

RIGHTS SITES NEWS

PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN THE CLASSROOM

A Publication of The Advocates for Human Rights



Human Rights Education

The Human Rights Education Program is designed to introduce international human rights and responsibilities to K-12 students. It uses the framework of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to help students understand and appreciate common human values, to encourage them to apply international standards to their own lives, and to support positive student action to remedy human rights violations in their own communities.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

“Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have a religion or whatever belief of his [her] choice.”

~ Article 18, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

January is a month in which people around the world celebrate religious freedom and the key role that faith and spirituality have played in solving global challenges. This edition of Rights Sites News is dedicated to the fundamental right of every human being to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion and commemorates U.S. National Religious Freedom Day (January 16th), World Religion Day (January 17th), and Martin Luther King Day (January 18th).

The basis for human rights — respect for human life and human dignity — can be found in most religions and philosophies. For example, we may be familiar with the following common phrases that arise out of different belief systems:

“Treat others as you would yourself be treated.” — Hinduism

“What you yourself hate do to no man.” — Judaism

“Hurt not others with that which pains you.” — Buddhism

“Do unto all men as you would wish to have done.” — Islam

“Live in harmony, for we are all related.” — Native American

“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” — Christianity

Human Rights Roots

The Hindu Vedas, the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi, the Bible, the Qur’an (Koran), and the Analects of Confucius are five of the oldest written texts containing principles and values that address people’s duties, rights, and responsibilities. The Inca and Aztec codes of conduct and justice and the Iroquois Constitution are examples of Native American principles concerning duties, rights and responsibilities that existed well before the eighteenth century.

Source: *Human Rights Here and Now*, Human Rights Resource Center 1998.

When the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was drafted after WWII, these values were a source of inspiration. The UDHR, in many ways, is a reflection of the shared values found in the sacred texts and authoritative teachings of the religions and spiritual traditions of the world. Now it is defended and proclaimed by men and women of faith as the foundation for justice and peace in our time, as evidenced by the following statement from the Princeton Declaration at the World Conference on Religion and Peace:

“Adhering to different religions, we may differ in our objects of faith and worship. Nevertheless, in the way we practice our faith, we all confess that the God or the truth in which we believe transcends the powers and divisions of this world. . . We are all commanded by our faiths to seek justice in the world in a community of free and equal persons. . . We reaffirm our commitment . . . to the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, and we deplore the denial of human rights to any individual or community.”

Religious leaders and teachers play a significant role in explaining and defending human rights within their communities. Part of their role includes transmitting the importance of mutual understanding among people and groups of different beliefs. It is important that children learn from an early age about different faiths and to respect those who have different beliefs. The Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasizes this point: “Children have the right to know about their own cultural identity but also about cultures and civilizations different from their own.”

As we commemorate these three days in January, let us remember that the universal values we celebrate transcend the boundaries of religion, ethnicity, gender, and geography and help us to build a culture where we, the peoples of the world, can address together our common global concerns in a holistic, positive, and transformative way and “live together in peace with one another” – thus realizing the core objectives and universal principles stated in the UDHR.

In This Issue:

| | |
|---|-----|
| Lesson: Human Rights and Religion | 2-3 |
| Human Rights and Heroes of Faith | 4-5 |
| Human Rights and Religion Resources | 6 |
| Featured Resource and Curriculum | 7 |
| Reading Suggestions: Religion, Belief, and Tolerance | 8 |
| Tips for Teaching About World Religions | 9 |
| The Talmud Torah School: Teaching Human Rights, Peace, and Justice on MLK Day | 10 |
| New Human Rights Education Resources | 11 |
| Human Rights Calendar | 12 |

Lesson: Human Rights and Religion

Grade Level: 6 to 8 **Time:** 1-2 class periods **Goal:** To examine the connection between religion and human rights

Objectives:

- Students will learn definitions of human dignity and the right to religion and belief.
- Students will understand how freedom of religion and belief protect human dignity.
- Students will examine how human dignity is central to many religions and connect this to human rights.

Materials: Chalkboard/whiteboard/flip-chart and markers, copies of “Golden Rule” quotes and religions for students, copies of Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the 1st Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Essential Questions:

- What is human dignity and where does it come from?
- How do religions promote human dignity?
- How does the right to freedom of belief and religion protect human dignity?

Note: To give students more background on human rights and the UDHR, check out *Human Rights Here and Now: Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, available for free at www1.umn.edu/humanrts/edumat/hreduseries/hereandnow/Default.htm.

Procedure:

ACTIVITY 1: DEFINING HUMAN DIGNITY

1. **Brainstorm.** Write “human dignity” on the board or flip-chart and ask students to explain what that phrase means to them. Based on their definitions, ask the class to come up with their own ideas of what human beings need to live in dignity. Some ideas may include education, friendship, shelter, respect, etc.
2. **Explain.** Explain that the idea of “human dignity” is central to human rights. (Read the introduction on page 1 of this newsletter to get an idea of this centrality.) Point out how many of the examples that the students listed are represented in the UDHR. Explain to students that valuing human dignity has also been a fundamental part of the belief traditions of many different cultures and societies and that the writers of the UDHR drew on these traditions when creating the document. To better understand this link, tell students that they are going to explore the similar ways in which the different religions of the world express the importance of human dignity.

ACTIVITY 2: SIMILARITIES BETWEEN RELIGIONS

1. **Match.** Divide students into small groups and give them two lists based on the “Golden Rule” (see text box): one with the names of the eleven religions and one with the quotes. Ask them to identify which quote belongs to which religion. After a few minutes of debate, reveal the answers and discuss the similarity of these quotes.
2. **Discuss.** Ask students to discuss how, if at all, these quotes relate to the concept of human dignity and the ideas they came up with in the brainstorm.
3. **Homework.** Have students do some short research on a religious figure who also supported human rights. Ask them to write a short paragraph on how that person’s religious beliefs inspired them to take action. This can be posted on the classroom wall the next day, so encourage diversity and creativity in students’ selections. For inspiration, see *Human Rights and Heroes of Faith* on pages 4 and 5 of this newsletter.



ACTIVITY 3: CONNECTING HUMAN RIGHTS

- 1. Explain.** Explain to students that religious traditions not only support human rights values but human rights also recognizes the importance of freedom of religion and belief. Ask a student to read aloud Article 18 of the UDHR: *“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public and private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”*

Ask another student to read the 1st Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: *“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”*
- 2. Discuss.** Ask students why they think the right to religion is an important human right. How does this human right support human dignity? How can we support religious tolerance in our classroom/school? (Prompt students to discuss the school’s current status regarding religious tolerance with questions like: “Do you think our school is a welcoming environment for students of various beliefs?”) See page 9 for *Tips for Teaching about World Religions - How to be sensitive and inclusive.*
- 3. Reflect.** Ask students to think about the right to religion in their own lives. How does it affect them? Have they had a personal experience with this right? Have them write a short journal entry about these questions.

The “Golden Rule” Expressed in Many Traditions

Bahá’í: *And if thine eyes be turned towards justice, choose thou for thy neighbor that which thou chooseth for thyself.*

Buddhism: *Make thine own self the measure of others.*

Christianity: *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would have done to you, do ye even so to them.*

Confucianism: *What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.*

Hinduism: *Do not to others what ye do not wish done to yourself.*

Islam: *None of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself.*

Jainism: *Treat all creatures in the world as they would want to be treated.*

Judaism: *What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor.*

Sikhism: *As thou deemest thyself, so deem others.*

Taoism: *Regard your neighbor’s gain as your own gain, and your neighbor’s loss as your own loss.*

Zoroastrianism: *That nature only is good when it shall not do unto another whatever is not good for its own self.*

Source: Adapted from “Understanding Religion or Belief,” *Lifting the Spirit: Human Rights and Freedom of Religion or Belief.* University of Minnesota Human Rights Resource Center and The Tandem Project, www1.umn.edu/humanrts/ledumat/hreduseries/TB5/download.htm.

**Corbin Harney****Issue: The Environment****Faith: Western Shoshone**

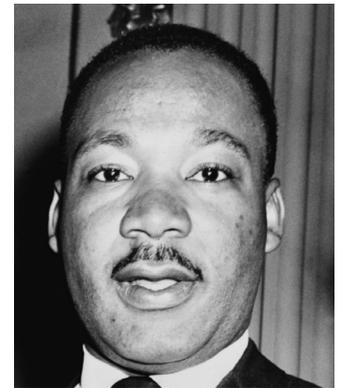
An Elder and spiritual leader of the Western Shoshone, a native people indigenous to Idaho, Nevada, Utah and California, Corbin is the author of *The Way It Is: One Water, One Air, One Mother Earth*. He travels the earth nomadically, just as his Shoshone ancestors roamed all over their land. Today, instead of hunting antelope or gathering pine nuts, he speaks out on behalf of Mother Earth. He spreads an urgent and powerful message to all of us, a message that transcends language differences and the borders of our maps. "The Mother Earth provides us with food, provides us with air, provides us with water. We, the people, are going to have to put our thoughts together, our power together, to save our planet here. We've only got one water, one air, one Mother Earth."

Source: www.myhero.com/myhero/hero.asp?hero=c_harney

Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**Issue: Civil Rights****Faith: Christian — Protestant**

A strong proponent of civil rights in the U.S., Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. fought for racial equality when segregation was the norm in much of the country. A pastor, King was inspired by the ideals he took from Christianity and the operational techniques of Gandhi, King utilized non-violent means to combat institutional racism, poverty, and the Vietnam War. In the eleven-year period between 1957 and 1968, King traveled over six million miles and spoke over twenty-five hundred times, appearing wherever there was injustice, protest, and action. He was named *Time Magazine's* Man of the Year in 1964 and won the Nobel Peace Prize the same year. His assassination on April 4, 1968 caused him to be revered by many as a martyr for human rights. To this day, he remains a central figure in U.S. civil rights history.

Source: www.mlkonline.net

**Zainah Anwar****Issue: Women's Rights****Faith: Muslim — Sunni**

Anwar is a founding member and former Executive Director of Sisters in Islam, a Malaysian non-governmental organization working on women's rights within the Islamic framework. The group works in the areas of research, advocacy, public education, and legal reform, and services to push for a progressive rights-based understanding of Islam. It deals with a wide range of issues, including Islamic Family Law, Islamic Criminal Law, domestic violence, freedom of religion, freedom of expression, Islam as a source of law and public policy, and Islam and women's rights. Anwar is currently the Project Director for Musawah, a global movement for equality and justice in the Muslim family. She also writes a monthly column on politics, religion, and women's rights, called Sharing the

Nation, in the *Sunday Star*, Malaysia. Advocating for women's rights based on the teachings of the Qur'an may seem controversial, but for Malaysia's leading feminist, the sacred text of Islam is far from a source of repression – it is her most powerful asset. Anwar has long argued that Muslim practices that are oppressive to women are a perversion of the true word of God, instigated by men intent on maintaining their privileged position in society. "I'm outraged that my religion is distorted and used to justify patriarchy and the discrimination and oppression of women," she says.

Source: www.cartercenter.org/peace/human_rights/defenders/defenders/malaysia_zainah_anwar.html

Mother Teresa

Issue: Poverty

Faith: Christian — Catholic

Mother Teresa was born in 1910 in war-wracked Albania to Catholic refugees. At the age of 19, she went to India to join the Sisters of Loreto, a missionary order of nuns. She served with the Sisters as a teacher for 20 years. At the age of 38, while traveling by train in India, she had a striking realization that her life's mission was to minister to the poorest of the poor. With the Pope's blessing, Mother Teresa descended into the slums of Calcutta and began the Sisters of Charity. Under her direction, the Sisters of Charity ministered to the sick and hungry of Calcutta, providing care and food to all who came to the mission's doorstep. In 1979, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Today, Mother Teresa's work is carried on by the 3,000 + members of the Sisters of Charity who minister to the poor on six continents, continuing the selfless legacy that Mother Teresa spent her long life establishing.

Source: www.myhero.com/myhero/hero.asp?hero=M_Teresa



Dalai Lama

Issue: Peace and Religious Freedom

Faith: Buddhist — Tibetan

The 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, is the spiritual and political leader of the Tibetan people. He was born in the small Tibetan village of Takster in Northern Tibet. At the age of 2, he was recognized as the reincarnation of his predecessor, the 13th Dalai Lama. From an early age, the Dalai Lama spent many years studying Tibetan scriptures and completed a doctorate in Tibetan Buddhist philosophy by the age of 25. In 1950 the Chinese army entered Tibet and began to attack the Tibetan culture and religion. Despite many attempted negotiations and non-violent protests, the Dalai Lama was finally forced into exile in 1959 and since then has maintained a Tibetan government from his base in Dharamsala, India. He advocates and raises awareness of the plight of the Tibetan people worldwide and has

sought to preserve parts of the Tibetan culture through educational and cultural institutions. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 and has travelled extensively around the world advocating for peaceful solutions based upon tolerance and mutual respect in order to preserve the historical and cultural heritage of his people. He has often said there is an underlying unity between the different world religions: "All religions are essentially the same in their goal of developing a good human heart so that we may become better human beings."

Source: <http://ezinearticles.com/?Dalai-Lama-Short-Biography&id=298195>

Emma Lazarus

Issue: Immigrant Rights

Faith: Jewish — Sephardic

Emma Lazarus was born in New York to a family that traced their ancestry back to America's first Jewish settlers. As descendants of this pioneering group of Sephardic (Spanish and Portuguese) Jews, Emma inherited a rich pride in her heritage, and often wrote about the "Jewish plight" in her poetry. In the 1880s, Lazarus was moved by the news of the Russian and Eastern European persecution of Jews to become more active as an advocate for Jewish immigrants and later for all disenfranchised immigrants. She published many well-received poems and essays, including "The New Colossus," now one of the most often quoted poems in U.S. history, especially the lines "Give me your tired, your poor, / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, / The wretched refuse of your teeming shore." Her poem was placed on the Statue of Liberty in 1903, nearly 20 years after her death.

Source: www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6359435



TEACHING RESOURCES: HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Anti-Defamation League — World of Difference Institute

www.adl.org/education/edu_awod/default.asp

A leading provider of anti-bias education and diversity training programs and resources. Lesson plans and resources for K-12 teachers available.

Faith and Globalization

www.faithandglobalization.yale.edu/cate/12

The impact of religious faith is profound in a world where political, economic, and social spheres are increasingly interconnected. The topics included on this website reflect the conversation about faith and globalization that has been taking place in and out of the classroom.

Finding Common Ground — Teaching Guide

www.freedomforum.org/templates/document.asp?documentID=3979

The constitutional difference between “teaching religion” and “teaching about religion” is made very clear in Finding Common Ground. This guide to religion and public education is based on First Amendment principles and offers strategies to help educators incorporate studies about religion.

Freedom Forum

www.freedomforum.org/templates/document.asp?documentID=13087

The Freedom Forum is a nonpartisan foundation dedicated to free press, free speech, and free spirit for all people. Their publications page features numerous resources for teachers on how to teach about religion in the classroom.

PBS — Religion and Ethics News Weekly

www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics

Provides lessons for educators that feature stories, online video, and other resources to address current events from bioethics and the role of faith in politics to Islam and terrorism.

Religion and Human Rights

www.religionhumanrights.com

This website offers resources on multi-faith approaches to human rights, human rights in diverse cultural contexts, and analyses of human rights law. The site also serves as a clearinghouse for open, posting of scholarship on these topics.

Religion and Public Education Resource Center

www.csuchico.edu/lrs/rperc/

Provides general information about the ethical, legal, and educational issues that arise in connection with the topic of religion and public education.

Religion in the Public Schools - A Handbook

www.adl.org/religion_ps_2004/

A handbook by the Anti-Defamation League with information on the proper role of religion in U.S. public schools.

Religious Faith and Human Rights

www.uc.princeton.edu/main/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3065

In this audio podcast hosted by UChannel, Rowan Williams, the 104th Archbishop of Canterbury, explores the true relationship between religion and human rights.

The Religious Tolerance Organization

www.religioustolerance.org

A site that provides information about religious diversity in an attempt to promote greater understanding and respect with useful information about specific religions.

A Teacher’s Guide to Religion in the Public Schools

www.firstamendmentcenter.org/PDF/teachersguide.PDF

This guide moves beyond the confusion and conflict that surrounds religion in public schools with 18 questions and answers that provide teachers with a basic understanding of the issues concerning religion in their classrooms.

Teaching about Religion with a View to Diversity

www.teachingaboutreligion.org

This website assists history and social studies teachers in their handling of religion as curricular subject matter with the goal of promoting public civility and religious pluralism.

Teaching Tolerance

www.tolerance.org

Founded in 1991 by the Southern Poverty Law Center, Teaching Tolerance is dedicated to reducing prejudice, improving intergroup relations, and supporting equitable school experiences for our nation’s children. This site provides classroom activities, teaching kits, and other materials for teachers looking to improve tolerance education in their schools.

This I Believe

www.thisibelieve.org

This site promotes respect for different religions and beliefs by engaging youth and adults from all walks of life in writing, sharing, and discussing brief essays about the core values that guide their daily lives. Lessons available for educators.

Understanding World Religions

www.virtualreligion.net/vri

Rutgers University’s Virtual Religion Index is a comprehensive reference site to comparative religion resources on the web, including links to the scriptures of many faiths.

What Do You Believe?

www.whatdoyoubelieve.org

This 50-minute documentary and accompanying study guide helps promote tolerance and understanding among American teenagers from different religious and spiritual backgrounds.



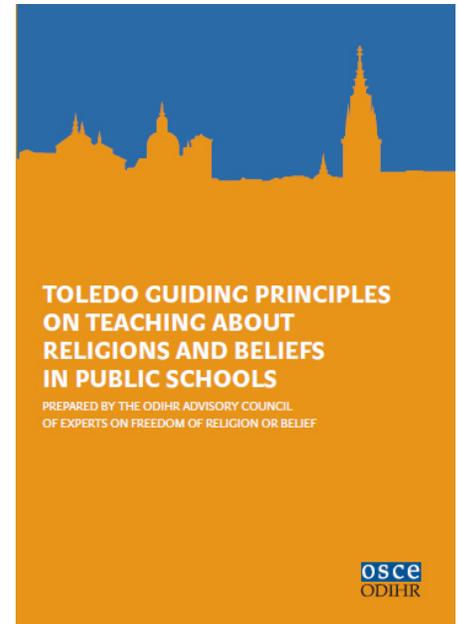
FEATURED RESOURCE: TOLEDO GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON TEACHING ABOUT RELIGIONS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching About Religions in the Public Schools* was prepared to provide better understanding of religious diversity and the increasing presence of various religions in the public sphere. The creation of this guide is based on two core principles: that education emphasizes respect for everyone's human right to freedom of religion and belief, and that teaching about religions and beliefs can reduce harmful misunderstandings, stereotypes, and human rights violations.

U.S. educators and administrators will find these principles useful as the primary purpose of this guide is to promote the study and knowledge about religions and beliefs in schools, particularly as a tool to enhance religious freedom. It does not propose a curriculum for teaching about religions and beliefs, nor does it promote any particular approach to teaching about religions and beliefs. The principles focus on an educational approach that provides information about different religions and beliefs as opposed to instruction in a specific religion or belief.

The guide also offers criteria including procedures and practices concerning the training of those who implement such curricula and the treatment of students from many different faith backgrounds who may be the recipients of such teaching. *The Guiding Principles* does not add a new set of directives on freedom of religion or belief, tolerance, and education but rather aims to offer tools to implement them, translating the principles that already exist into concrete applications and offering examples of good practices.

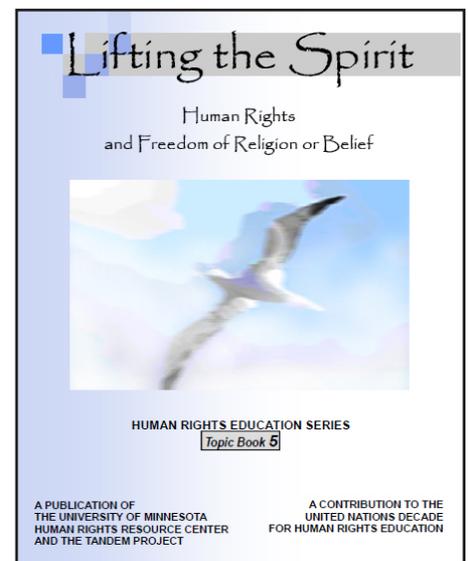
To download this resource and learn more about how your school can ensure that teaching about different religions and beliefs is carried out in a fair and balanced manner, please visit: www.osce.org/publications/odihr/2007/11/28314_993_en.pdf.



FEATURED CURRICULUM: LIFTING THE SPIRIT - HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

This is a resource guidebook with hands-on learning experiences for teachers, facilitators, and advocates working with youth between 12 and 18 years old. Designed for use in secondary classrooms, religious institutions and youth advocacy organizations around the world, both content and organization aim to be adaptable to many different national and cultural settings.

Lifting the Spirit focuses on the eight articles of the 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. Unit I (*Introduction to Human Rights and Freedom of Religion or Belief*) lays the foundation for the whole curriculum, establishing classroom standards and challenging students to articulate their understanding and experience of key concepts, such as human rights, dignity, religion, and beliefs. Unit II (*Understanding Freedom of Religion or Belief*) introduces students to the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. Unit III (*Human Rights from Concept to Declaration*) takes students more deeply into human rights, first examining the content and history of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and then exploring the 1981 Declaration in the context of the international human rights system. Unit IV (*The 1981 UN Declaration on the Freedom of Religion or Belief*) takes students systematically through this document, clarifying its language and linking concepts to their own lives. Unit V (*Taking Action for the Freedom of Religion or Belief*) challenges students to research and assess their own family, school, community, and national legal system in light of the freedom of religion or belief.



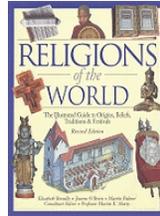
Written and published by The Tandem Project and the University of Minnesota, *Lifting the Spirit: Human Rights and Freedom of Religion or Belief* is available for free at www.umn.edu/humanrts/edumat/hreduseries/TB5/download.htm.



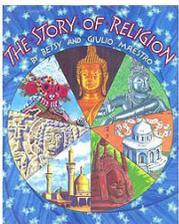
READING SUGGESTIONS: RELIGION, BELIEF, AND TOLERANCE



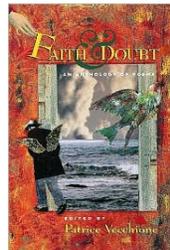
Faith: Many Beliefs, So Much in Common. By The Milestones Project. This book explores the world's five most widely practiced religions and one indigenous religion to see what they have in common. The book contains beautiful photos of young children practicing their faith. (Grades Pre K-2)



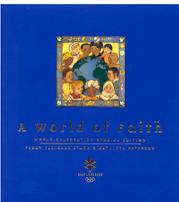
Religions of the World: The Illustrated Guide to Origins, Beliefs, Traditions & Festivals. By Elizabeth Breuilly, Joanne O'Brien, Martin E. Marty (Editor), and Martin Palmer. A straight forward introduction to world religions. (Grades 6-8)



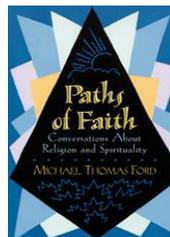
The Story of Religion. By Erika Weihs, Betsy Maestro & Giulio Maestro (Illustrator). In this book the beliefs of different faiths are explained through history, sacred writings, festivals and holidays. Colored-pencil, ink, and watercolor illustrations depict worldwide practices. (Grades 3-5)



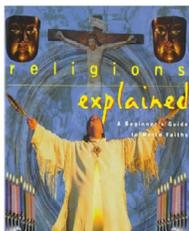
Faith and Doubt: An Anthology of Poems. By Patrice Vecchione. Explores why we believe and why, sometimes, we don't. From religion to politics to war and love, this collection of poems will help students clarify their beliefs. (Grades 6-12)



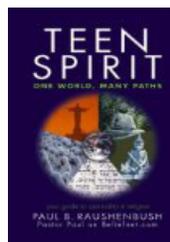
A World of Faith. By Peggy Fletcher Stack and Kathleen B. Peterson (Author, Illustrator). Each page in *A World of Faith* offers an accurate glimpse of one religious group's origins, beliefs, and current practices. The concise text is accompanied by historical illustrations with descriptions that clarify key symbols of each group. (Grades 3-5)



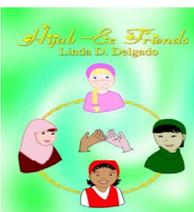
Paths of Faith: Conversations about Religion And Spirituality. By Michael Thomas Ford. A wonderfully illuminating and readable collection of interviews. People from 11 different faiths speak of their own youthful spiritual struggles and the joys and challenges of living out their beliefs. (Grades 7 and up)



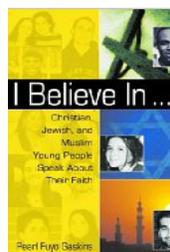
Religions Explained: A Beginner's Guide to World Faiths. By Anita Ganeri. An introduction to several religions, including explanations of lesser-known practices such as Sikhism, Jainism, Baha'i, spirit religions, and others. (Grades 4-6)



Teen Spirit: One World, Many Paths. By Paul Raushenbush. *Teen Spirit* covers each of the major religions present in America, complete with basic tenets, testimonies from famous celebrity practitioners, teen voices on why they like practicing that religion, misperceptions, specific roles and rites of passage for young people, and etiquette for how to behave when invited to an unfamiliar religious event. (Grades 8 and up)



Hijab-Ez Friends. By Linda D. Delgado. A great story about a ten-year-old girl who is encouraged to go to a new school to interact with other cultures and religions and the friendships she makes. (Grades 4-6)



I Believe In... Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Young People Speak About Their Faith. By Pearl Fuyo Gaskins. This book addresses issues such as religious identity, personal doubt, intolerance, stereotypes, and more through interviews with teens in the United States. (Grades 9 and up)



TIPS FOR TEACHING ABOUT WORLD RELIGIONS

HOW TO BE SENSITIVE AND INCLUSIVE

The following guidelines can help you address the concerns that often surround teaching about religion in the public school classroom:

- Preface the unit of study with a letter to parents outlining objectives and offering dialogue. Explain that you will be helping students learn about various religions without promoting any of them.
- Let students know upfront that faith, or lack thereof, is a very personal matter and that they do not have to profess any religious beliefs in order to participate in the unit.
- As part of your own preparation, visit local places of worship to enhance your understanding of different faiths and to make contacts for possible class activities.
- As the class surveys religious traditions, stick to the facts (date and place founded, basic beliefs and practices, significant people). Avoid interpreting issues of faith, and focus on religion as an aspect of culture: it is part of what makes people who they are. Artifacts such as prayer rugs, menorahs, and crucifixes remind us of this role.
- Provide a relevant framework by focusing on the similarities among faiths. This comparative approach can also prompt effective art, music, and writing activities.
- When choosing religious texts, such as the Qur'an, try to find authentic or bilingual editions so students can see different languages and formats. Both Arabic and Hebrew read from right to left, so from an English-language perspective, the books are laid out "backwards." Use this difference to discuss how individuals might make assumptions about scriptures and religions with which they are not familiar.
- Arrange for the class to visit various places of worship. Make it clear to your contact person that you wish to be observers only and not participants in the service.
- Invite guest speakers to the classroom, but alert them ahead of time to the need for objectivity. Any discussion about religion can quickly become personal, so stress that the purpose of the visit is not to have students examine their own faith but simply to expose them to various belief systems.

Source: "Teaching About Religion," by Teaching Tolerance, www.tolerance.org/supplement/teaching-about-religion.



THE TALMUD TORAH SCHOOL — TEACHING HUMAN RIGHTS, PEACE, AND JUSTICE ON MLK DAY

Last year, Talmud Torah of St. Paul (TTSP) commemorated Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day with the study of the American civil rights movement combined the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Advocates for Human Rights' Education Program was invited to talk to the school about human rights and how they relate to students' everyday lives. The students at Talmud Torah continued studying human rights for the semester and collectively took on a Peace Challenge.

TTSP is a Jewish, comprehensive educational center that includes the Annette Newman Day School for grades K-8. Students come from diverse Jewish backgrounds and practices and live across the Twin Cities. TTSP encourages students to meet on the shared values of tolerance, self-respect, and cooperation.

Keeping the mission of the school in mind as well as the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., The Advocates taught lessons from their curriculum, *The Road to Peace: A Teaching Guide on Local and Global Transitional Justice* which includes several lessons on peace and conflict resolution, human rights, the struggle for justice, and how students can take action.



At the beginning of the visit, students were asked: “How are YOU responsible for promoting human rights in your school, your community, and the world?” Frequent responses included things such as: to be free, donate food, be nice and kind to people, and stop bullies. Later, when asked “What can YOU do to teach others about Human Rights?” students said: tell others what “human rights” means, talk about it, and be a good role model.

Next, students participated in an activity called “The Web of Connectedness.” Students and staff formed a large circle and tossed a ball of string to the person standing across from them until each person was holding a piece of the string, forming a giant web. The facilitator pulled on one or two sections and asked students to hold on tightly. Watching the effect, students learned that we are all impacted by each others' actions and vice-versa. This activity was followed by a lively discussion and reflection about how each of us has an impact on the world.

Following the web activity, students explored the many ways they can make a positive difference in their school and community through the “100 Ways to Be a Peacemaker” activity. Students were each given “peacemaker cards” upon which different peace actions were written. (For example: “speak up when you see someone bullying someone else,” “don't buy or use violent toys or games,” “don't tell racist jokes,” and “apologize and forgive.”) They then placed the cards on a continuum of actions from those they would most likely do to those they would not do. From this list, the students chose a few to undertake as part of a “Peace Challenge,” where they made a commitment to fulfill them during the remainder of the school year.

The students, with the support of teachers and administrators, followed through with their chosen peacemaking commitment. The students introduced a problem-solving technique to the school staff, administration, and The Advocates' staff called “Talk it out!” to address challenges they may be faced with at school and at home. They are now using “Talk it out!” throughout the school to resolve conflict and create a more peaceful school environment.

Through their example, the students at the Talmud Torah of St. Paul have shown each of us how to truly honor the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the timeless values he taught us including courage, justice, compassion, and peaceful conflict resolution. To find out more about *The Road to Peace: A Teaching Guide on Local and Global Transitional Justice* and the lessons and activities used in this article, please go to <http://discoverhumanrights.org/Curricula.html>.



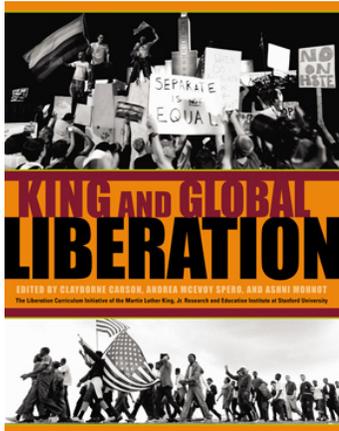
Diversity Works

Diversity Works is a *Trivial Pursuit*-style game that is a fun way for students to gain greater awareness and understanding about the different cultures and holidays of peoples around the world. Denise Bailey, a teacher, designed this product to help youth understand and respect different cultures. Players work together to answer cultural questions and win the game as a group by earning letter cards and spelling “diversity.” There are 300 questions about 60 different cultures. The questions have three levels of difficulty and include categories on religion, food, sports, discoveries, holidays, and others. Although the directions describe four variations of play, teachers can easily adapt the culture cards to fit their curriculum. The game is most effective for use with grades 5-9. To learn more about *Diversity Works* and to order a copy go to www.cultural-concepts.org/aboutus.html.



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Resource: Liberation Curriculum

The Liberation Curriculum (LC) website – <http://liberationcurriculum.org> – offers teachers historically accurate and pedagogically effective online, educational materials. The website includes: lesson plans, documents, classroom activities, an audio compilation of significant King sermons and speeches, and access to the King Encyclopedia. Teaching units are designed around the Montgomery bus boycott, King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” the Children’s Crusade, the “Beyond Vietnam” speech, Malcolm X, and human rights. The LC’s teaching unit, “Human Rights: By Any Means Necessary,” is featured in the April 2008 issue of the *Magazine of History* published by the Organization of American Historians. Their newest curriculum guide, *King and Global Liberation*, is for educators looking to teach students about how the American civil rights movement was intertwined with international human and civil rights movements, and how Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s leadership both drew on and inspired other organizers’ efforts and accomplishments. This 170-page book is composed of lesson plans, handouts, activities, and unit overviews.



HREA’s Portal for Human Rights Schools

Human Rights Education Associates (HREA) recently launched a new web resource, entitled “Portal for Human Rights Schools” to promote understanding and application of a human rights-based approach (HRBA) to schooling. This approach is concerned with the organization of learning so that it is reflective of human rights principles and promotes understanding of the human rights framework. The website offers resources for schools, policy makers, educators, students, and individuals interested in the implementation of HRBA in their schools. The aims of this portal are:

- to provide viewpoints on the theoretical underpinnings of the HRBA;
- to present a range of HRBA practices that are emerging in schools worldwide;
- to encourage “best practices” in the documentation and evaluation of HRBA by sharing resources dedicated to examining the most pressing issues in evaluating human rights education.

HREA recognizes the flexible and evolving nature of HRBA and seeks to draw on a number of perspectives to show how the human rights-based approach to schooling can be implemented in a way that is sensitive to the cultural, social, economic, and political variants that are specific to each school. To check out this great new resource, go to: www.hrea.org/index.php?base_id=27&language_id=1.



HUMAN RIGHTS CALENDAR

JANUARY

- 8 World Literacy Day
- 16 U.S. National Day of Religious Freedom
- 17 World Religion Day
- 18 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- 27 International Day of Commemoration in memory of victims of the Holocaust

FEBRUARY

- African American History Month*
- 12 National Freedom to Marry Day
- 14 V Day - Victory over Violence Against Women and Girls
- 20 Non-Violent Resistance Day

MARCH

- Women's History Month*
- 8 International Women's Day
- 21 International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- 21 World Poetry Day
- 22 World Water Day

Check out the primary sacred dates
for religions around the world at:
www.interfaithcalendar.org/

RIGHTS SITES NEWS

Volume 6 Issue 1 Winter 2010

The Advocates for Human Rights Education Program

Colleen Beebe
Director
cbeebe@advrights.org

Madeline Lohman
Program Associate
mlohman@advrights.org

Anna Donnelly
Program Assistant
adonnelly@advrights.org

Emily Farell
Program Associate
efarell@advrights.org

Kathy Seipp
Program Associate
kseipp@advrights.org

Margot Goodnow
Program Assistant
mgoodnow@advrights.org

Rights Sites News is published quarterly by the Education Program at The Advocates for Human Rights to promote human rights education in the classroom and support human rights teachers. We welcome suggestions and comments.

Rights Sites News Editor: Emily Farell
Contact: 612-341-3302, ext. 124
www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org

To sign up for our list-serv and receive periodic e-mail updates about opportunities related to human rights education, please send your name and your e-mail address to: efarell@advrights.org.

The Advocates for Human Rights would like to thank supporters of our educational programming: Blandin Foundation; Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation; The Beverly Foundation; U.S. Human Rights Fund; U.S. Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery; Emily Sandall Memorial Fund for the Sankhu-Palubari Community School; Elmer L. & Eleanor J. Andersen Foundation; Carlson Family Foundation; and other donors.



650 3rd Avenue South, Suite 1240
Minneapolis, MN 55402