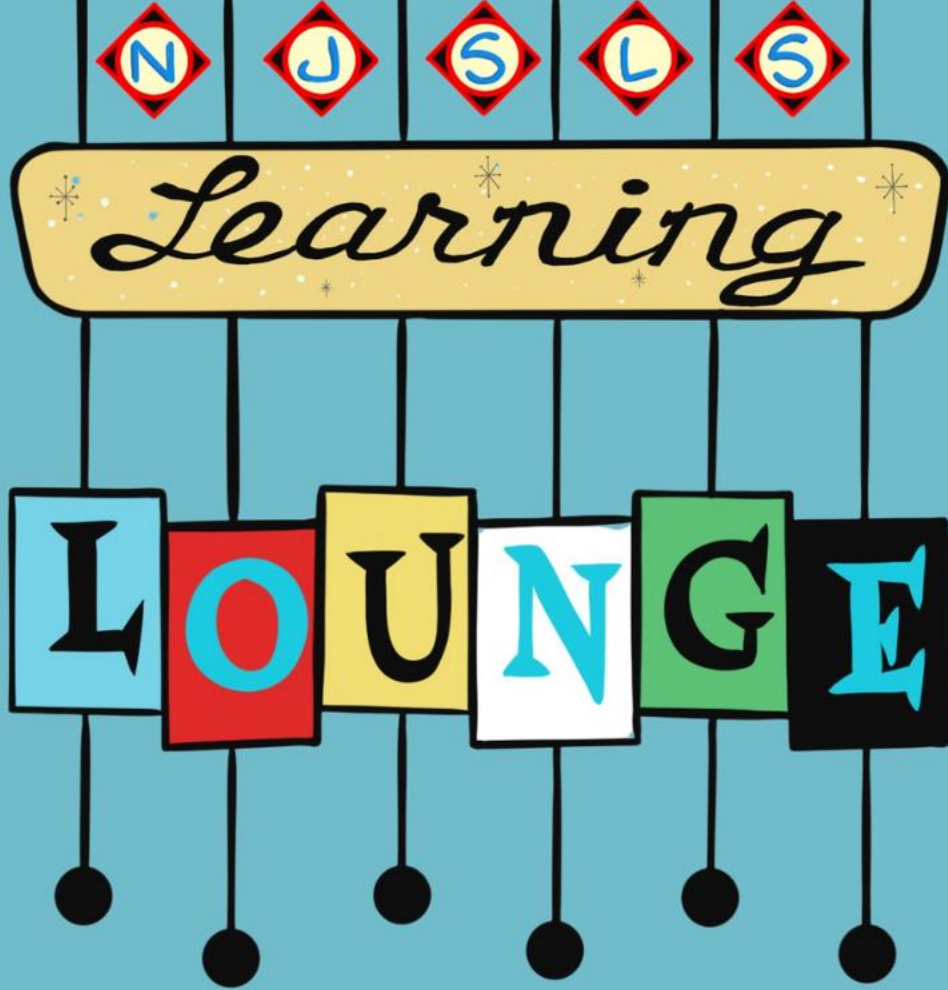


As we wait for our
Learning Lounge to begin,
please use the chat to share the
subject you teach, the grade
level(s), and what brings you
joy in your current teaching
assignment.

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More Than Just a Month:

Integrating
Religious Diversity
into the K-12 Social
Studies Curriculum

**Division of Teaching and Learning
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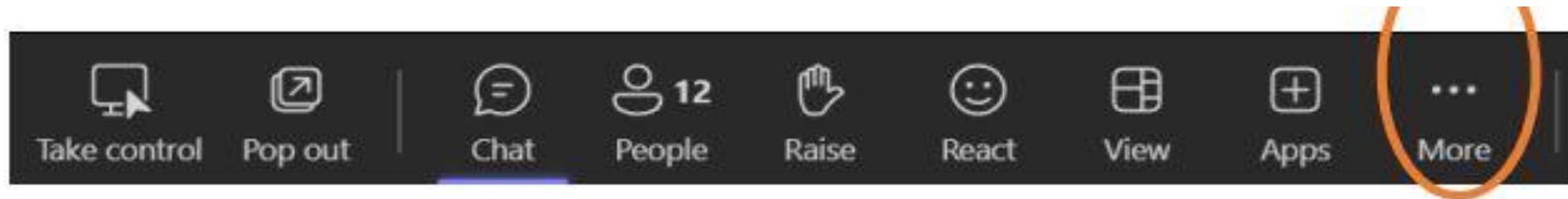
April 8, 2025



To turn on live captions:



- Once you enter a Teams meeting or webinar, at the top of your screen, find the three dots with “more” written underneath.



- Go to “Language and Speech” and click on “Turn on live captions”.



Purpose of today's Learning Lounge



- Present legislation and standards that call for instruction related to religious diversity.
- Discuss the role of religious literacy in social studies instruction.
- Deliver an overview of religious traditions.
- Provide instructional strategies and resources for teaching about religious diversity.



Diversity & Inclusion ([N.J.S.A.18A:35-4.36a](#))

- highlight and promote diversity, including economic diversity, equity, inclusion, tolerance, and belonging in connection with gender and sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, disabilities, and religious tolerance;
- encourage safe, welcoming, and inclusive environments for all students regardless of race or ethnicity, sexual and gender identities, mental and physical disabilities, and religious beliefs.



Religious Traditions Overview



- Major world religions and their basic beliefs.
- Lesser-known traditions and practices.
- Indigenous spiritual traditions.
- Secular worldviews and philosophical traditions.
- Intersections with culture, history, and society.



Religion in the NJSLS-SS



- Standard 6.1: U.S. History: America in the World.
 - Examine religious influences on American historical development.
- Standard 6.2: World History/Global Studies.
 - Religious traditions' impact on global developments.
- Standard 6.3: Active Citizenship in the 21st Century.
 - Connect religious literacy to civic engagement and cultural competence.

Discussion Break: Where do you incorporate religious diversity in the curriculum?





By End of Grade 2



- 6.1.2.CivicsCM.3: Explain how diversity, tolerance, fairness, and respect for others contribute to acceptance.
- 6.1.2.HistoryUP.2: Demonstrate how beliefs, values, and traditions can reflect multiple cultures.
- 6.1.2.HistoryUP.3: Show how stereotyping and prejudice can lead to conflict.



By End of Grade 5



- 6.1.5.CivicsDP.3: Describe the role of religious freedom and participatory government in various North American colonies.
- 6.1.5.HistoryUP.2: Compare and contrast forms of governance, belief systems, and family structures among African, European, and Native American groups.
- 6.1.5.HistoryUP.4: Compare and contrast gender roles, religion, values, cultural practices, and political systems of Native American groups.
- 6.1.5.HistoryCC.11: Make evidence-based inferences to explain the impact that belief systems and family structures of African, European, and Native American groups had on government structures.
- 6.1.5.CivicsHR.1: Describe how fundamental rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights contribute to the improvement of American democracy.



By End of Grade 8



- 6.2.8.HistoryCC.3.a: Determine the extent to which religion, economic issues, and conflict shaped the values and decisions of the classical civilizations.
- 6.2.8.HistoryUP.3.c: Compare and contrast the tenets of various world religions that developed in or around this time period (Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, and Taoism), their patterns of expansion, and responses to globalization.
- 6.2.8.CivicsPI.4.a: Analyze the role of religion and other means rulers used to unify and centrally govern expanding territories with diverse populations.
- 6.2.8.HistoryCC.4.d: Analyze the causes and outcomes of the Crusades from different perspectives, including European political and religious leaders, crusaders, Jews, Muslims, and traders.
- 6.2.8.HistoryCC.4.f: Analyze the role of religion and economics in shaping each empire's social hierarchy and evaluate the impact these hierarchical structures had on various groups.





By End of Grade 12



- 6.2.12.HistoryCC.5.c: Cite evidence describing the role of boundary disputes and limited natural resources, including disputes related to religious differences, as sources of conflict.
- 6.2.12.CivicsHR.6.a: Evaluate the effectiveness of responses by governments and international organizations to tensions resulting from ethnic, territorial, religious, and/or nationalist differences.
- 6.2.12.HistorySE.1: Analyze the impact of current governmental practices and laws affecting First Amendment rights and privacy, including religion in schools.
- 6.1.12.CivicsPR.14.a: Use primary sources representing multiple perspectives and data to determine the effectiveness of the federal government in addressing civil liberties and rights, including First Amendment protections.
- 6.2.12.HistoryCC.14.d: Evaluate the role of religion on cultural and social norms, public opinion, and political decisions.



Why Religious Literacy Matters



- Religious literacy is a crucial component of cultural competence.
- Impact on student well-being and belonging.
- Connection to cultural heritage and identity.
- Role in understanding historical events and contemporary issues.
- Legal framework: First Amendment and religious freedom in schools.

Discussion Break: How does being religiously literate help you as an educator?



Common Challenges



- Fear of “promoting” religion.
- Confusion about separation of church and state.
- Limited knowledge of diverse traditions.
- Concern about offending students or families.
- Addressing stereotypes and misconceptions.
- Navigating religious holidays and observances.



Instructional Strategies



- Academic vs. devotional approach.
- Using primary sources and authentic voices.
- Incorporating multiple perspectives.
- Age-appropriate content and language.
- Creating safe spaces for discussion.
- Emphasizing respect and understanding.



Classroom Activities



- Interactive learning experiences - virtual field trips to places of worship.
- Guest speakers from different faith traditions.
- Cultural artifact exploration.
- Comparative religion projects.
- Student-led research presentations.

Discussion Break: Please share examples of your instructional activities in the chat.



Creating Inclusive Environments



- Acknowledging religious diversity in your classroom.
- Supporting students during religious observances.
- Addressing religious bullying and discrimination.
- Accommodating religious dietary restrictions.
- Working with families and community members.



Handling Sensitive Topics



- Guidelines for respectful discussions.
- Addressing controversial issues.
- Managing different viewpoints.
- Supporting students from minority faiths.
- Responding to challenging questions.



Instructional Resources



- [NCSS Webinars: Religion, Social Studies and You](#)
- [PBS Learning Media: World Religions Map](#)
- [PBS Religions Crash Course](#)
- [PBS Religion and the First Amendment](#)
- [Religion & Ethics Newsweekly: Access World Religions](#)
- [Smithsonian Sacred Texts](#)
- [Tanenbaum: Combating Religious Prejudice Educational Resources](#)



Conclusion



- Religious literacy is essential for comprehensive social studies education.
- The standards call for instruction related to religious diversity and the role of religion throughout history.
- An inclusive classroom explores all religions through an academic lens that emphasizes cultural understanding and respect.



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Thank You!



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