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California Three Rs

Rights, Responsibility, and Respect

*A Project of the California County Superintendents Educational
Services Association and The First Amendment Center*

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Rights, Responsibilities, and Respect in Action in California Schools

By Marcia Beauchamp, U.S. Education Manager for the Tony Blair Faith Foundation

Since 1988 when the California History-Social Science Framework made it clear that religion should be taught about as an integral aspect of multicultural education, many teachers and administrators have struggled with *how* it could and should be done. Over the years since then, the teachers and administrators who became involved with the California Three Rs Project have led the way forward through these sometimes turbulent waters by offering teacher training, expert guidance, and strong support for addressing religion in the curriculum in educationally sound and Constitutionally permissible ways. Additionally, significant progress has been made in improving the resources teachers have to work with, such as primary source documents, textbooks, and web-based resources. Still, when it comes to ensuring that teaching about religion is both robust and evenhanded, and that understanding religion's historical role also leads to comprehending its current influence in our world, we can do better.

Just a little over three years ago, the Tony Blair Faith Foundation launched *Face to Faith*, a free program for secondary schools that encourages dialogue on faiths, cultures and beliefs while teaching about the role they play in addressing the most pressing global issues of our time. *Face to Faith* is a 21st century schools program that uses a secure and monitored online community, thematic teaching modules, and free facilitated videoconferencing to link schools with one another across the globe. Through the program students may study environmental issues, wealth and poverty, global health issues, and personal expression and then have the opportunity to discuss what they are learning with other students in the program using the latest technology. The program's teaching modules and pedagogy put special emphasis on the ways in which faith, belief and culture influence one's perspective on these global issues.

Face to Faith and the California Three Rs Project have a lot in common. Both seek to improve student literacy about religion's role in our world, and both are committed to an academically sound and civically appropriate approach to addressing religion within the classroom. What makes *Face to Faith* a unique resource is that student voice and student experience are central to the materials and pedagogy underlying the program. Using state-of-the-art cooperative learning strategies, the *Face to Faith* lessons encourage students to consider what they think and believe, what has influenced their views, and how to share their ideas with others in respectful ways. In the *Face to Faith* learning journey students also develop the active listening and thoughtful questioning skills needed to engage in deep dialogue with people different from themselves. In short, the lessons and the approach instill and give students the opportunity to practice the principles of rights, responsibilities, and respect that are the trademark of the California Three Rs Project.

Each *Face to Faith* module contains a menu of lessons, activities and resources that teachers can use creatively to augment what they are already doing or to create an entirely new course. Of the five modules, only the Introductory Module is required for participation in the program, as it teaches the sensitive communication skills necessary for successful dialogue across differences. Each of the modules has a broad range of applications. They are appropriate for world history, world geography and civics courses, as well as global studies and world religions electives. Some schools have decided to create *Face to Faith* clubs that meet during or after school to engage with the lessons and hold videoconferences. Others recognize that the skills and practices offered by the *Face to Faith* curriculum can enhance their school's

character education mission. The program also offers civic engagement opportunities tied to the social issues covered in the teaching modules.

Through the use of 21st century technology, *Face to Faith* is a program that engages students in their learning in exciting new ways. Kat, a student from Northwood High School in Montgomery County, Virginia, blogged at the online community about how being involved with *Face to Faith* had influenced her, "And as the school year is coming to a close, I can't help but think how much of an impact *Face To Faith* has had on me since I started this semester long class a few months ago. I've discovered a lot about myself, my family, my friends, and people around the world through VCs and chatting online. When I started *Face To Faith*, I thought it would just be a school activity and nothing more, but now I find myself looking at it at home and in my spare time because it interests me a lot."

The program is not only having a big impact on students; teachers of the program are also finding it challenges them to grow. Cory Davis, teacher at Lewis and Clark High School in Spokane, Washington, says of the program, "I would say that as a teacher my horizons have been broadened just in working with the facilitators of our VCs, the curriculum, and to an extent the teachers of the schools we partnered with... Learning new teaching methods and communicating with teachers from around the globe simply allows new perspectives/new learning to form... And teaching methods from the curriculum certainly broaden the work I do every day."

In at least one case, an entire school district has taken up the program. Canyons School district in Utah has made *Face to Faith* a significant initiative of their district. Teachers and administrators who have long been involved with the Utah Three Rs Project saw *Face to Faith* as a natural extension of what they were hoping to achieve in their schools. Through their efforts, twelve teachers in eleven schools across two school districts in Utah have been trained to deliver the program. Teacher Jodi Ide, who serves as the lead *Face to Faith* teacher in the area, begins each *Face to Faith* teacher training session with lessons in the rights, responsibilities, and respect principles of the Three Rs Project.

Having the word "faith" placed so prominently in the program's name might cause concern among some educators, school boards and parents. That is why the First Amendment Center is working with the Tony Blair Faith Foundation to implement the program in Constitutionally appropriate ways. After all, *Face to Faith* is not a religion program – it is a civics program. Its main aim is to prepare young people to live peacefully in a religiously and culturally diverse world.

Currently, the *Face to Faith* program is being implemented in 11 California schools. Four of these schools are public and the rest are private, including independent, Roman Catholic and Hebrew schools. Given the place of religion in the California Social Studies Framework, the religious diversity in the state and the prominence of Internet technology, *Face to Faith* seems to be an ideal addition to California's classrooms, both public and private. Most important, however, is that it is a program that provides students an opportunity to practice the principles of rights, responsibilities, and respect during the school day within the context of what they are learning. Through the program students are prepared to engage with their peers to understand the roots of the challenges we face and to explore ways they might work together to find solutions. They develop the skills needed to talk about their own beliefs and inspirations and listen deeply to the views and experiences of others very different from themselves. Where else in our culture but in school do young people get such an opportunity?

Religious differences are at the heart of many of the challenges we now face. Young people around the world need to be prepared to participate in the world as global citizens who can navigate these differences successfully. *Face to Faith* is a program that provides the direct learning experiences they need. As Shawna Keller, a teacher at Owasso Ram Academy Alternative High School in Owasso, Oklahoma said, "Bridging the gap between cultures, religions, and peoples is hugely important in our society. If *Face to Faith* can help bring tolerance and understanding to the younger generation, maybe one day they will use that tolerance and understanding in a place of power."

To learn more about *Face to Faith* or to register for the program, please visit <http://www.facetofaithonline.org/express-interest>.

Dr. Marcia Beauchamp, is a consultant for the Freedom Forum First Amendment Center and U.S. Education Manager for the Tony Blair Faith Foundation. She is the former lead for the California 3Rs Project.

One Nation: Many Faiths TAH Project, San Joaquin County Office of Education,
and CSU San Bernardino College of Education
invite you to participate in



Teaching About World Religions in Our Midst Islam

Featuring

Susan Douglass – ACMCU Education Consultant, Georgetown University

Publications include World Eras: Rise and Spread of Islam, 622-1500, 2002, teaching resources for the Council on Islamic Education and the National Center for History in the Schools, a children's book Ramadan, 2002. She was an advisor to the award-winning, PBS-broadcast documentary Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet, 2002.

DATE: October 6, 2012
TIME: 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
LOCATION: San Joaquin COE – Kingston Room
2707 Transworld Drive, Stockton CA 95206
209-468-9082

Islam is a subject teachers perceive as one of the most difficult topics in the curriculum. Required in California Content Standards for well over a decade, along with information on all the world religions, since September 11, 2001 and increased US involvement in Muslim regions of the globe, knowledge about Islam and Muslims is now even more critical. This workshop is designed to help teachers prepare material that fits into the limited time available, that meets constitutional guidelines for teaching about religion, is correlated to standards, and is appropriate for various grade and ability levels.

The program begins with a discussion of establishing a comfort zone in teaching about sensitive issues of Islam in today's world followed by topics such as basic beliefs and practices, the geography of Muslim expansion, and the historical influences of Islam in the world.

There is no fee but registration is required by the deadline, October 1, 2012.

Questions: Email Peg Hill mhill@csusb.edu

----- Registration Coupon -----

Name _____ School _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Daytime phone () _____ Email (required) _____

Grade Level _____

Send completed registration coupon to: Veray Wickham, One Nation: Many Faiths TAH Project, San Joaquin COE, P.O. Box 213030, Stockton, CA 95213 vwickham@sjcoe.net and "cc" Peg Hill, mhill@csusb.edu. DEADLINE October 1, 2012.

Common Ground Resources:

Finding Common Ground: A Guide to Religious Liberty in Public Schools by Charles Haynes and Oliver Thomas, Esq. First Amendment Center, 2007. This book has guidelines on how to handle a wide range of issues related to religious liberty and public schools. Download free at <http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/publications>.

The *Religious Freedom Education Project at the Newseum* <http://www.religiousfreedomeducation.org/> is a new program at the First Amendment Center focusing on religious liberty in public life.

CA 3Rs Project Website <http://ca3rsproject.org/>. This site has resources for teachers and administrators, documents published by the CA 3Rs Project, calendars of religious holidays, etc.

For California Three Rs Project program information, contact:

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For First Amendment Religious Liberty Information, contact:

Dr. Charles C. Haynes, Senior Scholar, Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, 555 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. (202)-292-6288 chaynes@freedomforum.org

For information on teaching about world religions, contact:

Dr. Bruce Grelle, Director, Religion and Public Education Resource Center, Department of Religious Studies California State University, Chico, 239 Trinity Hall, Chico, CA 95929-0740 (530) 898-4739 bgrelle@csuchico.edu