NEWS BREAK

Article:  Alabama could overturn ban on yoga in schools

Section:  MAIN, A6

Sunday's News Break selects an article from Sunday, March 14, 2021 of The Seattle Times print replica for an in-depth reading of the news. Read the selected article and answer the attached study questions.

You are encouraged to modify this lesson to fit the needs of your students. For example, some teachers might use this as a take-home assignment and others might read and answer the questions in a small group or larger, class discussion.

*Please be sure to preview all NIE content before using it in your classroom to ensure it is appropriate for your students.

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1

• Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2

• Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

Objectives:

Students will talk about the practice of yoga, and whether it should be offered in public schools. They will talk about cultural appreciation vs. cultural appropriation and what that looks like in our society. Students will talk about whether yoga classes would be bringing religion into schools and whether that would be a separation of church and state, or not. Do they consider it another form of exercise that’s important to mind and body health and wellness?
Pre-Reading Discussion:

- What do you think the article will be about, using only this picture?
- Are there clues?
- What can you infer?

Vocabulary Building:

Read this sentence, what do you think the highlighted words mean using context clues? A context clue is a word or words that are hints and refers to the sources of information outside of words that readers may use to predict the identities and meanings of unknown words.

“On Thursday, the state’s House of Representatives passed a bill that would override a ban on teaching yoga in public schools.”

Override Guess:

Override Definition:
Comprehension Questions:

1. For nearly three decades, teaching ________ in Alabama’s public schools has been forbidden by the state’s school board.
2. On Thursday, the state’s House of Representatives passed a bill that would ________ a ban on teaching yoga in public schools.
3. He said that while some conservative legislators in the state might have opposed yoga because of its associations with ____________, officials on both sides of the aisle had been slowly warming to the idea. “Most of the senators that I’ve talked to are OK with it,” Gray said.
4. His legislation would override a ________ school board regulation that says that “school personnel shall be prohibited from using any techniques that involve the induction of hypnotic states, guided imagery, meditation or yoga.”
5. The bill hits at the intersection of some combustible issues. What 4 specific issues did the article state? —— the yoga bill has captured outsized news media attention. This year and last year, it was covered by multiple local, state and national news outlets.
6. What does Namaste mean?

Discussion Questions (small/large groups), Journal Prompts or Essay Questions:

• What surprised (or stood out to) you in the article?
• At first I thought ____________, but now I think ____________?
• What things did you already know from prior experience?
• What do you know about yoga? Have you ever taken a class? Does anyone in your family practice?
• How do people generally feel after they’ve taken a yoga class?
• How would stretching and breathing help your mind and body?
• Do you think yoga should be offered in schools? Why or why not?

Yoga is “a very important part of the Hindu religion,” he said. “As such, it does not need to be taught to small children in public schools.” Gray pointed out that his bill would allow schools and students to make their own decisions about whether to offer or participate in yoga classes. It also says that public school teachers cannot say “namaste,” a greeting often used in yoga, or any kind of chant. “You have to compromise in order to get that bipartisan support,” he said.

• Do you think this is a fair compromise?

Amid reports of racism and violence against Asian Americans and other minorities, the measure is a positive step, said Nikunj Trivedi, the president of Coalition of Hindus of North America.

“He said practicing yoga is cultural appreciation, not cultural appropriation.”
Cultural appropriation, also called cultural mis-appropriation, occurs when a person from one culture adopts the fashion, iconography, trends, or styles from another culture.

- What is cultural appropriation, using your own words?
- What are some examples of cultural appropriation that you’ve seen?
- Do you agree or disagree with the above statement?

Johnston, the adviser for ALCAP, which opposes the yoga bill, said he did not oppose the practice of yoga. “I think yoga is widely accepted, and even some Christian churches have yoga classes,” he added. But he framed the practice as inseparable from Hinduism, and therefore subject to the constitutional separation of religion and state. “You cannot have any kind of religious activities in elementary schools,” he said. Gray disagreed. “It’s just exercise,” he said. “We do it all the time in the gym. It’s not a big deal.” Material from The Washington Post is included in this report. “Most of the senators that I’ve talked to are OK with it. … A lot of their wives actually do yoga.”

- Do you think yoga is bringing religion into public schools? Why or why not?
- Do you think yoga is considered exercise?
- What grade levels should yoga be taught?

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