

# TEACHING TOLERANCE



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## WEBINAR TRANSCRIPT

# Religious Diversity in the Classroom: Applications for Elementary Educators

**SARA WICHT**

Hello, good afternoon. Mark, are you there?

**MARK FOWLER**

Yes, I'm here.

**SARA WICHT**

We are live.

**MARK FOWLER**

All right, so good afternoon, everyone. This is Mark Fowler. I'm the managing director of programs of the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding, partnering with our colleagues at Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. We'll each tell you a little bit more about our organizations. Just so glad that you're joining us for this webinar, *Applications for Elementary Educators*, which is the third in a five-part series that we've been working on together, that will take us through into the spring of 2015.

We've got a lot of items on the agenda today and a lot of information that we want to give you. There'll also be opportunities where we need input from you and opportunities for you to participate. We'll be using the chat window and the poll features of the webinar to gauge your responses. There'll also be an evaluation immediately following the webinar. We'll let you know when it's time to either take a poll or type in responses to the chat feature. We're just really happy that you've joined us today.

Just a quick word about our work. Tanenbaum is a secular and nonsectarian not-for-profit. We work in these four program areas in addressing religious diversity and our mission is to combat religious prejudice. We do that work in education, as we are working today, but we also work in workplaces, helping companies to create inclusive work environments for employees of all religious beliefs and none.

We work in conflict resolution, studying the work of religiously motivated peace activists who are working on the ground in active conflict zones around the world working for peace. We also do this work in healthcare, providing training for medical practitioners who need help in understanding the ways in which patients and their families make decisions based on their religious beliefs and practices. That's a little bit about our work, and we are excited to be with you today. Sara?



## **SARA WICHT**

Yes. You'll see, there's our ... you'll know who the talking heads are. You just heard from Mark and heard some of the things that he's ... that they're doing over at Tanenbaum. I am Sara Wicht. I'm the senior manager for teaching and learning here at Teaching Tolerance, and I'm really happy to be here. Happy to be continuing this collaboration with Tanenbaum. Just as a reminder, this is specific to elementary practices today; the third in a five-part series.

Let me tell you a little bit more about the work here at Teaching Tolerance. We were founded in 1991 by the Southern Poverty Law Center. Our mission statement is there for you to see. We are dedicated to reducing prejudice, improving intergroup relations and supporting equitable school experiences for our nation's children. We foster school environments that are inclusive and nurturing and where equality and justice are not just taught but lived. We are one of the nation's leading providers of anti-bias education resources.

We reach hundreds of thousands of educators and millions of students each year. Let's look a little more closely at what the series' essential questions have been. As we've mentioned, this is the third of a five-part series. Overarching ideas for this five-part series include: Why is it important to include religious diversity in classroom content? And, what preparation do teachers need in order to address religion and religious diversity in classroom content?

Today's webinar is the first of three that will cover specific grade ideas, or specific grade-level ideas for elementary. In the spring, after the New Year, we will do the same thing for middle and high school classrooms. We'll share more information about dates on that as we conclude our time, in about an hour.

Drilling down into those essential questions and looking specifically at why all of you are with us today as elementary educators. Today, we're really trying to answer, how can I help my students explore the diversity of religious beliefs and practices that exist in our community and the world while safely expressing their own identities? We're also looking to be able to discuss, how can I integrate discussions of religious diversity into academic content? We ask that you keep these in mind during our time together today.

On learning outcomes, what are our objectives during our hour together today? You'll hopefully acquire knowledge to discuss the essential questions. It is also our aim that through the practice of the contents and the materials that we've compiled for you in the after-session pack, that you'll be able to implement lesson plans that help students to explore those big idea questions, those big questions, while learning about those religious and nonreligious beliefs.

Also, direct relation to your lesson planning by using a variety of resources and activities. Being able to explore different religious beliefs and practices and focusing on common themes that are spread across different religious traditions. I would like for us to consider the following considerations during our time. As you view and participate in the event today, you do have the freedom to arrange the slides and add-on windows in whatever configuration on your desk—in your screen, on your laptop or desktop—that makes you comfortable.



You'll notice a dock at the bottom of your screen, with little icons. These icons can be opened and minimized to your liking. We encourage you to keep the slides open throughout the webinar since this is from where we will share today's information. The Q&A widget provides a way for you to communicate with us, and each other, can be found through the group chat. There ... The small file icon is where you can download today's after-session pack and other materials related to this webinar, this webinar series and that we've compiled for you.

As Mark mentioned at the beginning, immediately following this live event, you'll receive a prompt to complete an evaluation. We greatly appreciate you taking the three to five minutes to give us your feedback. It certainly influences programmatic decisions that we make. Then you will also be able to receive a certificate of completion. You'll be prompted automatically at the end of our time together today, and it will be printed out with your name and today's session title.

As I said, the third webinar in our series of five focuses on particular ways that elementary-level educators can integrate discussions of religion and religious diversity. When we refer to elementary today, we are referring to grades K-6. The Common Core Standards are broken into standards for grades K-5 and 6-12. Here at Teaching Tolerance, our classroom resources are leveled into K-2, 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12.

We understand that many educators teach more than one grade level. During our time together, we're going to provide some examples in the mid-range, as well as adaptations of those examples for younger and older grades. The additional information in the resources list have elementary-level application available for you to modify for your specific grade level if necessary. Again, just to remind you that our next two in the series of five will deal specifically with grades 6-8 or 7-9, and 9-12 or 10-12. We'll look at the middle and high school years.

Let's get to the ground rules first. We want you to participate from your interests. We encourage you to take notes. We certainly hope you have fun. Definitely hope that you utilize the materials after the training and share what you learned with your colleagues. A recorded version of today's session will be available by the end of the week. We have an encore session tomorrow at 6:30 Eastern Time. We do that so that we can accommodate some of our West Coast colleagues. We encourage you to share what you learn today with those people back in your ... on your campuses or in your community.

Quick webinar check, agenda check. Today, we're going to spend some time ... Oh, we already did that, welcomes and introductions. We're going to look at religion and Common Core State Standards. We're going to think a little bit about identity. We're going to explore some big questions, looking at what we have in common, and then really give you a chance for application into your own instruction and planning. I think, Mark, we're ready to get started.



**MARK FOWLER**

Okay, sounds great. As is per our agenda, we wanted to start this next conversation around the intersection of religion and the Common Core State Standards. I also didn't want ... I want to go back and say that I know that there was someone who noticed that there was an echo when I was speaking earlier. If you would just type into the chat box, let us know if you're still hearing that echo, then we'll see what we can do on our end.

Regarding the Common Core State Standards. I'm sure most people on the call, if not everyone, is familiar with the Common Core State Standards for English Language, Arts and Literacy, in History and Social Studies, in Science and in technical subjects. The overarching goal of these standards is for college and career readiness for the 21st-century classroom and workplace.

To actually have young people be people who, in these settings that are going to be far more global and far more diverse ... that they are people from often widely divergent cultures and who represent diverse experiences and perspectives, must learn and work together. That is actually a noble goal, if you will. We want to look a little bit more, specifically, at how does teaching about religion, and religious diversity, fit into this goal.

We can see that ... Oh, okay. We can see that there are a couple of ways, on the very surface that we can see, that students who are college and career ready will seek to understand other perspectives and cultures through reading and listening. That they are able to communicate effectively with people of varied backgrounds, and that they are able to evaluate other points of view critically and constructively.

I see that the echo is still there. I'm not exactly sure what to do. We'll play a little bit on our end and see what we can figure out, but I'm going to keep going and I apologize for the echo. One of the things to bear in mind with these three elements that we've pulled out is that there is a very rich opportunity here for introducing students to both literary as well as informational text, that are related to religious beliefs and practices, in an effective way.

That could actually lead to addressing and fulfilling on the K-5 anchor standards for reading. There are opportunities for rich and age-appropriate lessons on religion's role in literature, and in history, in culture, in philosophy, in politics and in current events. I was presenting recently at a conference, a national conference, and asked the educators who came to the session what were some of the ways where religion just showed up in their content area.

It was the week before Thanksgiving, and so one person said, "Well, we talked about the Puritans. It's about ... to become time for Thanksgiving." I said, "Well, that's great." She said, "We talked about that Puritans were seeking refuge from religious persecution." I said, "That's awesome." I said, "Do you do any work around the experience of Native American spirituality? What were the practices that were present among the Native Americans that the Puritans encountered?" Nothing.



There's an opportunity, even within the content that we're already addressing, to be able to expand and look at the ways in which religious belief and/or practice, or non-belief, has impacted particular moments in time and/or characters in their development. I can actually hear the echo now, so I really apologize.

**SARA WICHT**

Oh, no.

**MARK FOWLER**

It just got on my nerve, too. I don't know if that's any better. No, it's not. I can still hear the echo. I don't quite know what the problem is. Let's see. I think what I'd like to say is that during our time together today, what we're going to do is try and model a number of elementary lesson plans. Just take note of the ways in which they align with the Common Core State Standards.

That provides that opportunity for expanding the range of materials that can be included and the idea of pursuing critical thinking, and listening, and writing and reflection. Sara, did you want to say a word about this? The Common Core State Standards?

**SARA WICHT**

I do. We just want to look, in addition to those specific grade-level and anchor standards that we pulled out, in identifying where does teaching about religion fit in? It's also important to highlight really the adoption of the standards include three big shifts, especially for ELA, English Language Arts and Literacy instructions. Those three shifts, listed here for you, are about building content knowledge and ... or knowledge through content-rich nonfiction.

That we are encouraging, and helping, and supporting and scaffolding our students in grounding their evidence from text when they're reading, and writing and speaking about text. That they're usually ... that they're explicitly using textual evidence. And, that they're building their academic language and they're continually engaging in complex texts.

Using content-rich text on religious and nonreligious belief while grounding student reading, writing and speaking with specific textual evidence will aid building knowledge and academic vocabulary. Keep this in mind as well as you're ... as we're working together today.

**MARK FOWLER**

That's great, Sara.

**SARA WICHT**

What we've done ... Oh, sorry.

**MARK FOWLER**

I'll let you go ahead.



**SARA WICHT**

What we've done so far is really made that ... drawn that connection and supported what it is for sharing and helping you in ways to ... may justify at times why it is you do what you do. We would like to move into an activity called "Who am I?"

**MARK FOWLER**

That's great. We like to start by asking everyone to respond to the poll question. You can answer ... give us your answer to the question, "Do you speak a language other than English?" Then, just press the "submit" button. I'm sorry. We've done everything we can to try and get rid of the echo. I'm just not quite sure what to do.

**MARK FOWLER**

Joanna, I understand if I just go to the next slide, the results will come up?

**JOANNA WILLIAMS**

Yes.

**SARA WICHT**

Yes.

**MARK FOWLER**

Fifty-five percent of those on the webinar today speak a language other than English, 45 percent do not. Let's go to our next poll question. Thinking again about our identity, different ways in which we identify, "Were you born in the United States?" Please take a moment to answer "yes" or "no," and then click "submit." Eighty-five percent of the people on the webinar were born in the United States and 15 percent were not. Thank you so much.

Our last question around this, "Are you affiliated with a religious group?" You could answer "yes" or "no," and then click "submit." Sixty-five percent of those on the webinar are affiliated with a religious group and 35 percent are not.

This is very interesting. I'd like you to just consider for a moment, when you think about the students who are in your class and the families that you're interacting with, how might they have answered these three questions. Something that we might consider has to do more with not the answers but the questions themselves. If you will, identity is really a rather abstract concept for elementary school students, especially those in K-2. A lot of students don't walk around spending a great deal of time pondering the question, who am I?

Although they interact with each other, and the environment, to gain a sense of their own unique identity. As we start to unpack the multiple components of identity, only a couple of which we went through with the questions that we asked you, we can see that there are opportunities for children to reflect on the many different ways of their own lived experience in the way in which they identify themselves. The lesson that we're about to share with you, this lesson ... these questions actually come from a lesson that's a part of your after-session packs, which is called "My Identity and My Learning Community."



There is no right answer per se, but it has really more to do with the foundation that you're setting. The primary goal, the primary idea and the first is that if children are better prepared to learn and understand the identities of others, that will start with them having some comfort with exploring and expressing their own idea. The more they understand themselves, the more they can speak to understand another.

By gaining a better understanding of just the idea of identity, that there are a variety of ways in which we're similar and different, that they can actually begin to recognize that different is normal. Finally, that the goal of this is respectful curiosity. We want to provide a foundation for the development of that respectful curiosity that have young people want to ask questions about how they are the same, but also how they are different. A lot of that will happen in the context of the safe and respectful environment that you create as part of your classroom culture.

A lot of elementary lessons are about responding constructively to differences can provide the context for later discussions on the causes of stereotyping. We're really creating a foundation, at a very early age, for more complex conversations down the road. I just ask you to be, I just ask for you to consider, as we went through the poll results, was there anything that was surprising to you in terms of the results? What did we notice, or what did you notice, maybe about some of the assumptions that you might have just about people who happen to be on the same webinar as you are?

As educators we have to be responsible for the fact that we do enter the classroom with assumptions about our students. Perhaps about their families, as well as bringing in our own identities to the classroom. Another thing to consider as part of this is that, as you begin a discussion of identity with elementary school students, it's very important that the children not be on the spot per se. You can start this conversation by asking the same questions that we asked of you.

Characters that they're familiar with or people that may be familiar with, like Dora the Explorer or Curious George or Grace from the Mary Hoffman book *Amazing Grace*. Even President Barack Obama or Derek Jeter. That depending on the age of the students, you can find external people and/or character that they can begin to wonder and ask questions about the identity of those people.

Here is just a visual representation of some aspects of the lesson which is fully in all of the instructions, etc., are in your after-the-session pack. This has to do with "My Identity Has Many Parts." It's been condensed here so that you can see what we're talking about. You can lead students in either discussing or brainstorming the components of identity. Again, this is not about them having to fill in each blank. You might present something like this to them, just kind of molecule blank, and let them fill in the different ways in which they think about themselves or identify themselves.

For younger children, you might ask them to choose pictures that represent parts of their



identity or their personality. While old students might be able to provide more in-depth answers. It's really not ... Religion may, or may not, come up for students. It may be a part of their identity at the moment. Maybe something they think about or not. They may be member of secular families. The point is not necessarily to get them to disclose. It really is more to open the doorway to this unique aspect of identity so that if they'd like to explore it, they can.

Then finally, if we look at the next slide, another way to introduce the topic is to conclude the lesson by having student make self-portraits that feature images of their faces along with components of their identities. You can enrich the lessons by having them include an artist's statement. For students in K-1, they can dictate that statement. Older students maybe be able, depending on your resources, can produce videotaped performances or pieces about their various identities.

The example that we have on the slide, the book *Just Like Me: Stories and Self-Portraits by Fourteen Artists*, provides examples of self-portraits by artists who represent a wide range of racial and ethnic heritages. The artists also include pictorial clues about their identities in their paintings. This is another way that young people begin to create connections between abstract ideas that might be conceived as an art and ways in which to communicate them.

By displaying these portraits, it may help to have students become more cognizant of, and certainly more respectful of, the similarities and differences of both the students and the communities that they represent. Sara, did you want to say a word about this in terms of identity from Teaching Tolerance's framework?

#### **SARA WICHT**

Yes, please. Thank you, Mark. I just wanted to add that exploring one's own identity, and really developing that openness towards others' identities, can also be grounded in the Teaching Tolerance Anti-bias Framework, which is listed as a PDF in your related resources. Along with the other after-session packet. The complete framework is unpacked into grade-level outcomes. What you're seeing right now are three of the 20 anchor standards.

These are really those main ideas, or those jumping-off points that Mark has explained and talked through when we start thinking about and talking about identity with our students. They'll be better prepared to learn about it and understand identities, others' and their own if they also are able to express their own identities. The more I understand myself, the more I can understand you. That gaining a better understanding of identity allows students to begin to recognize that difference as normal and really providing a foundation for the development of respectful curiosity and modeling.

What does that look like? What does that sound like? What words do I use within the context of a safe and respectful classroom? To ask questions because I'm curious. Not because I am being judgmental or necessarily trying to make myself in any type of ranking in compar-





ison to the other, but it's out of curiosity. Texts are great ways to get at this. Really developing the skills through texts that encourage dialogue about the standards and the outcomes, without requiring a single identity to become a spokesperson for that identity group. To provide diversity within classrooms that are perhaps more homogeneous.

Presenting other identities via texts is one way to do that. Mark, can you help us with an activity in incorporating religious diversity into existing content goals?

**MARK FOWLER**

Yes, absolutely. As we go to this next slide, what we'd like for you to do is to provide a framework for thinking about how to incorporate religion and/or religious identity into existing content that you have. Rather than thinking that you have to create something brand new. We'd like to ask for you to take a piece of paper and a pen, and make a T-chart on a piece of paper.

Just think about your current or upcoming lessons and we'd like for you to list three. What are three lessons that you're either working on right now, or that are coming up, and just list them in the left-hand column of your T-chart. Just take a minute and do that.

Then, as we're going through the rest of the webinar, you might want to keep that sheet with you, near you. As we make recommendations, there may be ideas that come to mind about how you can incorporate religion and/or religious diversity into existing content that you're already working on. In your after-the-session pack, we'll actually have some examples as well of ways in which you can incorporate religion, specifically, into some of the content that you're working on.

Just add the check-in for our agenda. We've actually reviewed religion and the Common Core State Standards. We've done a little work around identity. Now, we want to introduce a lesson that will, I think, begin to give some idea and context to the ways in which you can incorporate religion at the elementary level looking at big questions.

In this idea of exploring "Big Questions: A Garden of Questions and Answers about Beliefs." Rather than thinking that we have to do some kind of either watered-down version of world religion or that we have to talk very specifically about each religious tradition in order to have young people have an introduction to this. Another way to think about this is to explore the big questions that young people already have, and that those can become the source of a way for young people to talk the ways in we might be different and/or similar in terms of religious belief.

This actually ... This idea comes from a lesson from our "Religions in My Neighborhood" curriculum. The full lesson is in your after-the-session pack. It's also probably a good point ... a good moment to know that any of these concepts, you want to make sure that you fully communicate it to parents and fully communicate it to your school leadership, to get their buy-in and to explain your rationale for why you're including this particular content. We've



actually included in the after-the-session pack some guidelines for communicating with parents.

This book *The Three Questions* is a great way to begin a lesson as a read-aloud. The book is by John Muth. You'll see that there are three questions that Nikolai, the main character in that book, asks. One is, "When is the best time to do things?" "Who is the most important one?" And, "What is the right thing to do?" The book suggests some thought-provoking, humanistic, answers but the answers aren't really the point. It's the questions that are important.

They provide a good starting point to get students thinking about their own big questions, and their own answers to the big questions that are being posed. It's also a good starting point for discussing different religious beliefs and practices, and how they represent different answers to the big questions. They are the big questions that we share, but our answers may be different.

I'd like to give you an opportunity in terms of using the chat feature. If you would just type in to the chat box, what do you think are some big questions? What are some big questions that you either find yourself dealing with or you've heard your students bring up?

I've ... My chat box is slow to start but I see it here. There's a question on "Does this meet the platinum rule? Do unto others as they would like to have." Just whatever the big questions are, you think. Why does everyone celebrate light during winter? What happens when people die? What should I do? What is religion? Who is right? Who should be my friend? These are some of the answers that are in the group chat.

Who made us? These are big questions. There are a couple that we'd like to add to this. How did life begin? Why are we here? How can I be a good person? Why do bad things happen? What is the truth? What is right or wrong? Why do some people follow a religion? What happens after we die? What does it mean to be good? You've all got this pretty much well in hand, this idea of what the big questions are.

The big questions can actually be your access to the beginning of having conversations with students about their own belief and practices. To go back to the garden of belief for a moment, once students have actually brainstormed their big questions, you can use the metaphor of a garden to illustrate the big question and the multitude of ways people have answered them, either through religion, or philosophy or science.

In this metaphorical garden, the seeds are the big questions. The environment is the factors that influence your answers to the big questions. Then the plants and flowers are your answers to the big question. A garden grows from many seeds and to many species of plants. It uses many different nutrients from the soil. This can be a very powerful metaphor, allowing students to really picture a wide range of perspective, living in this big metaphorical garden of human experience.



The other thing that they can learn is that sometimes questions go unanswered. That every question doesn't necessarily have to have an answer. Sometimes it's sufficient to have the question and to imply your intuit. This is just a little rendering of it, but you can have this be a class art project that students work on the aesthetic parts of the garden. They can paint the sky, and the trees, and cut out various shapes for various plants. This can all be tied into an existing science lesson that you may already have about plants and flowers.

At the end of the project, you'll have a student-created community garden mural. This is also a really great way to have parents and guardians be able to see what are the big questions that their young people are asking. The big questions can also be added in word bubbles as seeds beneath the surface of the garden. Then, it can really be a class discussion as to, even if they didn't come up with the question, what might their answer be. The purpose is really exploration in this lesson, rather than trying to get to a right answer.

By encouraging curiosity, we really begin to uncover the interest and/or the ideas and beliefs that young people already have about these topics. Another resource that you might consider as a way to explore different perspectives through storybooks is ... is also with the Common Core State Standards, is this book, *What is God?* It actually represents a wide range of beliefs. If you will, it provides a comparative introduction to different religions, as well as what some of the holy books or sacred writings are of various traditions.

Some others might include, and another way to introduce the topic, we have here *The Little Book of Hindu Deities, Kindness, Humanism. What's that? Big Bang! The tongue tickling tale of a speck that became spectacular, The Origin of Life on Earth.* Creation stories and creation myths can actually provide the background for the exploration around the variety of ways in which people have come to try and answer some of the big questions. Sara, can I turn it over to you to share some information about the anti-bias curriculum?

#### **SARA WICHT**

Yes. Thank you, Mark. To draw the connection to, again, about really that identity exploration. Meeting students in that developmental phase that they're in and encouraging them to ask questions, and identify their multiple identities and respectfully ask about their peers. Mark has identified several texts that are specifically religious contents to use in classrooms with students and drawing the lines from the identity development through the big questions, those seeds of the garden.

Thinking again about homogeneous communities and how do we help our students develop asking questions about people who are different from us, if there are limited numbers of people who are different from us, around us. What we've learned is that texts offer a great way to connect to, and learn about, all the beautiful diversity in the world.

What we've done is create a K-12 curriculum called *Perspectives for a Diverse America*. The screenshot that you have shows ... I searched K-2, and 3-5, central texts for religion. The list is partial, it's not a complete list. I wanted you to get an image of what that curriculum looks



like, so that when you go ... when you seek it out, you know where it is. You know you're on the right spot. Like the rest of our resources, this is a full K-12 free curriculum, free resource, for teachers.

Knowing that I can talk about those big questions with my students via a text. Knowing that I could say how would so-and-so, from a specific story or article, respond to my big question about what ... how can I be a good person? You can refer them back to those text connections. You're supporting your requirements for Common Core and requiring that students make ... ground their responses with textual evidence. You're giving them another way to talk about and understand that diversity development and the identity development.

That is ... Like I said, it's K-12. We've filtered texts for a religion lens, and it's free. All of the texts can be downloaded and read aloud, or printed and shared with students. Really, just a little bit more about how religion can be included in your literacy instruction. You're developing those literacy skills through the readings. Mark?

#### **MARK FOWLER**

That's great. Thank you so much, Sara. With all the resources that are available through Teaching Tolerance, if you go back to this idea of the garden, you can actually have this to be, if you will, a source material so that you can revisit the garden mural as you are learning about it and as students are reading about the different communities and different ways of believing, and ask them if they want to ... how does the story that they are reading provide an answer to one or more of the big questions that are present in the garden.

Again, it's about ongoing inquiry, not about getting to a right answer. Though their answers then, those new answers, become new plants and new flowers in the garden. Children can add leaf shapes to the garden representing the different beliefs they've learned about, whether it's monotheism or polytheism. About specific ... They can add plants or flowers about specific belief systems. They can add raindrops that represent the people in the different sacred texts, whatever they learn about.

This is just a structure that we've created but you can certainly add all kinds of things to this in terms of the people who cultivate the garden, all of that. We leave that to you, but it'll be important from time to time just to check-in because sometimes you may see students having the experience of their beliefs shifting, or growing or expanding.

The quick check-in for our webinar, we've gone through our big questions, and now we just want to talk very briefly about another lesson that gives young people the opportunity to explore about the leaf, about caring and sharing. Again, looking for larger themes where we can include the idea of talking about religious diversity. In this example ... This is another lesson that is in your after-the-session pack, this gives a framework for looking at larger ideas about caring and sharing with people.

The examples that you see on the screen are like the Sermon on the Mount, the Ten Com-



mandments, the Eight-Fold Path, other examples. This is actually presented in a conversation with young people about rules and ways in which communities, and groups, and groups of people care and share for one another. The Golden Rule, as has been mentioned I think in chat box, is another very great opportunity to talk about the various ways the leaf in practice have come up.

Here is an example that we found that was put together by a group called Scarborough Missions, which is a Canadian Roman Catholic mission society that emphasizes interfaith work in social justice. The full copy is available in the after-the-session pack, as well contact information for Scarborough Missions. They're really wonderful people.

Because of time, I'm not going to go through it but you can see that there are about, I think, 13 or 14 different traditions represented. They are primary belief around what it means to care for someone and what does it look like to actually care for someone through the sacred writings of different traditions.

#### **SARA WICHT**

As you see, we are close to the end of our agenda. It looks like just enough time to go through this next exercise. We'd like you to return to your T-chart that you did towards the beginning of our time together. Knowing that discussions of religion and religious diversity can be integrated into existing classroom contents and learning goals without really requiring much additional time or resources. If religion is addressed only as a stand-alone subject that's relegated to a limited time or place, for example, holidays or certain times of the year, then it does lose its depths and multidimensionality.

We looked at three examples of lesson plans that can be incorporated into your classrooms. Think about ways that you can now incorporate, maybe a practice or a picture book that you saw, something that we just maybe sparked an idea for you into what you currently do. Instead of an add-on, instead of something in addition to, how can you include and incorporate religious and nonreligious diversity into current and upcoming lesson plans. Jot a couple of notes for yourself on the right side of that T-chart.

As you're thinking about that, we're going to look at just a couple of other examples. Knowing that many elementary schools, and middle and high schools, but specifically many elementary schools, do units on communities. There's a full lesson in the after-session pack where students work in groups to research different religions and then come together as a class.

Using boxes and art supplies to create an interreligious community with diverse people and families. As well as stores, and community centers, and houses of worship, and parks. That this community serves the needs for people from a wide range of religious and nonreligious traditions.

In the next couple of weeks, think about an item on that right-hand side of your T-chart and



put it into practice. Use it in your classroom. That takes us about to the end of our agenda, but we want to give a little bit of time for questions and answers. Really looking at what we've been able to do so far today. Reviewing those Common Core Standards. Thinking about identity and who am I? Exploring big questions. Beliefs about caring and sharing.

Then thinking really concretely, how can you apply what you've learned or what we've shared, or variation of what you've learned and what we've shared, into your own practice? Let's take a couple of minutes before we give additional information and wrap up. If you could use the chat, the group chat window, to enter questions. In addition to ... Well, Mark, do you want to talk about some of the follow-up that we have planned?

#### **MARK FOWLER**

Sure, absolutely. As we've been doing with the other webinars, we will review the log, if you will, from this session, as well as the questions that you add to the chat box and use those as foundational information to create blog posts that will continue the learning after this webinar session is over. You can enter as many questions as you want because, likely, someone else may have the same question and that lets us know that it's something that we really should do some research on. Both of our organizations leverage our resources to figure out how to give you a more in-depth answer to that question.

#### **SARA WICHT**

I think that this participant identified *A Culture of Respect* and then seeing that it was in the resource. The first event in the series was *What's Law Got To Do With It?* We really talked about the legal parameters for including religious contents in your classroom. The second one was exactly that, *Cultivating a Culture of Respect*.

As we mentioned in the beginning, all of the next three go through elementary-, middle- and high school-level application. If you missed one of the first two, they are available ... the recorded version is available on both Tanenbaum's site and Teaching Tolerance's site. It's in the related resources, so you can open up that file on your dock and you'll see that material right there for you. We've tried to put it in one place.

Feel free to keep adding questions to the group chat as we summarize and wrap up our time together. We do like to respond later via blogs, and it helps us to make decisions about what areas our audience wants more information about. We hope that today we've learned that students really learn about and understand the identities of others by expressing their own. The more I get to know myself, the more I might be able ... and I'm more open to understanding others.

Exploring everybody's answers to the big questions is one way to learn about each other. We also know that teaching about religion and religious difference develops students' foundational skills for critical literacy in identifying the specific Common Core College and Career Ready Standards. As well as, really the literacy shifts that have been called for, and adopted in, over 40 states.



We also, again, remind you that these are things we hope you do after today's session. You'll receive a prompt at the end that will ask you to answer some evaluation questions from our time together. Also, a prompt to download a certificate of completion. We hope that you come back to the recording, which will ... you'll receive an email that gives you the link to the recorded version so that you can utilize the resources in the after-session pack and the other resources in the related resources window.

We should have the recording available for you to share with your colleagues by the end of the week, so we encourage you to do that. Directly after ... The evaluation, just to clarify, will have your name and the title of today's session printed on there for you. Also, please let us know how we can continue to support you and stay connected with us. You'll see that inquiries about any of the contents is ... are directed toward editor ... No, is it editor? Which one did we go with, Mark? Education at Tanenbaum, or ...

**MARK FOWLER**  
Education.

**SARA WICHT**  
... at the very end ... okay. At the very end, we'll show you a couple of other contacts for myself and for another colleague in ... for Tanenbaum. Our middle school educators applications, part three ... Sorry, part four, is scheduled for February 25th and 26th. Between now and then, share that information with your middle school colleagues.

We have included, as I said, the first two webinars in this series, and also another related webinar that Tanenbaum and Teaching Tolerance partnered on a year ago, titled *Addressing the December Dilemma in Schools*. It's a timely moment to, maybe, check that out if you haven't already.

There's the contact. I knew it was on there somewhere. Feel free to reach out to me directly, or to Marisa at Tanenbaum directly, with any questions that you don't have the opportunity or didn't have the chance to add to the chat window. Is there anything you would like to add, Mark?

**MARK FOWLER**  
No. I just want to acknowledge the Stavros Niarchos Foundation for helping us and their supporting us to participate in the webinar series. I just want to send a special thank you to them. Of course, a special thank you to you, my great friend, for yet another fantastic webinar.

**SARA WICHT**  
Thank you. It's always wonderful to collaborate with you.

**MARK FOWLER**  
Even though I sound like I'm in a valley somewhere.



**SARA WICHT**

Yeah.

**MARK FOWLER**

I don't mean to sound this way.

**SARA WICHT**

You don't usually sound that way.

**MARK FOWLER**

Yeah.

**SARA WICHT**

I'm seeing some great questions too in the chat window. We sure appreciate you all joining us today. Watch for follow-up blogs and additional information. Thank you in advance for completing the post-webinar evaluation for us so that we can make adjustments, as needed, and bring you what you want.

**MARK FOWLER**

All right, everyone. Thank you so much.

**SARA WICHT**

Good-bye.

**MARK FOWLER**

Bye.