



Developing Religious Literacy: Case Study Discussion Guide

The following are considerations for each of the [case studies](#) provided in ICS's Developing Religious Literacy workshop. Keep in mind that the case studies are meant to spark discussion around best practices, and there are different ways of looking at each lesson described. The following are what ICS would suggest considering in regards to the best practices put forth by the [NCSS C3 Supplement](#). You may find that you agree, disagree, or see the case study as impacting a different best practice than is mentioned. These are simply ideas to **consider**.

Best Practices:

- Approach to religion is **ACADEMIC**, not *devotional*.
- Student **AWARENESS** of religions, not student *acceptance* of any religion.
- **STUDY ABOUT** religion, not the *practice* of religion.
- **EXPOSE** students to a diversity of religious views, not *impose* any particular view.
- **EDUCATE** about all religions; it does not *promote* or *denigrate* religion.
- **INFORM** the students about various beliefs; not seek to *conform* students to any particular belief.

Case Study	Best Practices to Consider	Additional Thoughts	Your Space: What would you change to make this lesson conform to best practices?
Case 1: The Jewish Kippah	- STUDY ABOUT religion, not the <i>practice</i> of religion.	While wearing the <i>yarmulke</i> , or <i>kippah</i> , can be seen as a sign of respect, does it also toe the line of making a student feel	

		like they are being asked to practice a religion?	
Case 2: Arabic Calligraphy	-Student AWARENESS of religions, not student acceptance of any religion. - INFORM the students about various beliefs; not seek to conform students to any particular belief.	Asking students to study calligraphy is a thoughtful way to examine religious culture, but having students copy the <i>Shahada</i> , or the Islamic profession of faith, could easily be interpreted as asking them to accept or conform to a religious belief.	
Case 3: Hindu Practice	-Approach to religion is ACADEMIC , not devotional .	First, we should never tokenize students or their families. Just because a student is a practitioner of a religion, that does not mean they are an expert. In terms of best practices, if a family were invited to speak, they could easily slip into explanations that are more devotional, promotional, or imposing.	
Case 4: Christian Dogma	- EXPOSE students to a diversity of religious views, not impose any particular view. - INFORM the students about various beliefs; not seek to conform students to any particular belief.	Inviting local leaders to discuss their religion can be an immersive way for students to learn from an expert – so long as that leader is also willing to follow the best practices. By saying students will go to hell if they do not believe in Jesus Christ, he is both imposing his beliefs and seeking to conform.	
Case 5: Buddhist Meditation	- STUDY ABOUT religion, not the practice of religion.	In this context, meditation is part of a religious practice. With the student providing instructions for his classmates before they begin the session, it is implied that the students will be participating in a	

		religious experience.	
Case 6: Women in Islam	<p>-STUDY ABOUT religion, not the <i>practice</i> of religion.</p> <p>-EDUCATE about all religions; it does not <i>promote</i> or <i>denigrate</i> religion.</p>	Having students try on clothing that is religious or closely associated with religious culture can feel like practicing a religion. It can also lead to a situation where a religion might be promoted or denigrated; this experience may not be taken seriously by some students, which could cause students who wear that clothing to feel uncomfortable or disrespected.	
Case 7: Jewish Holidays	<p>-Approach to religion is ACADEMIC, not <i>devotional</i>.</p> <p>-STUDY ABOUT religion, not the <i>practice</i> of religion.</p>	It is certainly fun for students to be able to try different foods. However, does trying these symbolic foods as their religious meaning is explained lean towards asking students to partake in a devotional practice?	