula.

### Religion in American Life

*Religion in American Life* is a seventeen volume series of supplementary texts written for young adults and general readers by college and university scholars of American religion. It is the first such series tailored to young readers, and presents material on religion in America in the context of history and literature typically taught in schools and familiar to students. The series is organized in three ways: chronologically, topically, and denominationally or by religious faith. This allows the teacher enormous flexibility in her approach to teaching about religion.

The chronological volumes, *Religion in Colonial America*, *Religion in Nineteenth Century America*, and *Religion in Twentieth Century America* trace religion in the U.S. from the colonial period to the present. For example, *Religion in Colonial America* includes a chapter on “The Flowering of Religious Diversity” in the 18th century, and *Religion in Nineteenth Century America* includes information on the role religion played in the civil war.

Topical volumes include *Church and State in America*, *African-American Religion*, *Women and American Religion*, *Immigration and American Religion*, and *Alternative American Religions*. These volumes all include an overview of their topic that ranges from the colonial era to the present. Common themes in immigration, diversity and religion’s role in addressing social issues run through-

out the volumes.

The denominational volumes cover the history of the faith from its inception through modern times in America. These volumes in particular can also be excellent resources for the world history teacher because they include background on the faith traditions themselves. These volumes tend to reveal more about the practices of the various faiths and religious ways of understanding the world and human experience. However, they also, like the other volumes, are written chronologically and with an historical viewpoint.

The great value of *Religion in American Life* is its flexibility and organization. Any or all of these volumes might be used as a basis for student research projects, or as on-going supplements for an entire course. This series is not designed to be an “add-on” to an already over-crowded curriculum. It is meant to provide teachers and students with a richer and more exciting way to cover required topics. An index and biographical supplement that will accompany the series is an additional aid to integrating this wonderful resource into what one is already teaching in U.S. and world history.

## **On Common Ground: World Religions in America**

*On Common Ground: World Religions in America* is a multimedia CD-ROM that was developed by Diana Eck and the Pluralism Project at Harvard University. The CD-ROM is the result of over five years of field research documenting the presence of the world’s religions in America. Features include:

- Multimedia summaries of the fundamental beliefs and practices of each faith
- Movies bringing the traditions to life with the voices and views of people speaking about their own faith experience
- A comprehensive directory listing all of the mosques, temples, and gudwaras and other religious centers in every locale that is featured
- Nearly 2,000 photographs illustrating places of worship
- Profiles of leaders, like Siraj Wahhaj, the first Muslim cleric to open the U.S. Senate.
- Over one hundred printable documents to provide resources for classroom discussion — from the writings of Jefferson and de Tocqueville to a Buddhist statement on school prayer
- A comparative thematic index to reference topics across the religious boundaries
- An on-line component to provide updates to the database [www.fas.harvard.edu/pluralism](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/pluralism)
- A free teacher’s and student’s guide

This CD-ROM is an exciting and fun way to learn about the world's religions. It provides an opportunity for students to hear and see people worshipping in their own unique ways, to hear them talk about their faith, and to experience the variety of religious expression that is a reality in 21st century America.

Some of the challenges of teaching about religion in authentic and accurate ways are resolved when the adherents of the faith are allowed to speak for themselves. On Common Ground allows students to hear the Muslim call to prayer and Sikhs discussing the meaning of the Five K's. Pictures of a Hindu puja and a description of its meaning are located on the pages dedicated to Hinduism, elsewhere Native American pow-wows are colorfully depicted. And there are downloadable documents about religious freedom in the United States from colonial times to the twentieth century, including stories about our on-going struggle to fully and fairly apply those liberties for all of our citizens.

Students and teachers alike will find On Common Ground to be one of the most entertaining and informative interactive study guides they have used to date.

## **The California 3Rs Project**

In addition to locating appropriate resources for teaching about religion, teachers and administrators need to understand their role as the fair honest brokers for the First Amendment. The California 3Rs Project, jointly sponsored by the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association and the First Amendment Center, dedicates itself to making training available to educators on the civic and legal frameworks for dealing with religion in the curriculum and religious liberty in the schools.

The Project has regional leaders, supported by the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association, in all eleven educational regions of California. These regional leaders provide workshops on teaching about religion within the First Amendment framework, content about the religions of the world, and seminars for administrators on working with the community to find common ground on issues of religious liberty in the schools.

For more information about the California 3Rs Project and upcoming workshops in your area, call or email Marcia Beauchamp at 415-482-9783, or email at [mbeauchamp@freedomforum.org](mailto:mbeauchamp@freedomforum.org).

## Resources

*America's Religions: An Educators Guide to Beliefs and Practices.* Hubbard, B., Hatfield and Santucci, authors. Teacher Ideas Press, Englewood, CO: 1997. 1-800-237-6124

*America's Religions: An Educators Guide to Beliefs and Practices* is an excellent resource book for classroom teachers as well as school administrators. Written by three California State University professors, this book is an overview of the beliefs and practices of twelve distinct faith groups, eight Christian denominations, as well as chapters on New Age Religion, Fundamentalism, and Secular Humanism and Atheism in the United States. The value of this work is in the attention given to the basic beliefs, common practices, common misconceptions and challenges for the classroom involving these various world views. Whether used as a primer on the various faiths, or as an on-going reference guide, this book should be on every school principal's shelf.

### **Council on Islamic Education**

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Fountain Valley, CA 92728-0186  
(714) 839-2929  
www.CIE.org  
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The Council on Islamic Education (CIE) is a national, non-profit resource organization dedicated to providing information on Islam and Muslim history to K-12 textbook publishers, education officials, curriculum developers, teachers, and other education professionals. CIE is comprised of scholars and academicians associated with major universities and institutions throughout the United States. CIE produces resource materials, conducts workshops, attends education conferences, and convenes events in its efforts towards accurate, balanced, and sensitive coverage of Islam in the context of a global approach to world history.

### **Religion and Public Education Resource Center**

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[www.csuchico.edu/rs/reperc.html](http://www.csuchico.edu/rs/reperc.html)

The Religion and Public Education Resource Center (RPERC) provides resources for teaching about religions in public schools in ways that are constitutionally permissible and academically sound. The Center serves both as a depository of existing materials and as a catalyst for the development and distribution of new materials relating to pedagogical and legal issues that arise in connection with teaching about religion in public schools. RPERC offers curriculum guides and sample lessons in several subject areas for classroom teachers.