After the Session Pack

The activities and lessons included in this After the Session Pack can be used following the *Religious Diversity in the Classroom: Fostering a Culture of Respect* webinar or as a stand-alone series of units and resources. They develop many of the key skills listed in the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts.

We hope that all of the resources provided in this pack will support your important work in creating safe classrooms where all students feel welcome.

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- Webinar Recording
- Webinar after session pack

Dear Reader,

For over 15 years, Tanenbaum has worked on the question that confronts educators across the U.S.: what to do about teaching religion in the classroom. We know that many educators are challenged when they need to teach about religious differences. And we know that this discomfort is exacerbated by the widely held – but incorrect – belief that it is either illegal or simply not appropriate to do so. How often do we hear that teachers must not teach "about" religion? Or that by doing so, they are appropriating a role best left to parents or families?

Our response is clear. Today, there are 50 million children in U.S. schools, and they are the most diverse group in our nation's history. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010) They come from different ethnicities, backgrounds and countries, with religious practices and various beliefs that are an important part of students' many identities.

If we avoid noticing and talking about differences based on religious and secular traditions, and if we only give attention to other differences such as race, gender, and sexual orientation, are we – by omission – suggesting that religion is not worthy of inquiry? Or, that religion is somehow a frightening problem that we must avoid mentioning? By not addressing religion, and not assisting our students in learning about the many different ways people believe, do we risk perpetuating stereotypes based on misinformation, bias and ignorance?

The Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding and Teaching Tolerance believe the answer is easy. Teachers need the resources to teach "about" religion – without in any way supporting or denigrating different beliefs. That's why we have teamed up to address religious diversity in the classroom through the delivery of a five part collaborative webinar series entitled *Religious Diversity in the Classroom*. The second webinar, "Fostering a Culture of Respect," and the accompanying after-session pack are designed to help educators create strate-

gies for creating inclusive learning environments where differences are respected, including religious differences.

Students learn best in environments where they feel safe, supported and respected. By implementing the key ideas outlined in the webinar, “Fostering a Culture of Respect,” and by using the frameworks and instructional activities provided in the following pages, educators will have the tools to create classrooms that inspire curiosity about differences. Including religious differences as well as appropriate content considerations for where the topic of religion and religious diversity can be explored..

Tanenbaum is a secular, non-sectarian non-profit organization that combats religious prejudice and builds respect for religious diversity through practical strategies and resources. At the foundation of our educational initiatives is the premise that multicultural education must not stop at the threshold of religion. We are enormously grateful to our partners at Teaching Tolerance for their expertise in anti-bias education, and for their leadership in helping communicate the value of addressing religious difference in the classroom.

We encourage you to contact us for any support that you may need in implementing these resources. We can be reached by email at education@tanenbaum.org and editor@tolerance.org or by phone at (212) 967-7707.

In partnership for preparing the next generation,

Sincerely,

Joyce S. Dubensky, CEO

Fostering Respect: A Foundational Approach

Creating a space where academic and social-emotional goals are accomplished side by side can ensure classrooms are inclusive of all students. The following are important areas to consider when doing this work:

- Supporting students' identities and making it safe for them to fully be themselves;
- Using instructional strategies that support diverse learning styles and allow for deep exploration of anti-bias themes;
- Creating classroom environments that reflect diversity, equity and justice;
- Engaging families and communities in ways that are meaningful and culturally competent;
- Encouraging students to speak out against bias and injustice;
- Including anti-bias curricula as part of larger individual, school and community action.

Teaching Tolerance's Critical Practices for Anti-bias Education guide (http://www.tolerance.org/critical-practices) recommends practices, includes helpful explanations and suggests specific strategies you can try in your own classroom.

Tanenbaum's pedagogy (http://tanenbaum.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/ED-Seven-Principles.pdf), the *Seven Principles for Inclusive Education,* offer strategic frameworks for considering addressing the topic of religion and religious diversity from the perspectives of the student as well as the educator.

When discussing sensitive topics like religion with your students, it's important to establish Ground Rules for respectful communication upfront so that everyone feels comfortable sharing. These Ground Rules form the foundation of inclusive classrooms that encourage students to be fully themselves. Students can come up with a list of behaviors that make them feel safe and respected. We recommend that the following Ground Rules also be included on the list:

- Listen when others speak (i.e., not busy planning your response)
- Participate fully 6
- Keep an open mind (i.e, assume you can learn from everyone in the room)
- Consider different points of view
- Listen/Participate from what's important to you
- Use "I" language (we can only speak for ourselves, not for a group)
- "One mic" – One person speaks at a time
- Confidentiality – It may be very important for participants to know their opinions will not be shared broadly.

- Everyone has a chance to speak
- Use positive language (no cursing, slurs, or accusatory language)
- Be respectful toward one another

This lesson (https://www.tanenbaum.org/sites/default/files/Respecting%20Each%20Other_0.pdf) is recommended for grades K-12. Students will explore why respect is important and consider what respectful behavior looks like, sounds like and feels like.

Make sure that there is verbal agreement to the Ground Rules before you proceed with the conversation. You can periodically remind students of the Ground Rules and refer back to them when confronted with difficult behavior.

Middle and high school educators can establish Ground Rules for Discussion using this lesson (http://www.tolerance.org/lesson/ground-rules-discussion).

Critical Practices for Anti-bias Education: Classroom Culture

The following recommended practices, helpful explanations and connections to anti-bias education lead to specific strategies you can try on your own to build positive classroom culture.

The Anti-bias Framework[1] (ABF) is a set of anchor standards and age-appropriate learning outcomes divided into four domains—identity, diversity, justice and action (IDJA). The standards provide a common language and organizational structure: Teachers can use them to guide curriculum development, and administrators can use them to make schools more just, equitable and safe. Teaching about IDJA allows educators to engage a range of anti-bias, multicultural and social justice issues. The "Connection to anti-bias education" sections here refer to the four domains within the ABF.

Honoring Student Experience When asking students to explore issues of personal and social identity, teachers must provide safe spaces where students are seen, valued, cared for and respected. It is also important that students have opportunities to learn from one another's varied experiences and perspectives. To create this learning environment, teachers need to skillfully draw on student experiences to enrich the curriculum.

Teachers can show they value students' lives and identities in a variety of ways. Some are small, like taking the time to learn the proper pronunciation of every student's name or getting to know young people's families. Others require more time and investment, like building curriculum around personal narratives or incorporating identity-based responses into the study of texts. At the community level, it is important to understand neighborhood demographics, strengths, concerns, conflicts and challenges. Like students themselves, these dynamics may change frequently.

For teachers whose experiences differ from those of their students, it is critical to exercise sensitivity. They must bring the following to the effort:

- An asset-based view of youth and unfamiliar identity groups
- A commitment to avoiding and challenging stereotypes
- A sense of openness and cultural humility
- A willingness to let students define their own identities

Connection to Anti-bias Education

Honoring student experience supports three of the four anti-bias domains: Identity, Diversity

[1] http://www.tolerance.org/anti-bias-framework

and Action. Students who feel their experiences are unwelcome, judged, stereotyped, disrespected or invisible find it extremely difficult to engage in meaningful discussion of identity and justice issues. Those whose stories and voices are heard and reflected in the classroom are more likely to engage with anti-bias curriculum and translate their learning into action.

Knowing and valuing students' lives provides other benefits:

- Ability to identify potential "hot spots" on key topics.
- Development of caring student-teacher relationships that support effective identity-based learning.
- Development of intergroup awareness and understanding.
- Direction in the selection of texts that are relevant to a particular class.
- Appreciation of student contributions to discussions.

Strategies

Classroom-Reflective Texts Coupled with Nonjudgmental Dialogue

Choosing texts that reflect classroom demographics and following the readings with discussions or reflective writing assignments can provide teachers with powerful information about their students' hopes, concerns, strengths and life circumstances. These practices also open channels of understanding among students. Successful conversations about issues of identity frequently lead to deeper dialogue about students' own backgrounds and the experiences of others. My Traditions[2] can be a helpful lesson.

Share Stories That Make Room for Student Sharing

Personal anecdotes—respectfully and thoughtfully shared by teachers—have great power. Stories should be chosen carefully, kept brief, and told at a level that invites appropriate student sharing.

Community Study or Student-Led Walking Tour

Community studies usually address up to three questions; structure can vary greatly and may involve research, interviews, art, writing, video or other media. A walking tour should also focus on a few themes and ask students to highlight neighborhood places *they* find meaningful in relation to a relevant social issue. Student age and physical limitations should be taken into consideration when planning a walking tour. Who are the Activists in my Community?[3] can be a useful way to engage students in thinking about civic action.

Thoughtful Classroom Setup and Structure Without saying a word, classrooms send messages about diversity, relationship building, communication and the roles of teachers and students. Consider the different messages sent by these two classrooms:

Classroom 1

Desks are arranged in a U shape. The teacher's desk is in the front center of the room. On the wall is a poster of U.S. presidents, a copy of the Declaration of Independence and

[2] https://www.tanenbaum.org/sites/default/files/My%20Traditions%20Lesson.pdf
[3] http://www.tolerance.org/lesson/who-are-activists-my-community

inspiring quotes from Winston Churchill, Robert F. Kennedy and Albert Einstein. Students are working quietly on an independent assignment.

Classroom 2
Desks are arranged in clusters of four with students facing one another. The teacher's desk is in the back corner of the room. On the wall is a display of student self-portraits, a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and inspiring quotes from Maya Angelou, Aung San Suu Kyi and César Chávez. Students are working with their table-mates on a group project.

Classroom setup should be student centered. Specifics will vary from teacher to teacher and class to class, but common elements include these:

- *Classroom milieu*. Classrooms should be decorated with multicultural images that mirror student backgrounds and showcase the diversity of our society.
- *Arrangement of furniture and supplies*. The arrangement will look different depending on age group and subject, but all teachers can draw on these goals when setting up a classroom: supporting collaboration, fostering dialogue, encouraging ownership and ensuring comfort.
- *Student roles and responsibilities*. Classrooms will be most effective when structured to maximize student voice and participation.
- *Classroom norms*. Norms and expectations should take into account different cultural and communication styles, as well as gender differences, language needs and the desire to challenge stereotypes. Students should be involved in setting classroom norms to generate buy-in.

Connection to Anti-bias Education

Thoughtful classroom setup and structure supports two of the four anti-bias domains: Diversity and Justice. A welcoming class space sets the tone for participatory engagement. Diverse images affect students' conscious and subconscious understanding of classroom values. Expectations and practices that honor diverse backgrounds also create a more just and equitable educational experience.

Strategies

Classroom "Audit"
A (nonjudgmental) classroom audit involves "reading" the messages conveyed by the images on the walls, the books on the shelves and the arrangement of the furniture with an eye toward diversity, equity and student empowerment. The audit also includes considering the types of interactions that teachers have with students and that students have with one another.

Student Jobs and Ownership of Classroom Space
Many daily tasks can be done by students who, given the opportunity, may create new and interesting ways to approach them. Real-world lessons related to work and responsibility can be reinforced in a classroom. promoted for a job well done. Some classroom jobs might involve passing out materials, documenting or taking notes, managing a classroom library, filing papers or helping with a bulletin board. The job of "peacemaker" can

work nicely in classrooms where students have been trained in conflict resolution. Jobs in a responsive classroom can accommodate multiple learning styles such as artistic, kinesthetic and verbal.

Gender-Neutral Practices
Many teachers, especially at the elementary level, seat or group students along gender lines. However, not everyone fits traditional gender categories. Some students may feel they are truly a different gender than their physical bodies suggest; others might not fit neatly into either the male or female identity category. Using gender-neutral categories or allowing students to choose the group with which they identify affirms the experiences of all students.

Gender norms and stereotypes are so ingrained in our society that adults are often surprised to realize how early children internalize these ideas. In this lesson[4], students think about characteristics they ascribe to either boys or girls, learn about the idea of "stereotypes" and consider whether gender stereotypes are fair or unfair. They will also discuss how it feels to not conform to socially defined gender norms.

Shared Inquiry and Dialogue Differences shape who we are and what we know. Life, history, society and power cannot be understood from a single perspective; we need multiple viewpoints to truly see the world. Because of this, inclusive classrooms must function as learning communities built on shared inquiry and dialogue.

Dialogue is more than conversation. It is also different than debate, in which someone wins and someone loses. Dialogue requires openness to new ideas and collective learning. This is not an easy practice; for students (and teachers) to engage in dialogue, they must build and exercise specific skills:

- *Listening*. Deeply listening to what others say and to the feelings, experiences and wisdom behind what they say.
- *Humility*. Recognizing that, however passionately we hold ideas and opinions, other people may hold pieces of the puzzle that we don't.
- *Respect*. Trusting the integrity of others, believing they have the right to their opinions (even when different from your own) and valuing others enough to risk sharing ideas.
- *Trust*. Building a safe space to explore new ideas and work through conflicts, controversy and painful moments that may arise when talking about issues of injustice and oppression.
- *Voice*. Speaking the truth as we see it and asking questions about things we don't know or understand, particularly on topics related to identity, power and justice.

Connection to Anti-bias Education
Shared inquiry and dialogue support two of the four anti-bias domains: Diversity and Action. Building the skills necessary to explore multiple perspectives fosters critical thinking, complex textual understanding and appreciation for diversity. Dialogue also supports active

[4] http://www.tolerance.org/lesson/think-outside-box-brainstorming-about-gender-stereotypes

listening, respectful sharing and conflict resolution. A culture of shared inquiry offers a lived example of meaningful collaborative work and a model for community building.

Strategies

Naming Shared Inquiry as a Goal

Because many students experience classrooms that do not value shared inquiry and dialogue, it is important for teachers to create a safe environment before asking students to engage in this work. Safety can be established by discussing principles of engagement, demonstrating the teacher's commitment to collective learning or creating a set of discussion agreements. Tanenbaum's Talking Stick lesson[5] can aid in creating a physical example of these important practices.

Teaching Active Listening Skills

Active listening is a way of hearing and responding to another person that requires the listener to stop thinking about his or her own ideas and focus on the speaker. Active listening behavior includes asking good questions, listening without judgment and paraphrasing. These behaviors can be modeled through the use of talking circles or ordered sharing. Short practice activities can also strengthen active listening skills.

Rethinking Participation Norms

To most teachers, class participation means contributing to discussions, volunteering to answer questions or otherwise engaging in verbal exchanges. However, participation does not have to be verbal; gender, culture and ability may affect student comfort levels with verbal communication. Modeling equity and inclusiveness calls for a broader definition of participation that includes active listening, written response, artistic response and involvement in small groups. These options should all be valued as classroom participation. Teaching Tolerance's toolkit on developing the student voice[6] can be helpful here.

Addressing Conflicts and Hurt Feelings

Teachers need to prepare for possible conflicts or hurt feelings when exploring personally or politically sensitive material. Teachers can encourage students to publicly or privately name "ouch moments"—times when comments or reactions (usually unintentional) cause upset or discomfort. It is also helpful for teachers to check in with students who seem upset as a result of a class activity or conversation.

The *Speak Up at School*[7] guide helps teachers develop the skills to speak up themselves and help others find the courage to speak up too. This guide offers advice about how to respond to remarks made by students and by other adults and gives guidance for helping students learn to speak up as well.

Social and Emotional Safety Social-emotional learning, respect and safety are as important as literacy and critical thinking skills when exploring an anti-bias curriculum. Re-

[5] https://www.tanenbaum.org/sites/default/files/Talking_Stick_and_Tree_of_Gratefulness_Lesson.pdf
[6] http://www.tolerance.org/student-voice
[7] http://www.tolerance.org/publication/speak-school

search shows that students need to feel both physically and emotionally safe to learn. This includes safety from stereotype, threat, harassment and exclusion.

Creating a safe climate takes time and work. These are some of the most important components:

- Active teaching of social-emotional skills
- Attention to creating positive relationships
- Bullying prevention and intervention
- Community building
- Explicit focus on understanding and appreciating differences
- Meaningful conflict resolution
- Teaching students to challenge bias and exclusion
- Upstander training

Work on classroom climate and social-emotional learning cannot simply focus on empathy, kindness and inclusion. Social difference and bias underlie many unsafe and exclusionary behaviors; these issues need to be discussed explicitly. Appreciation for multicultural perspectives is also critical when teaching about relationship building, conflict management and community. This helps students learn to draw on many traditions and experiences and address social divisions in the classroom.

Connection to Anti-bias Education

Prioritizing social and emotional safety supports three of the four anti-bias domains: Identity, Diversity and Action. This practice supports a classroom community in which students feel secure enough to engage in respectful, productive conversations about identity and diversity. This work also models actions necessary to nurture inclusive, respectful connections across lines of difference.

Strategies

Classroom Contracts

A contract of norms and behaviors can help define the classroom community as a socially and emotionally safe place. Students should participate in shaping the contract, identifying a list of agreements about how class members will treat one another, talk together and so on. Issues such as identity, difference and power should be addressed explicitly. For example, a contract could include “Listen with respect to the experiences of others,” “Try to understand what someone is saying before rushing to judgment” or “Put-downs of any kind are never OK.”

Explicit Anti-bullying or Community-Building Curricula

Many powerful anti-bullying and community- building curricula, when integrated into the regular school curriculum, can build social-emotional skills and teach students to manage conflict. Below are a few suggested resources. Not all address diversity or bias issues specifically; be sure to add these issues to the existing materials if they’re missing.

- *Tribes Learning Community*. Research-based approaches to classroom and school-wide community building, social-emotional education and the development of positive learning communities (all grades).
- *Respect for All Project (GroundSpark)*. Award-winning films, curriculum guides and teacher training on issues of bias-based bullying, family diversity, gender role expectations and LGBT inclusivity (all grades).
- *Steps to Respect/Second Step (Committee for Children)*. Research-based social-emotional learning and bullying-prevention programs (pre-K through middle school).
- *Bullied: A Student, a School and a Case That Made History*[8] *(Teaching Tolerance)*. Documentary and teaching guide about one student's ordeal at the hands of anti-gay bullies and his fight against hate and harassment (middle and high school).
- *A Guide to the Film* Bully *by Lee Hirsch (Facing History and Ourselves)*. Film and discussion guide on bullying and its profound impact on several different students and families (middle and high school).

Participation in Mix It Up at Lunch Day
Mix It Up[9] is a Teaching Tolerance program designed to help students identify, question and cross social boundaries. Launched in 2001, Mix It Up recognizes that some of the deepest social divisions in schools are found in the cafeteria. Each fall, Teaching Tolerance sponsors a national Mix It Up at Lunch Day when schools around the country encourage students to move out of their comfort zones and share a meal with peers who are different from them.

Values-Based Behavior Management Discipline and behavior management are central to classroom culture. How are students encouraged to treat one another? What happens when they make poor choices or present behavioral challenges? What shapes student-teacher interactions? And what happens when conflicts arise?

This critical practice asks teachers to think about behavior management in light of five key principles from the *Perspectives* curriculum:

- Belief in the dignity of every person
- Community building
- Equity and fairness
- Respect for cultural differences
- Respect for the safety and inclusion of all individuals and groups

These values can be creatively infused into disciplinary practices. However, in general, responsive classrooms address three key aspects.

First, behavior management systems must support safe, inclusive communities by enforcing high standards for respectful interaction; incorporating student-generated discipline policies; teaching conflict resolution; and actively addressing *all* instances of bias, bullying, exclusion or disrespect.

[8] http://www.tolerance.org/kit/bullied-student-school-and-case-made-history
[9] http://www.tolerance.org/mix-it-up/what-is-mix

Educators for Social Responsibility worked hard along with the Bronx Design and Construction Academy to build a justice-oriented framework for handling behavioral issues in school. Explore how real-life discipline scenarios could be handled in alternate ways and consider the benefits of different approaches in this feature story and activity. Also review Teaching Tolerance's article[10] on restoring justice and toolkit[11] for the same.

Second, disciplinary incidents must go beyond punishment and be treated as opportunities for growth, restitution and community building. This is not to say that rules violations should not be met with consequences. However, if community respect is to be a core classroom value, students should not be cast out of the group, even if they struggle to live up to expectations.

Finally, behavior management practices must reflect fairness, equity and cultural awareness. Research shows that students of color and special education students face disproportionate rates of discipline, suspension and expulsion. These patterns have devastating social consequences. Applying disciplinary rules fairly requires self-awareness and willingness to suspend judgment (positive as well as negative) about individual students. Culture also plays a role in disciplinary judgments; in some cases, "inappropriate behaviors" may reflect a cultural mismatch between the norms of the school and the norms of a student's home culture. Teachers can better understand the relationship between culture and discipline by working on a related critical practice: self-awareness and cultural competency.

Connection to Anti-bias Education

Taking a values-based approach to behavior management and discipline supports one of the four anti-bias domains: Justice. This practice exposes students to community-building goals and to a system of justice that values all people and builds connections rather than creates divisions.

Strategies

Student-Generated Agreements and Contracts

Involving students in the design of classroom discipline policies can go a long way toward establishing buy-in and shared ownership of classroom culture. Ideally, students will work on the policies as a class, but teachers can also work individually with students who need extra support. Tanenbaum offers this lesson on the elements of conflict[12] as a way for students to identify what a shared safe space classroom looks like.

"Zero Indifference" but not Zero Tolerance

Although zero-tolerance policies are popular, mounting evidence suggests that this approach does not make schools safer. An alternative (recommended by the American Civil Liberties Union; the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network; the Anti-Defamation League; the Respect for All Project; and Teaching Tolerance) is taking a "zero-indifference" approach to bullying, harassment and other disciplinary issues. Zero indifference means

[10] http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-47-summer-2014/feature/restoring-justice
[11] http://www.tolerance.org/toolkit/toolkit-restoring-justice
[12] https://www.tanenbaum.org/sites/default/files/ED%20-%20Sample%20Lesson%20HS%20-%20COEXIST_0.pdf

never letting disrespectful conduct go unaddressed; school staff always name and respond to behaviors, but they do not implement automatic suspension, expulsion or other punishments.

Restorative Justice

Restorative justice is an approach to school discipline (and criminal justice) that emphasizes repairing harm and restoring relationships rather than simply punishing those who have engaged in misconduct. Restorative justice spans a wide variety of practices and strategies, including peacemaking circles, peer jury processes, mediation, conferencing and classroom discussions focused on building empathy.

Fostering a Culture of Respect: Classroom Audit

	Classroom	School	Reflection/Notes
Different Races			
Different Genders			
Different Abilities (Wheelchair, Glasses, etc.)			
Different Religions			
Different Family Structures			
Different Ages			
Different Environments and/or Surroundings			

Fostering a Culture of Respect: Components of Shared Inquiry and Dialogue

Listening: Listen *behind* what is said	
Humility: Our side is not the only side; others may have different information	
Respect: Trusting integrity of others; everyone has a right to their own opinions	
Trust: Work through conflicts, controversy, and painful moments	
Voice: Being comfortable asking questions about things we don't know and/or understand	

Fostering Respect: Speaking Kindness in Democratic Classrooms

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. SL.5.1 – Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Lesson Components:

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will identify ways that they want others to speak to them.
- Students will develop guidelines for kind speech.
- Students will revisit their guidelines to reflect on their implementation and success.

TIME NEEDED: 50 minutes, plus preparation and optional activities.

WHAT YOU NEED: For this lesson you will need:

- Post-It stickers
- Poster Paper
- Markers

FRAMEWORK:

For educators who hope to create a democratic classroom, one of the first steps is to co-create classroom rules with students. This lesson invites students to reflect on student-to-student verbal interactions and develop a set of guidelines for speaking to each other with kindness and respect.

PROCEDURE:

Classroom rules are part of a democratic classroom. There are ways that democratic citizens are to speak with each other even in times when they disagree. This lesson takes a common classroom principle—that of speaking to each other with kindness and respect—and helps students delve deeper into communications skills necessary for respectful citizenry.

Inform students that they're going to make a list of ways they like to be interacted with and spoken to.

Put students into groups of three or four. Give each student a packet of Post-It notes and ask students to discuss the ways they like to be addressed. When someone makes a statement to this effect, that students should write the statement on one of the Post-Is notes. At the end, they'll have a stack of Post-Its on their desks. If you want to model this for your students, simply use 8 1/2 –by-11 sheets of paper and write statements on one each and tape them to the front board.

To take a positive approach, ask students to identify ways they *like* to be addressed. (It's often counter-productive to start students dialoguing about the ways that others speak to them offensively.) This positive approach sets the right tone in your classroom.

It may at first be difficult for students to frame their responses positively. The examples below may help. When students falter, just ask them if they can reframe their statements using positive language. Answers will vary, but these examples will give you enough to get students primed:

- "I like it when people use respectful tones with me" instead of "I don't like it when people yell or scream at me."
- "I like it when others share the conversation equally" instead of "I don't like it when people dominate what's going on."
- "It's nice when classmates just say a simple "thank you" or "please"" instead of "I hate it when people are rude."
- "I love it when people treat me with respect" instead of "I think people who use racist and sexist language are stupid."

After students feel they've exhausted their list, have them begin to group statements that seem to go together. You can begin by showing them what to do on the front board with the 8 ½-by-11 sheets of paper. For instance, you may notice that several of the students' statements have to do with non-verbal communication; you can put those in one row. When students know what to do, have them group their statements into rows by simply rearranging their Post-Its.

When they have their statements in rows, ask students to name each row. For instance, as in the example above, a row might be labelled "Non-Verbal Communication."

Have students make positive action statements that address the concerns mentioned in each row of Post-It notes. For instance, on the "Non-Verbal Communication" row, students might say, "We will be careful that our faces and bodies match the kind words we want to hear from each other." Write students' action statements on the board.

After their summaries, let each group take one action statement and make a poster of it to hang in the classroom.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY: Once students have identified and postered these positive principles of speaking with each other, why not have them make it contractual? Have each student come up and sign the posters with their names, agreeing that they are making a contract with others to abide by these rules of speaking with good intent.

As all educators know, ways of speaking to each other in classrooms need to be revisited often. As an extension activity, have students reflect on whether they are abiding by the principles they've listed. Why or why not? What seems difficult about it?

Fostering Respect: Ongoing Reflection and Learning

The work of social justice education is never finished. There is always more for both teachers and students to learn—about themselves and others, about identity and diversity, about discrimination and empowerment, and about how they all relate. Being a teacher-leader in the anti-bias field means embracing the opportunity for ongoing reflection and growth.

Personal exploration helps prepare teachers to address a broader range of anti-bias topics more deeply. Ongoing learning also motivates teachers to use and promote inclusive curriculum from year to year.

Keeping a professional journal helps capture evolving thoughts on anti-bias content and curriculum, classroom or school dynamics related to religious and non-religious belief. Use the following questions to reflect on your own ideas about religion and consider how those ideas influence your practice.

1. What are my own ideas about religion? How do I define religion?
2. What is the role of religious and non-religious belief in my life, in my culture and in other cultures that surround me?
3. What is/was my own religious or non-religious socialization?
4. Is being religious or non-religious an important part of my identity? Who shares this identity? Who doesn't? How do I respond and relate to them?
5. Is being religious or non-religious an important part of my students' identities? How does it evidence itself in the classroom?
6. What is my first, consistent reaction when students bring up the topic of religion in my classroom?
7. What role does religious and non-religious belief play in people's lives?

Create an opportunity during a preparation period of staff development time to share your experiences with fellow faculty members. This sharing can create a foundation for beginning to see how to address the climate in your school regarding religious and non-religious beliefs.

Teaching and Learning about Religions: Considerations for Communicating with Families

The below recommendations are designed to help public school educators, as well as those in independent and parochial schools, communicate about classroom content and extra-curricular educational activities that foster learning about the religious differences and are inclusive of religiously diverse family backgrounds. As always, you should keep in mind your school and/or districts policies when planning and communicating about classroom and school activities.

Classroom Lessons

Let parents know that it is a school educator's responsibility to teach about religion from a factual, neutral and objective point of view that neither promotes or denigrates a particular religious belief no belief or religion or no religion in general.

Teaching and learning about several different religions and beliefs is important to providing a comprehensive education. Teachers may engage family members for additional information, but should be mindful of not asking someone to represent all people of a particular group ("spokesperson syndrome").

Primary sources can be a useful tool for promoting important critical thinking skills. Using such resources, students can develop a stronger, more nuanced view of historical and/or current events involving religion and religious traditions.

Several of the Common Core standards, across grade levels, align with the goals of teaching about religion and religious diversity. (See page 24 for more on the connections between Common Core and teaching about religion.)

It is important to learn about religious holidays throughout the year. Teachers may call upon family members to share about significant holidays that they celebrate in their homes. However, family members should not be asked to represent all people of a particular group ("spokesperson syndrome"). Students' learning can also be enhanced when family and/or community members share primary resources related to their religious traditions. Such resources include, but are not limited to, photos, videos, and letters. Note, any materials should be presented in a non-devotional manner.

Sometimes, parents and family members may prefer that their children not participate in a particular educational activity for religious reasons. "If focused on a specific discussion, assignment, or activity, such a request should be routinely granted in order to strike a balance between the student's religious freedom and the school's interest in providing a well-rounded education." [13]

School Plays and Concerts

Concerts and school plays present great opportunities for students to learn about history and culture through the arts. The content of school plays and concerts should always be linked to educational goals and the broader mission of the school. For instance, a school can perform Andrew Lloyd Weber's *Jesus Christ, Superstar* as part of an educational program designed to learn about the history and development of musical theatre. School plays must have an overall secular and objective theme.

Furthermore, a school can perform classical music with religious themes – for instance, Verdi's "Requiem" or other compositions that make direct reference to religion. If such works are chosen for study and/or performance, it must be for their educational value, and not in order to send a particular religious message. Studying the religious themes in these various artistic works can help deepen students' understanding of how religion is embedded in culture and has contributed to the development of theatre and music as art forms.

Student participation in extracurricular activities and special events such as school plays, should be voluntary

Field Trips

Field trips to sites of religious historical significance can be a meaningful way to extend learning beyond the classroom and enhance students' understanding of relevant course content. In order to maintain neutrality, these trips cannot involve any form of religious coercion or proselytizing.

Every effort should be made to provide students with the opportunity to visit a variety of sites or provide students with access to study a variety of materials of significance.

[13] http://www.freedomforum.org/publications/first/religioninpublicschools/parentsguidereligion.pdf

Teaching and Learning about Religions: Considerations for Lesson Planning

This information was originally included in the After the Session pack for our first webinar in this series, "What's Law Got to do with it?" We believe that this information remains useful in thinking about creating learning environments where students feel safe, respected and appreciated. We have highlighted three key areas for consideration, to ensure that your instruction is a) neutral and objective, b) non-devotional and c) neither promoting nor denigrating religion, non-religion nor a particular religious practice. These guidelines can also serve as a resource as you plan lessons to address religious diversity. As always, you should keep in mind your own students' learning priorities, as well as any instructional goals and educational policies set by your school and/or district.

Neutrality and Objectivity

Key Idea: "Teachers must remain neutral concerning religion, neutral among religions, and neutral between religion and non-religion."[14] In other words, it is a teacher's job to present information, not opinions, and to refrain from giving more attention or value to any particular religion/non-religion over another.

Lessons that discuss religion are **neutral and objective** when they:

- Present facts in a balanced manner, favouring no particular religion or perspective and sharing comparable information about multiple traditions.
- Do not make generalizations about a group of people or stereotype.
    - Avoid language of "all" or "always" (e.g., "all members of (x) religion always do (y).")
    - Remember that there is diversity within diversity.
- Discuss several different religions, including those that are not part of the majority present in a school or classroom.
- Include critical thinking about historical and/or current events involving religion and religious tradi-

[14] http://www.freedomforum.org/publications/first/teachersguide/teachersguide.pdf, Page 6

tions.[15]

- The use of primary sources will allow students to consider questions of point-of-view and author's bias, deepening their understanding of how religion affects individuals and has contributed to the development of culture, society and politics.
- Regarding primary sources, the Library of Congress writes: "Primary sources provide a window into the past - unfiltered access to the record of artistic, social, scientific and political thought and achievement during the specific period under study, produced by people who lived during that period. Bringing young people into close contact with these unique, often profoundly personal, documents and objects can give them a very real sense of what it was like to be alive during a long-past era."[16]

Furthermore, exploring primary sources creates an opportunity for students to "relate in a personal way to events of the past."[17] The use of such first-person accounts encourages deeper student connection to real, human stories and experiences, while also developing the important, Common Core-aligned skills of active reading, critical thinking and consideration of multiple perspectives.

Non-Devotional

Lessons that discuss religion are **non-devotional** when they:

- Aim for student awareness of religious diversity without imposing any religious or non-religious viewpoint.
- If using religious texts (e.g., scriptural writings) – They are presented and studied from an academic perspective, rather than for the purpose of learning religious doctrine.
- Do not seek to indoctrinate students in a particular religious or non-religious belief.
- Do not include participation in any religious rituals or practices, including any form of prayer or worship.

Neither Promoting nor Denigrating Religion

Lessons that discuss religion **neither promote nor denigrate religion** when they:

- Make no value judgment regarding whether one is or is not religious.
- Discuss religion/non-religious beliefs as an aspect of identity and as a component of multiculturalism and diversity.
- Include a variety of different religions, expanding beyond the majority present in a classroom or school.
- Respect students' rights to hold their own religious or non-religious/secular beliefs.

[15] Adapted from http://www.freedomforum.org/publications/first/teachersguide/teachersguide.pdf - Page 4
[16] http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/whyuse.html
[17] *Ibid.*

- Teachers can model for students how to communicate about their beliefs respectfully and in a manner appropriate for the school environment.

Educator Assessment: Teaching about Religion

Factors	Please rate, on a scale of 1-5, how well you think you do this (1 being "I need to focus more attention on this", 5 being "I do this well")	Please rate, on a scale of 1-5, how you prioritize these factors (1 being the biggest priority, 5 being the least)	Notes and Next Steps for Specific Factor:
Is relevant to educational goals			
Is taught from a factual and secular perspective			
Does not blur secular values with religious values			
Is mindful of the developmental stage and maturity of students			
Gives equal emphasis to minority and majority religions and the perspectives of non-believers			
Is cautious and aware of "spokesperson syndrome"			
Does not favor religion over no religion			
Does not attribute significance of any religious viewpoint to the school			
Is aligned to the classroom rules of respect			

Resources	
General Notes	

Teaching about Religion and Common Core Connections

The skills students gain through learning about religion and religious diversity in an unbiased, academic manner, overlap with the skills identified in the Common Core State Standards as essential for College and Career Readiness. These skills include:

- Analyzing the development and interaction of ideas
- Assessing different points of view
- Integrating information from diverse media sources
- Crafting substantial arguments bolstered by strong supporting evidence grounded in informational texts
- Conducting research based on meaningful questions
- Conversing with diverse partners
- Using language thoughtfully

Below is an overview of how teaching about religion helps meet Common Core standards across grade levels.

Elementary School, Grades K-5

- Speaking and Listening, Standard 1a, Kindergarten – "Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others and taking turns speaking about the topics and texts under discussion)."
    - When developing rules for discussions, teachers should be sure to emphasize the skills and dispositions necessary to speak with peers respectfully. Creating and adhering to these rules for discussion will help ensure that all diverse voices are heard and respected. We recommend involving students in the process of developing these rules for discussion.
- Reading Standards for Literature, Standard 9, Grade 4 – "Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g., opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events (e.g., the quest) in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures."
    - It is important that students read stories/literature representative of diverse cultures, including diverse religions. Seeing oneself reflected in what one reads can be an important and validating experience for children. Furthermore, reading a diverse array of literature will help students recognize similarities and differences between various cultures and religions – thus helping to add understanding to their experience of diversity in their communities.

- Writing Standards, Standard 7, Grade 2 – "Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., read a number of books on a single topic to produce a report; record science observations)."

    - This standard emphasizes an important aspect of the research process: consulting multiple sources of information – which helps to counteract bias and ensure that a diverse array of perspectives is represented. Collaboration with peers also allows students to build skills in communication and cooperation.

Middle School, Grades 6-8

- Reading Standards for Literature, Standard 9, Grade 8 – "Analyze how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works such as the Bible, including describing how the material is rendered new."

    - The AAR (American Academy of Religions) notes that religion is embedded in culture, and also that religion is fluid, dynamic, and changing over time (from AAR). Careful reading and analysis of both literary and informational texts will allow students to better understand these elements of religion as an aspect of one's identity and factor in society.

- Language Standards, Standard 5a, Grade 7 – "Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., literary, biblical, and mythological allusions) in context."

    - An understanding of religion's role in history and society will enable students to better understand and appreciate allusions to religion that come up in common figures of speech, as well as elsewhere in literature and conversation. Better understanding of religious allusions will help students recognize language that may be pejorative or biased and help to develop better self-awareness of when they might be saying something offensive, thus helping them regulate their own word choices in order to be more respectful.

High School, Grades 9-12

- Reading Standards for Informational Text, Standard 8, Grades 9-10 – "Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning."

    - Students can develop their skills in critical media literacy by looking at how religion is portrayed in the media and other sources, and using knowledge of different religions to debunk stereotypes and assess information about religion and religious diversity for accuracy, bias, and/or point of view.

- Speaking and Listening Standards, Standard 1d, Grades 11-12 – "Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task."

    - Through this standard, students can engage in the important work of community-building and make sure that all voices and perspectives are heard and respected – including those that reflect religious diversity. They will also come to recognize that the quest for understanding can, and often does, go beyond a single conversation – enabling students to be critical thinkers about our diverse world.

Additional Resources from Teaching Tolerance

I Start the Year with Nothing article[18] and toolkit[19]

When invested and empowered, students can be equal partners in creating a productive and meaningful learning environment. This feature story and toolkit provides an inventory to allow you to reflect on how student voices and input are integrated into your classroom and school community

Professional Development: Democratic Classrooms[20]

Educators possess different philosophies and styles for their teaching. Some work from an authoritarian perspective, leveraging their power as the teacher to control student behavior and dictate classroom participation. Others employ a more democratic approach, sharing power with students and supporting them in managing their own behaviors.

Professional Development: Controversial Subjects in the Classroom[21]

Invariably, issues are raised in classrooms that bring charged responses from students. How can educators set the stage for safe, respectful dialogue and learning? How to move from taboo to teachable moment and constructively discuss controversial issues.

Professional Development: Critical Practices for Anti-bias Education: Classroom Culture[22]

Practical strategies for creating a space where academic and social-emotional goals are accomplished side by side. Valuable advice for implementing culturally responsive pedagogy and bring anti-bias values to life.

Bullied: A Student, a School and a Case That Made History[23]

[18] http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-46-spring-2014/feature/i-start-year-nothing
[19] http://www.tolerance.org/student-voice
[20] http://www.tolerance.org/supplement/democratic-classrooms
[21] http://www.tolerance.org/article/controversial-subjects-classroom
[22] http://www.tolerance.org/critical-practices
[23] http://www.tolerance.org/kit/bullied-student-school-and-case-made-history

Bullied is a documentary film that chronicles one student's ordeal at the hands of anti-gay bullies and offers an inspiring message of hope to those fighting harassment today. It can become a cornerstone of anti-bullying efforts in middle and high schools.

Religious Diversity in the Classroom: What's law got to do with it?

There's a lot of misinformation about what teachers are allowed to do when it comes to discussing religion in public school. But the truth is—it's both legal and important to teach about religion and the diversity of religious and non-religious worldviews.

Assess the first webinar recording here.

https://tanenbaum.webex.com/ec0701l/eventcenter/recording/recordAction.do?theAction=poprecord&AT=pb&internalRecordTicket=00000001a9c54a460d1c1cc48a38c4e768c7386b8dc8f3d017a92eff410278a23e5d4d8d&isurlact=true&renewticket=0&recordID=8489632&apiname=lsr.php&needFilter=false&format=short&&SP=EC&rID=8489632&RCID=0a4b37dc2dd846853f8108ccecd34b37&siteurl=tanenbaum&actappname=ec0701l&actname=%2Feventcenter%2Fframe%2Fg.do&rnd=9454424505&entactname=%2FnbrRecordingURL.do&entappname=url0201l

Understanding the legal parameters around teaching about religions can help educators feel more at ease when religion surfaces in classroom materials and discussions.

The following blog posts are meant to continue the conversation about religion as academic content.

You CAN Teach About Religion in Public School!

http://www.tolerance.org/blog/you-can-teach-about-religion-public-school

What Does the First Amendment Say About Displaying Religious Symbols?

http://www.tolerance.org/blog/what-does-first-amendment-say-about-displaying-religious-sym

Can I Say That? Can I Wear That?

http://www.tolerance.org/blog/can-i-say-can-i-wear

Is Silence Golden? Giving Students a Choice in Matters of Faith

http://www.tolerance.org/blog/silence-golden-giving-students-choice-matters-faith

The December Dilemma

The December Dilemma highlights the struggles that many educators face regarding religious holidays and traditions in the classroom during the month of December.

Below is a link to the recording of a webinar on holiday inclusion as well as the After the Session Pack.

December Dilemma Webinar Recording

https://cc.readytalk.com/cc/playback/Playback.do?id=373eie

This webinar recording will help you create deeper understandings of religious and secular holidays, facilitate classroom discussions surrounding inclusion and respect for religious and non-religious differences, and evaluate existing classroom resources and strategies for equity and inclusivity.

December Dilemma After the Session Pack

https://www.tanenbaum.org/sites/default/files/December%20Dilemma%20Webinar%20After%20the%20Session%20Pack%2012.4.13.pdf

The activities and lessons included in the December Dilemma Student Unit Packet can be used following the Addressing the December Dilemma in Schools webinar or as a stand-alone series of units. They address many of the key skills listed in the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts. These activities ask students to interpret and analyze new information, to conduct research and present their findings, to be conscientious speakers and attentive listeners and to think critically about the world around them. This pack also includes several resources for educators, including assessments related to holiday inclusion and incorporation of religious diversity in curricula. Additional articles, lesson plans and guides form Teaching Tolerance and the First Amendment Center are also included.

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