



The California Three Rs Project

Rights, Responsibility, and Respect

April 2015

BULLETIN

Volume 12, Number 3

California Three Rs Advisory Council

Avi Black

History-Social Science Professional
Development Consultant

Cheryl Brown

CA Assembly, 47th District

Julian Crocker

California County

Superintendents Educational Services
Association

Marshall Croddy

Constitutional Rights
Foundation

Connie DeCapite

California International Studies Pro-
ject

Michelle Deutchman

Anti-Defamation League

Maha ElGenaidi

Islamic Networks Group

Lisette Estrella-Henderson

Curriculum & Instruction
Steering Committee

Jay Fiene

California State University
San Bernardino

Mynga Futrell

Objectivity, Accuracy, and Balance in
Teaching about Religion

John Hale

Center for Civic Education

Mary Hendra

Facing History and Ourselves

Steve Herrick

American Academy of Religion

Robert F. Kane, Esq.

Americans United for
Separation of Church and State

Jyotswaroop Kaur

Sikh American Legal Defense and
Education Fund

Judith Lessow-Hurley

San Jose State University

Shabbir Mansuri

Institute on Religion
and Civic Values

Nancy Martin

Chapman University

Kenneth McDonald

California Department of
Education

D. Keith Naylor

Occidental College

Kathy Northington

Association of California School
Administrators

Jacqueline Regev

Institute for Curriculum Services

Brian Rivas

California School Boards
Association

Beth Slutsky

California History-Social
Science Project

Sally Todd

Catholic Diocese of Orange

Forrest Turpen

Christian Educators
Association International

Broaching Borderlands Beyond Religion (Part Two)

Mynga Futrell

Lead Curriculum Developer for Objectivity, Accuracy, and Balance in Teaching About Religion

When it comes to managing the entire spectrum of worldviews that may be present in youngsters' families, public school educators face the challenges of both religious and nonreligious diversity. School leaders here in California are well aware of the fact that freedom of conscience derived from the U.S. Constitution and First Amendment applies in public schools.

One aspect of civic obligation is that no one religion should be given privilege over any other. What is perhaps less often recognized is that neither should religion itself have privilege over *non*religion. This recognition requires a civic neutrality.

Adults and students in schools need to understand that freedom of conscience applies equally to the religious and nonreligious alike. Lest youngsters from

nontheistic or nonreligious families be treated as inferiors at school events or in the classroom, educators need to recognize that all students belong in the panorama of American citizenship.

Here, considered through a secular lens, are three of the more important challenges to schools achieving civic neutrality between faith and no faith: moral assumptions, ceremonial deism, and inequity biases.

Moral Assumptions

Much of American society affixes a moral tinge of disfavor to the "None" segment of our "all faiths, or none" divide (i.e., It is better to have a faith — any faith — than to have none at all.). (Please see Part One of this article in the January 2015 3Rs *Bulletin* for discussion of the "Nones.") Surveys have shown, for example, that no other "religious category" is less trusted than the

tiny atheist segment of society.

Americans often make a moral assumption that religion/faith is a foundation of benevolence. Secularists, however, might view benevolent actions even within organized religions as simply fundamental expressions of a common humanity. In other words, a more neutral attribution of morality is available. It is this: *humanitarian* action.

Whereas religious persons might mainly

(Continued on Page 2)

Inside this issue:

Broaching Borderlands Beyond Religion (Part Two)	1
Growth of World Religions to 2050	3
Excerpt From A Teacher's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools	4

The California Three Rs Project is co-sponsored by Constitutional Rights Foundation, California County Superintendents Educational Services Association, and the Religious Freedom Education Project at the Newseum



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM EDUCATION PROJECT
AT THE NEWSEUM

One aspect of civic obligation is that no one religion should be given privilege over any other. What is perhaps less often recognized is that neither should religion itself have privilege over *non*religion.

base their moral behavior on specific sacred texts and teachings, nonreligious persons may find a basis for their own moral behavior in scientific research (e.g., studies show that infants exhibit signs of morality) or universal moral precepts (i.e., the ubiquity of the Golden Rule throughout diverse cultures). In either case, people can have humanitarian motivation for their benevolent actions.

In schools, educators should remember that stereotyping and stigmatizing of nonreligious persons is just as bad as stereotyping and stigmatizing of religious persons. Where appropriate, educators can help students understand that morality is a valued human virtue for both the religious and nonreligious.

Civil conversation can help students think critically and look for areas of common ground with one another. It is imperative that educators challenge neither the religious nor secular identity of any student, but rather that they nurture a classroom and school environment in which all students feel safe and are treated as equal moral agents regardless of worldview.

Ceremonial Deism

Governmental mention of a generic or non-specific God has, over time, become legal, based on the as-

sumption that no one is truly harmed by it. Many citizens give little notice to government (or schools) engaging in speech and symbolism drawn from religious context, such as the ceremonial use of the word “God.”

Certain government-backed 1950s-era actions, however, have disquieted other citizens (i.e., the insertion of “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954 and the replacement of the original “E Pluribus Unum” motto with “In God We Trust” in 1956). Contemporary opposition to these measures comes from strongly religious citizens sensing a dilution of their faith and from secularists recognizing intrusions gaining strength over time. Those with a naturalistic outlook usually support a firm separation of church and state, and with national calls to prayer, ceremonial deism is increasingly making them feel like second-class citizens.

Just as they are constitutionally protected from religious coercion, youngsters cannot be compelled to recite the Pledge. Those from nontheistic families may choose the pre-1954 version, or they can sit out the exercise without disturbing others. Disparagement from teachers or peers, or being excluded by means of excusal from the room, sends a message to nontheistic students that

they are outsiders to patriotism.

Inequity Biases

We all have personal biases of one kind or another. When partiality results in unfair treatment and discrimination, however, there is harm to the civic framework of neutrality. The creation of any kind of second-class citizenship for any group damages the whole of society. That is why outright discriminatory targeting of any individual for his or her religion or belief is illegal.

In secondary schools, secular student groups are protected by the Equal Access Act’s assurance of access to resources equal to that of religious student groups, and vice versa. Occasionally, some youngsters will show interest in exploring religions and beliefs (or science and philosophy) and may want to form an extracurricular club for this purpose. Some clubs are religious in nature, while others may identify as nonreligious and may meet to investigate and freely discuss such areas as skepticism, humanism, freethinking, or to engage in charitable activities.

The educational nonprofit Secular Student Alliance (SSA) is probably the most active and well-known na-

(See “Beyond Religion” on Page 3.)

Beyond Religion (cont'd)

tional secular organization for non-theistic youth. SSA reports that non-theists on high school campuses frequently encounter a high level of prejudice and even bullying on campus. Although nontheistic student groups have the same rights, protections, and school accommodations available to them as any other extracurricular clubs, many communities still frown upon the notion of "atheistic activity" in a school.

This needn't be the case. Knowledgeable school staff should extend their mandate of civic neutrality to the full range of religious and nonreligious diversity.

One easy-to-remember rhyme offers a useful mantra for the overall undertaking to be civically neutral in matters of religion and nonreligion:

*Academically astute,
constitutionally sound,
and just plain fair
all the way 'round!*

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN SOCIAL STUDIES?

FIND OUT!

SUBSCRIBE to the listerv of Stacey Greer, Consultant for the Literacy, History & Arts Leadership Office of the Professional Learning Support Division in the California Department of Education. Send Stacey an email at sgreer@cde.ca.gov to **subscribe today!** It's **FREE!**

SHARE your own organization's events, materials, and professional learning opportunities of interest to social studies educators across California.

Send an email to
sgreer@cde.ca.gov.
Again, it's **FREE!**

The Spring 2015 issue of
Constitutional Rights Foundation's

Bill of Rights in Action

features

The Free Exercise of Religion in America



by Damon Huss

A reading and Common Core-aligned lesson
on the history, law, and application of the
First Amendment's free exercise clause.

Subscribe and download for free at

crf-usa.org

Growth of World Religions to 2050

Damon Huss
Director, The California Three Rs Project

This month, the Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project published "The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010–2050," a [report](#) that analyzes religious changes worldwide over the next few decades. The report indicates demographic pro-

jections until the year 2050, and the researchers relied on factors including current geographic distribution, age differences, and fertility and mortality rates of religious groups.

One major finding in the report is that Islam is projected to grow at a faster rate (73 percent) than the

world's population as a whole (35 percent).

The number of Christians will also grow, but at a rate about the same as the world's population. By 2050, the number of Muslims will almost equal the number of Christians, and much of the growth of both faith groups will be in sub-

Saharan Africa.

Buddhism is the one major religious group that is projected to decrease worldwide, but only slightly. The number of unaffiliated persons will also decrease by three percent worldwide, despite their numbers increasing somewhat in Europe and North America.

Damon Huss, J.D., M.Ed.

Director, California Three Rs Project
 Constitutional Rights Foundation
 601 S. Kingsley Dr.
 Los Angeles, CA 90005
 Phone: 213-316-2117
 E-mail: damon@crf-usa.org

Dr. Margaret Hill

Co-Director, California Three Rs Project
 College of Education-ELC (retired)
 California State University, San Bernardino
 5500 University Pkwy.
 San Bernardino, CA 92407
 Phone: 909-946-9035
 E-mail: mhill@csusb.edu

For information on teaching world religions:

Dr. Bruce Grelle

Director, Religion and Public Education Project
 Department of Comparative Religion and Humanities
 California State University, Chico
 239 Trinity Hall
 Chico, CA 95929-0740
 Phone: 530-898-4739
 E-mail: bgrelle@csuchico.edu

For information on First Amendment religious liberty:

Dr. Charles C. Haynes

Director, Religious Freedom Education Project
 555 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
 Washington, DC 20001
 Phone: 202-292-6288
 E-mail: chaynes@freedomforum.org

The California Three Rs Project (CA3Rs) is a program for finding common ground on issues related to religious liberty and the First Amendment in public schools. The CA3Rs' approach is based on the principles of American democracy and citizenship, reflected in the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights and applied in a public school setting.

For over a decade, the CA3Rs has provided online resources, professional development, and leadership training for teachers and education professionals in order to disseminate essential information about religious liberty and the history of religion in America.

Common Ground Resources

Haynes, Charles C., and Oliver Thomas. *Finding Common Ground: A Guide to Religious Liberty in the Public Schools*. Nashville: First Amendment Center, 2007.

< <http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/madison/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/FCGcomplete.pdf> >

Religious Freedom Education Project at the Newseum.

< <http://religiousfreedomeducation.org> >

Excerpt From *A Teacher's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools*

The following two questions are excerpted from A Teacher's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools, a pamphlet written by CA3Rs co-sponsor and supporter, Charles C. Haynes. From time to time, the Bulletin will reprint portions of this important and highly useful resource for teachers. The pamphlet and other resources are available at the Newseum Institute's [Religious Freedom Center website](http://www.religiousfreedomcenter.org).

1. Is it constitutional to teach about religion?

Yes. In the 1960s' school prayer cases (that prompted rulings against state-sponsored school prayer and Bible reading), the U.S. Supreme Court indicated that public school education may include teaching about religion. In *Abington v. Schempp*, Associate Justice Tom Clark wrote for the Court:

[I]t might well be said that one's education is not com-

plete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effect-ed consistently with the First Amendment.

2. Why should study about religion be included in the curriculum?

Growing numbers of educators throughout the United States recognize that study about religion in social studies, literature, art, and music is an important part of a well-rounded education. "Religion in the Public School

Curriculum: Questions and Answers," issued by a coalition of 17 major religious and educational organizations—including the Christian Legal Society, the American Jewish Congress, the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the American Association of School Administrators, the Islamic Society of North America, the National Council for the Social Studies, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, the National Association of Evangelicals, and the National School Boards Association—describes the importance of religion in the curriculum thus:

Because religion plays a significant role in history and

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

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