Webinar Facilitators

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Webinar Etiquette

- All webinar attendees will be muted during the webinar.
- Use the **Q&A box** if you have any questions.
- Use the **comment box** to share your comments or to engage other participants during the webinar.
- Complete a **brief survey** after the webinar.
CENTER FOR EDUCATION EQUITY (CEE)

CEE is a project of MAEC, Inc., in partnership with WestEd and the American Institutes for Research (AIR).

CEE is one of four regional equity assistance centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Center for Education Equity (CEE) is committed to the sharing of information regarding issues of equity in education. References to any specific publication, person, or idea is for the information and convenience of the public and does not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of CEE. The contents of this presentation were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (S004D110021). However, these contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.
CENTER FOR EDUCATION EQUITY

CEE’s goals are to:

• Improve and sustain the systemic capacity of public education systems to address problems caused by segregation and inequities.

• Increase equitable educational opportunities for all students regardless of race, gender, religion, and national origin (English Learners).

Whom we serve:

• CEE provides technical assistance and training to states, districts, schools, and community-based organizations within Region I at the request of school boards and other responsible governmental agencies.
Webinar Objectives

• Understand the implications of the First Amendment as it pertains to education and religion in public schools.

• Balance constitutional concerns regarding religious liberty with school policies, including free exercise and religious accommodations.

• Identify challenges faced by students from diverse religious backgrounds.

• Identify best practices and policies for creating inclusive and safe environments for students from diverse religious backgrounds.
Presenters

Melissa Garlick
Anti-Defamation League

Seth Gordon-Lipkin
Anti-Defamation League

Dr. Muhammed Khalifa
University of Minnesota
Anti-Defamation League

“... To stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.”

October 1913
Framing the Conversation

• The conversation surrounding religion in public schools is complex, but it does not need to be divisive.

• Schools and educators can demonstrate respect for religious liberty while also fostering inclusive learning environments for students from all backgrounds.

• Approach challenges with the understanding that mistakes or misinformation, not malice, underlie many of the problems witnessed in this area.
Constitutional Principles

Religious matters are to be separated from the jurisdiction of the state, not because they are beneath the interests of the state but, quite to the contrary, because they are too high and holy and thus are beyond the competence of the state.
Constitutional Principles
First Amendment Religion Clause

Religious Freedom

The First Amendment
“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”
Constitutional Principles
Interpretation and Standards
Constitutional Principles
Establishment and Free Exercise Clause Standards

Any school practice or policy must not violate the Establishment Clause.

• Is a government action permissible?
• Does it have a secular purpose?
• Does it have a primary effect which neither advances nor inhibits religion?
• Does it create excessive entanglement?

Does it violate the Free Exercise Clause?
The week before Christmas, the students in Elizabeth’s class are instructed to paint a picture of Santa Claus. Elizabeth tells her teacher that she does not celebrate Christmas and asks whether she can paint something else. The teacher tells her that she does not have to paint a picture of Santa, but she should go to the other side of the room and read a book while the other kids finish the project. During recess, several of Elizabeth’s classmates taunt her for not painting Santa.

1. Is the assignment permissible?
2. From a non-legal perspective, did the teacher handle appropriately?

Please submit your response to the poll questions on the right-hand side panel.
Case Study 2
Teaching About Holidays

Mr. Parker, who is not Jewish, is afraid that he will mischaracterize Hanukkah when he is explaining about holidays. In class, he calls on a Jewish student to see if she would be willing to explain to the class the meaning of Hanukkah. She tries to do so. Later that day, the student tells her mother about the incident, who objects to Mr. Parker. Mr. Parker proposes that the mother come to class and explain Hanukkah. She agrees and comes to school and performs a holiday-foods cooking demonstration.

1. Should Mr. Parker have asked the student to explain Hanukkah?
2. Should he have asked her mother?

Please submit your response to the poll questions on the right-hand side panel.
Case Study 3
Prayer in the Locker Room

On the day of the Central Valley High School football championship, the coach gave his team a last-minute pep talk in the Bulldogs' locker room. He then led the team in a prayer, as he traditionally did before each athletic event. Richard Nelson, a student, felt uncomfortable reciting the prayer because he was an atheist. He mentioned his discomfort to the coach who responded that Richard should simply stand in silence or feel free to leave the room while his teammates prayed together.

1. Is the team prayer constitutional?
2. Is the coach's solution viable?

Please submit your response to the poll questions on the right-hand side panel.
Case Study 4
Prayer at Graduation

A school district is reviewing its graduation ceremony policy. The policy calls on a member of the local clergy to deliver a “non-sectarian, non-proselytizing” prayer at the start of the ceremony. After the parent of a graduating senior complains, the school district would like to substitute a student who is elected by his or her peers to deliver the prayer instead.

1. Can the school district substitute a student for a local clergy person?

Please submit your response to the poll questions on the right-hand side panel.
Case Study 5
See you at the Pole

Pastor Friendly visits the principal of a middle school to say that his large congregation is preparing their youth to pray at 7:00 am, Wednesday, September 26, joining hands around the school’s flagpole, located on a patio next to the street. Classes begin at 7:45 am. He’s not asking permission, only alerting the principal to this activity. He plans to be there, and says three of the school’s teachers, members of his church, will be there to pray and supervise the activity, too.

1. **Should this event be permitted?**
2. **Should the pastor be permitted to lead the students (and teachers) in prayer?**

Please submit your response to the poll questions on the right-hand side panel.
Case Study 6
Bible Club

Three students at Hawthorne high school decide to form a Bible study club. To organize and structure their club, they enlist the help of their local minister. A school science teacher agrees to become the club advisor. The principal has allowed a wide variety of clubs to meet during the school lunch hour, including the chess club, the debate club, and the Spanish club, but is concerned about the controversy that this club could create. The principal rejects the club, and tells the students that all other clubs are related to the curriculum, and he is not required to allow their club to meet during lunch.

1. Is the principal correct?

Please submit your responses to the poll question on the right-hand side of the panel.

2. If the club was allowed, what steps should the principal take?

Please submit your responses to the questions in the chat box found on the right-hand side of the panel.
Case Study 7
Holiday Calendar-School Closings

Muslim families in a suburban county with a large Jewish population requested that the school’s official calendar include the Muslim holy day Eid al-Adha as well as Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Rather than list both the Jewish holidays and the Muslim holiday on its calendar as Muslim community leaders requested, the district decided to eliminate all references to religious holidays, including Christmas and Easter. Instead the school board voted to have the new calendar simply list “no school” for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur/Eid al-Adha, and “winter break” and “spring break” for holiday recesses.

1. Is this an appropriate solution?

Please submit your response to the poll questions on the right-hand side panel.
Key Takeaways

- Remember that students may be susceptible to peer and institutional pressures.
- Include both majority and minority religions equally in curriculum.
- Be mindful of religious holidays when scheduling events, exams, etc.
- Don’t ask students to be representatives of their religious community.
- Be careful not to alienate or endorse any belief over another.
Questions for Discussion
Dr. Muhammad Khalifa
University of Minnesota
Unlearning Religious Bias
Where do we begin?

Recognizing contexts that activate religious bias:

- Colonialism, Western hegemony, and White supremacy
- Decontextualization and dehistoricization of religious texts and practice

Examples: “And completely destroy everything they have. Do not spare them. Kill men and women, child and infants, oxen and sheep, camels and donkeys.” (1s 153)

“Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men.” (1p 213)

Recognizing responses that reflect one’s religious bias

- Normalizing attitudes and habits that are related to religious majority while diminishing the habits and practices related to religious minorities
- Depicting religious minorities as other
- Religious characterization of political conflicts
Privilege

Privilege and supremacy are linked:

- White privilege
- Western culture privilege
- Male privilege
- Christian privilege
Valladolid Debates (1552)
Sustaining White/Western Perspective

White discomfort in White imagination/understanding of minorities
→ superimposition of fears
Drivers of Islamophobic Attitudes in Schools

- Dehistoricizing of Muslim anger and Muslim response to Western colonization and hegemony. Examples:
  - Attacks on September 11th
  - Violence responses throughout the Muslim world
- Media: Spectacle of Muslim violence
- Public Policy: Ban against Muslim immigration
- Misunderstandings and misapplication of the notion of ‘assimilation’
- Misunderstanding of both ‘terrorism’ and ‘Muslims’
  - Most terrorist attacks in U.S. not conducted by Muslims, most Muslims not terrorists
Harassment of Muslim Students in Schools

- **55%** of Muslim students surveyed reported experiencing some form of bullying related to their religious identity.

- **29%** of girls who wear a hijab—the traditional Muslim head scarf—said they had been offensively touched by another student.

- **20%** of Muslim students said they had experienced discrimination by school staff.

References: 2015 survey by the California offices of CAIR
Examples of Harassment Faced by Muslim Students in Schools:

“He asked me about Osama in front of everyone.”

“How am I to know anything about how Muslim sisters are treated? We don’t have those issues in my family.”

“They are always talking about compartmenting and women and making them objects, but then they only see me as a hijab.”

“Dad, we don’t have to leave do we?”

“He ain’t Muslim no more, because he got tired of answering questions about the Koran.”
What you **should avoid** doing in schools:

- Silencing the critical voices/opinions of Muslim students.
- Asking one to speak for all.
- Asking fear-based questions of Muslims, while giving non-Muslims a pass.
- Not having anti-bias policies specific for Muslims.
- Ignoring the sources of Western imperialism and hegemony that contribute to Muslim protest/anger.
- Avoiding the topic all together.
- Bringing up Muslim beliefs or theology as a source of critique.
What you **should** do in schools:

- Extend anti-oppression schooling to include Muslims.
  - i.e. resist Christian privilege, protect all equitably

- Recognize the impact of oppression on oppressed people. Ex. Anti-Black racism within Muslim community.

- Recognize affirmative Muslim epistemologies.

- Check in with Muslim students, in PRIVATE! Defend them in public.

- Do not ask Muslims to explain terrorism.

- Reform policy/ curriculum for anti-oppressive bias.

- Encourage/support Muslim allyship
Questions for Discussion
Anti-Bias Resources

Anti-Defamation League Resources (www.adl.org)

• Religion in the Public Schools

• Teaching about Religious Holidays – The December Dilemma

• Calendar of Observances

Teaching Tolerance (www.tolerance.org)

• Religious Diversity in the Classroom
  Tolerance.org/religious-diversity-classroom

• Dismantling Islamophobia
  T-t.org/dismantling-islamophobia

• The Bridge Initiatives
  Bridge.georgetown.edu

• Unity Productions Foundations
  Upf.tv/teachers
Save the Date!

High-Impact Culturally Responsive Family, School, and Community Engagement

Thursday, June 29, 2017
2:00pm — 3:30pm (EST)
Save the Date!

MAEC’S 25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
and INNOVATION AWARDS

OCTOBER 26, 2017 | 6:00-9:00PM | SILVER SPRING, MD

Commemorating 25 years of equity and social justice work in education.
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