

# The 15<sup>th</sup> Annual ISNA–CISNA Education Forum Welcomes You!

The ISNA-CISNA Education Forum, which fosters professional growth, development, and provides support to many Islamic schools, is celebrating its 15-year milestone this April. We have seen accredited schools sprout from grassroots efforts across North America; and we credit Allah, subhanna wa ta'alla, for empowering the many men and women who have made the dreams for our schools a reality.

North America is home to over one thousand weekend Islamic schools and several hundred full-time Islamic schools. Having survived the initial challenge of galvanizing community support to form a school, Islamic schools are now attempting to find the most effective means to build curriculum and programs that will strengthen the Islamic faith and academic excellence of their students. These schools continue to build quality on every level to enable their students to succeed in a competitive and increasingly multicultural and interdependent world. The ISNA Education Forum has striven to be a major platform for this critical endeavor from its inception.

The Annual Education Forum has been influential in supporting Islamic schools and Muslim communities to carry out various activities such as developing weekend schools; refining Qur'anic/Arabic/Islamic Studies instruction; attaining accreditation; improving board structures and policies; and implementing training programs for principals, administrators, and teachers. Thus, the significance of the forum lies in uniting our community in working towards a common goal for our youth.

## **Specific Goals**

1. Provide sessions based on attendees' needs, determined by surveys.
2. Increase number of focused and specialized sessions given by experts (Muslim and non-Muslim).
3. Promote more independent Islamic high schools in the U.S.
4. Reward attendees with professional development credits.
5. Create task forces to research solutions for unique problems faced by Islamic schools.
6. Provide stronger networking during and after the forum.

May Allah SWT reward the efforts of our educators and the institutions supporting the cause of Islamic Education in North America.

**ISNA Program Development & Educational Services Department**

**ISNA-CISNA 15th Annual Education Forum**

**April 18-20, 2014**

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## Table of Contents:

<b>Ziad Abdulla- Professional Development Appraisal System and Eduphoria: Practical Experience in Islamic School</b> .....	5
<b>Amira Al-Sarraf-Red Flag Resumes: Critical Lessons Learned in the Hiring Process</b> .....	7
<b>Omaira Alam-Instruction in Special Education: Classroom Strategies for the Muslim School</b> .....	18
<b>Omaira Alam-Encourage the Curious: The Case for Creative Engagement in Islamic Schools</b> .....	33
<b>Azra Ali- Cooperative Learning is Engaged Learning</b> .....	48
<b>Asma Ahmadi , Rania Lawendy-Demystifying Data: Becoming Data Literate</b> .....	59
<b>Banu Avsar Erumit, Khadija E. Fouad-Applying Inquiry to Science Lesson Design</b> .....	67
<b>Lina Barbir- Arabic Language Class: Learning Islam through your Activities in Arabic Class</b> .....	72
<b>Tatiana Coloso, Aishia Neal- Hands-On, Books Closed: Tackling the Islamic Studies Weekend School Effectively</b> .....	78
<b>Amal Sakr Elhoseiny, Nacheda Baroud Tizani, Thouraya Boubetra-Setting the Stage: Innovative Ideas to Encourage and Engage Learners in Arabic Class</b> .....	86
<b>Khadija E. Fouad- Biological Evolution: Wading into the Controversy-Strategies for Teaching Muslim Students and Islamizing Lessons</b> .....	103
<b>Muzaffar Iqbal-Teaching Science from an Islamic Perspective: Mastering Science Education</b> .....	107
<b>Mehnaz Kafray, Shereen Qaddoura-Resources: Classroom Management that Works!</b> .....	118
<b>Salman Khan-Guidance Counselors: The Undervalue and Overlooked Essential</b> .....	126
<b>Mahmoud Mansour- A Modified Way for Teaching Arabic Grammar: The Content Based Learning Approach</b> .....	130
<b>Jelena Naim- Data Driven School Improvement with MAP Assessments</b> .....	141
<b>Lamya M. Najem – Classroom Technology: A Tool to Enhance Arabic Learning</b> .....	149
<b>Farah Naz-The SIOP Model for Islamic School-A Research Based and Validated Instruction Approach for Teaching all Learners Effectively</b> .....	156
<b>Necva Ozgur –Developing an Exceptional Board: Moving for Working Board to Exceptional Board</b> .....	174

**Aiysha Sayeed, Fayi Abdi** –*The Daily Five: Fostering Literacy Independence in Elementary Grades*.....186

**Freda Shamma** –*Basing the Language Arts Curriculum on an Islamic Worldview*.....191

**Leila Shatara** –*Effective Supervision and Practical Evaluation of Teachers*.....203

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## Professional Development Appraisal System and Eduphoria: Practical Experience in an Islamic School

*Ziad Abdulla*

### Abstract

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This paper shows one of the successful and easy way of evaluating our teachers and staff at the Islamic schools in the U.S. PDAS as an appraisal system and Eduphoria as a technology tool will make the evaluation and the documentation professional and easy to use and reference to.

The PDAS is a teacher evaluation system created by the Texas Education Agency following the passage of Senate Bill 1 in 1995. The goal of the PDAS is to advance the level of the professional practice of teaching in Texas. The evaluation criteria incorporate the learner-centered proficiencies and promote continuous professional development.

### About the Author

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**Ziad Abdulla** is the Assistant Principal at IANT Quranic Academy, Richardson Texas. He obtained his Bachelors degree in Jurisprudence, Legislation and Guidance of Islam, a Diploma in Education Rehabilitation from the University of Jordan and he received his Masters in Islamic Education from Al-Albayt University, Jordan. The 2013-2014 school year marks his 23rd year as an Educator, five years as an Assistant Principal and 18 years as an Islamic Studies, Quran and Arabic teacher. He is also currently an Arabic professor at Richland College, and lecturer of Arabic and Islamic Sciences at Suffa Islamic Seminary. He is also a member of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).

## Professional Development Appraisal System and Eduphoria: Practical Experience in an Islamic School

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### The Appraisal Process Steps:

1. Teacher Orientation.
2. Teacher Self Report (TSR).
3. Walkthrough.
4. Formal Classroom Observation.
5. Student Performance as seen in the Campus Performance Rating and AYP
6. Summative Annual Report/Conference

**PDAS:**

The PDAS includes fifty-one evaluation criteria organized in eight domains. The eight PDAS domains are:

- Domain I: Active, Successful Student Participation in the Learning Process.
- Domain II: Learner-Centered Instruction.
- Domain III: Evaluation and Feedback on Student Progress.
- Domain IV: Management of Student Discipline, Instructional Strategies, Time and Materials.
- Domain V: Professional Communication.
- Domain VI: Professional Development.
- Domain VII: Compliance with Policies, Operating Procedures and Requirements.
- Domain VIII: Improvement of Academic Performance of all Students on the Campus.

Each domain has a certain amount of criteria that the evaluator will look for and then score it based on four performance levels as follows (Exceed Expectation, Proficient, Below Expectation, and Unsatisfactory). All this has to have evidence in light of the quality and quantity. Quality focuses on the Strength, Impact, Variety and Alignment (SIVA) of the teaching behavior and how it relates to student success. Quantity relates to the frequency and number of students for which the teaching behavior actively resulted in student learning.

**Eduphoria:**

Eduphoria is a technology tool under the name “SchoolObjects:PDAS” which provides a web-based total PDAS management system, giving teachers and principals a single tool to create, submit and monitor PDAS.

**Conclusion:**

PDAS is a professional appraisal system used in Texas, but can be used anywhere else, especially at our Islamic Schools. At IANT Quranic Academy we are using “Eduphoria” as a technology tool to submit and monitor PDAS.

In my presentation, I’m going to explain the process of the walkthrough evaluation and PDAS, show clips to help understanding the concepts. Also, I’m going to demonstrate using the technology through “Eduphoria” to show how easy and effective it is to use this tool.

**References**

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- Texas Education Agency, Revised 2005, Professional Development and Appraisal System, Teacher Manual
- “SchoolObjects:pdas”, <http://www.eduphoria.net/wordpress/>

## Red Flag Resumes: Critical Lessons Learned in the Hiring Process

*Amira Al-Sarraf, M.S. Ed.*

### Abstract

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Hiring qualified teachers is a challenging process even for the most veteran administrators. This workshop seeks to highlight key steps in developing a successful recruitment and retention process and will also cover Behavior-based Interviewing (BBI), legal guidelines to consider, useful resume filters, and other tools to optimize more effective hiring.

### About the Author

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**Amira Al-Sarraf** is the Head of School at New Horizon School in Pasadena, California, a nationally recognized Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Dept. of Education and fully accredited by CAIS and WASC. As a teacher and administrator at NHS for over twenty-five years, she has played a pivotal role in the development and growth of New Horizon. With a B.A. in Middle Eastern Studies from UC Berkeley and an M.S. Ed. in Educational Leadership from Walden University, Amira has worked diligently to build a coherent school-wide program focused on student achievement and based on an ongoing and sustained professional development model.

Prior to becoming School Head in 2005, she served as a middle school director establishing innovative programs such as Outdoor Education, Community Service, Student Leadership, High School Admissions Counseling, After-school Athletics, Human Development, and Science Fair Workshop. In addition to serving as an elementary classroom teacher in her early years, she also taught electives at the middle school level including drama, public speaking, media literacy, life skills, and civic education.

## Red Flag Resumes: Critical Lessons Learned in the Hiring Process

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### Introduction

Imagine the following scenario: You concluded an interview and offer a candidate the job as a preschool teacher. She had a warm and caring personality that obviously drew the children to her when she toured the school. Although she was relatively young, with a degree in Child Development, some experience teaching in a preschool setting, and a Muslim to boot, she seemed like the perfect choice. It was not until she started filling out the paperwork for her file that you discovered a critical piece of information and that there was a flaw in your hiring process. After she completed the Criminal Record Statement, she offered up the gem: she had a couple of DUI's on her record and an arrest for "drunk and disorderly conduct." She said one DUI was expunged from her record, and she was working on the other one. You had already offered her a contract, so what do you do? You must pause in the process and examine the ramifications of hiring a person with an arrest record and a possible drinking problem. Finally, you decide that you must withdraw the offer and contract, but you realize you must make an

important change in your process: the Criminal Record Statement must be part of the initial application for employment that is filled out PRIOR to the interview.

The hiring process is fraught with challenges. Certainly, the goal is to hire qualified teachers who can support the school's mission and make a long-term commitment to the school. However, administrators often learn difficult lessons through experience and may even stumble into treacherous legal territory if they do not follow a carefully crafted recruitment process. Defining the steps for properly screening potential candidates will safeguard employers from possible pitfalls and better ensure a more successful hiring process.

### **Challenges of Recruiting Qualified Teachers**

On the road to recruiting and hiring qualified teachers, administrators will encounter a variety of hazards. It begins with the question of where and how to find suitable candidates: what are the best sites for finding candidates, for example. Other issues include the ability to attract highly qualified candidates when other employers might be able to offer better salaries and benefits. Often candidates have the right "qualifications" but are not suited to the school's environment and aligned with its mission. Sometimes, teachers are fishing for a job because they've received a pink slip from the school district but are recruited back at the last minute before school begins. References are not always reliable since previous employers might be reticent to provide any negative feedback for fear of a potential lawsuit. These are just a few examples of challenges employers may face.

### **The Importance of Selecting Highly Qualified Teachers (or Growing Your Own?)**

"According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 'studies show that teacher expertise is the most important factor in student achievement (1996, p. 6).' There is also evidence that the effects of teacher quality are long-lasting and cumulative."

As stated above, research confirms that there is a strong correlation between student achievement and the quality of the teachers, a fact that would seem obvious to any educator. Dr. Mary Clement also affirmed this in her words, "Every child deserves the best teacher." Increased student achievement and positive public relations with the community should result from a qualified faculty. Any school would consider such results to be key goals of their institutions. As stewards of quality academics, schools must select teachers based on sound criteria of what it means to be a qualified teacher. This is critical to the recruitment, selection, and retention process and must be supported by a well-defined evaluative instrument.

On a basic level, No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 set in motion a concerted effort to provide basic guidelines for what is considered a "highly qualified teacher" or HQT. An HQT must:

- Obtain full licensure or certification
- Hold at least a bachelor's degree
- Demonstrate by passing a rigorous State test, subject knowledge and teaching skills in reading, writing mathematics, and other areas of basic elementary school curriculum (e.g., CBEST, CSET, RICA, etc.)

Through Race to the Top legislation in 2009, additional measures were put in place to tie teacher performance with student achievement in the evaluation of teacher effectiveness and quality.

In addition to the above basic criteria for an effective teacher, schools should seek teachers with the following qualities:

- solid teaching experience (preferably two or more years)
- knowledge of and application of best teaching practices
- ability to motivate and relate well with the targeted age group
- a clear sense of integrity
- a sincere commitment to the school's mission

Beyond these characteristics, administrators must link their interview process with their school's teacher evaluation instrument as an even more specific guideline for measuring quality and alignment with school expectations and instructional norms. The following is a sample of key areas for review and which should be evaluated in some way during the hiring process either through the application, resume, interview, demo lesson, or reference check:

1. Classroom Environment
  - Also, includes rapport with students
2. Planning for Instruction
  - Organization of subject matter, assessment of needs
3. Instructional Plan
  - Teaching strategies, use of resources
4. Student Involvement in Learning Process
  - Types of questions, use of groups, student responses
5. Management of Learning Environment
  - Assessment and record keeping, use of class time, discipline guidelines
6. Professionalism
  - Professional responsibilities, school mission
7. Professional Interaction
  - Relationship with parents, involvement in school community

### **Developing a Successful Selection, Recruitment and Retention Process**

According to Dunklee and Shoop, authors of *A Quick-Reference Guide to the Law for Principals*,

“Principals and other interviewers are faced with the three-pronged task of (1) recommending the best qualified teacher or staff person, (2) complying with a multitude of employment laws, and (3) protecting the rights of the prospective hiree.” (Dunklee & Shoop, 2006)

A first step in the hiring process is defining specific characteristics of the job or creating a job description. As mentioned in the above section on highly qualified teachers, the minimal requirements must be derived from a school's teacher evaluation instrument. Then, for each specific job, the school must utilize an evaluative tool that examines key points related to that area or level of teaching. For example, a preschool teacher should be assessed for her/his ability to:

- Stimulate emotional, intellectual, and social growth of students by developing and directing a developmentally appropriate curriculum that allows for both structured and unstructured play
- Encourage development of student self-control by utilizing classroom management and modeling techniques for preschoolers

By adding these criteria to the assessment tools (e.g., in the interview, demo lesson, etc.), an employer can develop a more accurate picture of a teacher's qualifications for a specific job. While this may seem to be a matter of common sense, administrators will be in a stronger position throughout the process if these criteria are well defined and incorporated in the written evaluation process.

### **Posting Ads**

An ad in a local newspaper (where such exist) used to be an appropriate and effective avenue for finding teachers for a school. However, today, Internet databases and recruitment sites offer schools a wider pool of potential candidates, not necessarily restricted by geographical limitations. In each state and major city, employers can usually find suitable sites for advertising for positions in the education field. One such service, for example, Edjoin, run by a school district, offers an extensive database of teachers throughout the State of California. However, any school may pay the fees for access to the database.

Obviously, choosing sites that are more likely to be used by educators is preferable. To determine the quality of the site, it helps to access sites as a potential employee. For example, [teacherstoteachers.com](http://teacherstoteachers.com) sounds like it would be a good place to go to advertise an opening; however, when accessing the site as a potential employee, it becomes apparent that few employers use the site so very few ads are available for potential candidates to consider. Thus, if it does not show a substantial number of ads for jobs in the area, it is not wise to advertise there.

### **Reviewing Resumes**

Once resumes begin arriving in the Inbox, it is critical to conduct a preliminary review paying attention to a number of key red flags. The decision on what filters are part of this first review is up to the employer, and certainly this may change depending on the position, the difficulty in finding potential candidates, and overall flexibility. However, with 100 plus resumes coming through, it will be imperative to narrow down the pool.

The following is a list of potential filters to use in the preliminary review of resumes:

- Type of university attended
- Additional degrees (credential or Master's)
- Years of teaching experience
- Years of Experience working with age group
- Number of years in each teaching position
- Quality of resume and cover letter
- Connection to Public School District

While examining resumes, administrators should pay close attention to what could be considered “red flags” for their potential in indicating possible problems with a candidate. For example, the number of years that a candidate has been at the jobs h/she has held can be important especially for individuals who have had several positions since completing their Bachelor’s degree. Staying at a job for only 1-2 years may indicate that the previous employers were not satisfied with his/her performance. It does not show stability, which is valuable to employers.

When candidates supply references, consider whether the reference given is for a supervisor (e.g., principal, assistant principal) or a colleague (e.g., fellow teacher, etc.). References from fellow teachers and parents will not provide a more objective view of the candidate since there may be friendship or limited relevant observation involved. A supervisor should have an overall professional picture of the candidate based on evaluations, observations in the classroom, any disciplinary action, etc.

The presentation of the resume can show a candidate’s level of organization, professionalism, detail-oriented work, and English skills. This is also one of the areas to consider when reviewing cover letters. While a resume provides information, a cover letter demonstrates a teacher’s passion, writing ability, and interest in the specific school to which h/she is applying. If the cover letter makes reference to a school’s mission, this is also indicative of the greater effort this candidate made in getting to know the school and envisioning themselves working there.

In some districts, layoffs may produce a higher number of teachers in the job market seeking new positions. However, this number is deceiving. Districts have been known to keep teachers they have laid off on some kind of priority list for rehiring very close to the start of school or even during the school. These teachers may be keeping one foot in the door at the public school while considering all of their options. This may cause great difficulty for the private school employer who may contract with such a candidate only to have the teacher withdraw their acceptance within days of school starting. Overall, it is often better to hire candidates who do not have a history with a particular public school or who come from out-of-state and do not yet have their state teaching credential.

### **Starting the Documentation**

Using a candidate file form allows the employer to record evaluative comments and ratings on one document for all the documents in a candidate’s initial file. This form includes the evaluation of the cover letter, resume, letters of recommendation, and transcripts. Starting this file for each candidate that will be called in for an interview is helpful in terms of tracking and decision-making, but it also can be used for legal purposes if a candidate chooses to take legal action on the school. A school may be asked to submit such records including the evaluation documents, resumes, and any other notes from the process. These should be kept in proper files either in the computer or in a file, or both. Administrators should also keep a log of all resumes reviewed and interviews conducted.

## **The Interview Process**

### *Making Snap Judgments*

In his book, *Blink*, Malcolm Gladwell makes a case for the presence and effectiveness of one's intuition or subconscious in making quick and accurate decisions. "Whenever we meet someone for the first time, whenever we interview someone for a job, whenever we react to a new idea, whenever we're faced with making a decision quickly and under stress, we use that second part of our brain [unconscious]." One particular study he shares refers to a psychologist, Nalini Ambady, who tested college students' immediate first impressions of professors with those taken after a full semester of classes. She found they were essentially the same, further substantiating this claim that our brains have the ability to make snap judgments that have a high degree of accuracy and value. However, in the book, Gladwell also shows the potential failings of relying on the "adaptive unconscious" and says of our predicament, "I think the task of figuring out how to combine the best of conscious deliberation and instinctive judgment is one of the great challenges of our time."

Employers must use both their analytical abilities and their instinctive reaction to a candidate in properly evaluating his/her potential worth to the school. A candidate who arrives at the interview without proper attire, dressed in board shorts and flip-flops, demonstrates a lack of professionalism and respect for the employer and the institution. A candidate who never smiles throughout the interview or does not make eye contact demonstrates difficulties in social skills that may inhibit positive relationships with students and/or parents. A candidate who shakes hands with some firmness demonstrates a level of confidence and an ability to make a connection.

Conversely, the school administrator must also show a degree of professionalism and respect towards the interviewee since first impressions work both ways. Additional guidelines for the employer include:

- Be yourself and extend a gracious welcome to your guests
- Get rid of paperwork – make office inviting.
- Offer snacks – makes candidates feel more at home.
- Hold all calls and interruptions.
- Don't make candidates wait.
- Primarily ask open-ended questions, and listen.

### *Interview Evaluation Tool*

Administrators must keep written documentation of each interview by using a standard or customized evaluation tool. The interview evaluation tool should contain a set of questions related to the position specifically and to teaching in general, and, to the degree possible, the interviewer should ask the same questions to all candidates. Questions should focus primarily on specific job requirements and use neutral, objective words and language. It is also important to record notes for each candidate. In addition, a rating scale for each response can be useful in final evaluations of the candidates.

### *Behavior-based Interviewing*

The basis for an effective interview is that past performance is the best predictor of future performance. This lies at the heart of behavior-based interviewing. Essentially, questions that ask, “Give me an example when...” will likely produce responses that will show how a candidate handled concrete past experiences and situations. This is much more valuable than asking them how they might handle a situation in the future providing only a theoretical possibility rather than an actual reality.

The method for interviewing candidates on their past experiences is called STAR. This refers to Situation, Task, Action, and Results. A candidate should be prepared upon prompting to provide a situation or challenge they experienced, what h/she was expected to achieve on a given project, what course of action h/she took and why, and the outcome or results of the actions h/she took. Including what one learned from the experience will also be valuable to the interviewer.

### *Legal v. Illegal Questions*

Whether an employer is engaging in small talk or following a set of questions on a form, all conversation and questioning must follow key legal guidelines. For example, an employer cannot ask a candidate about their personal lives or even where they live (e.g., are you married, how long have you lived in California, etc.). Any criteria used, information required, or interview questions asked must be directly related to required job performance or be justified as a BFOQ (Bona Fide Occupational Qualification) for a particular job. In asking specific questions about the ability to speak Spanish, for instance, an interviewer can only do so if this is relevant to the position.

By law (FERPA-Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), the school cannot ask questions or make comments about:

- Gender – gender preferences, roommates, living arrangements
- Race
- National origin – country of birth or native language
- Religion
- Age – includes not asking about when you graduated from high school or college to determine age
- Disabilities – height, weight, conditions
- Arrests

In addition, employers cannot ask questions about or comment on:

- Children (presence of or plans to have)
- Marriage
- Smoking habits
- Clothing
- Jewelry
- Spouse’s work

- Social affiliations

For Muslim and other faith-based schools, employers may want to gauge how a candidate would fit into the culture of the school. One way to approach this issue without asking what a person's religion is would be to describe the school's mission and ask, "How do you think you can contribute to the school's mission and environment?" Incidentally, this is an important question to ask ALL candidates, whether you assume they are Muslim or not.

### **The Portfolio**

A sign of a good candidate is the presence and quality of their portfolio. These candidates will bring a portfolio that will include lesson plans, pictures, communication with parents, newsletters, and any other documents (e.g., transcripts, letters of recommendation). Some employers prefer not to ask the candidate to bring a portfolio but rather wait to see if they bring one on their own. This demonstrates that an individual is motivated and aware of such important professional expectations. If the employer suggests the portfolio, a candidate may show up with a rudimentary portfolio that was put together last-minute and does not properly reflect the history of the candidate's professional career.

### **Checking References**

If the interview yielded positive results, an employer should take the next step by checking references and then arranging for a demo lesson. Unfortunately, candidates may exaggerate their qualifications during the interview, so an objective third-party assessment (checking references) will be helpful as well as an opportunity to see them in action (the demo lesson). These are extremely instructive elements in the process to fairly assess an individual's eligibility for the job.

Often candidates provide potential employers with letters of reference. These are valuable tools to review for relevant clues to a teacher's past performance. As stated previously, letters written by supervisors will have a greater weight and impact on the decision-making process. Administrators need to become adept at reading between the lines on the letters of reference as well. For example, if a supervisor never uses the wording of "I highly recommend," this is probably a red flag. Employers are handing these letters directly to their teachers, so they do not have the assurance of privacy, and, therefore, the content will be skewed if there is possible negativity.

When making calls to previous employers or references (supervisors), be prepared with 3-4 questions and state your intention to ask a "few" questions. Sometimes it is a good idea to ask a couple of open-ended questions such as "What was your experience with this teacher?" or "How did their performance match up with the school expectations?" Some previous employers are not very willing to disclose any details or be put on the spot to answer questions due to the potential for a lawsuit. They can, however, answer a question such as, "Would you rehire this individual?" If there is a pause or an uncomfortable response, then this is a red flag that their performance was not a stellar one.

Nowadays, employers can use tools such as Facebook, Google, and LinkedIn to gather tidbits of information that could be helpful in the decision-making process. People are advised to keep

their pages free of inappropriate material just for this reason, but often one can glean significant facts that can be used as part of the evaluation either from a positive or negative angle.

### **The Demo Lesson**

The demo lesson should be arranged to ideally take place in front of students or in front of a team of administrators and other teachers. While this can be intimidating, it offers an extremely valuable piece of the picture. It is typical to provide the candidate with a pre-arranged content standard, and the rest is in the hands of the candidate to put together a lesson plan. This lesson plan should also be requested prior to the beginning of the lesson. The team will then observe the lesson looking for specific criteria related to effective teaching. Such criteria may include:

- Following a standard/objective
- Motivating learners
- Directed teaching
- Engaging students through hands-on experiences, technology, group work, visual aids, literature, etc.
- Guided practice / Independent practice
- Informal and formal assessment
- Rapport with students
- Passion for subject area

Schools may use their classroom observation tool as a guide and to record the candidate's performance.

### **Making the Decision**

The process of making a decision to hire a candidate is often a difficult one. Administrators can attest to this as even when a candidate passes through each step successfully, there may still be factors that prevent their hiring. Issues such as their public school connection, affordability, and flexibility and versatility, for example, may weigh in on the final outcome of the process. After reviewing all of the steps of the process from the resume to the interview to the demo lesson, a team preferably should rank the candidates prior to the final selection. This is important in the event that a first-choice does not work out.

If, after interviewing a number of candidates, the process does not yield suitable candidates, it is imperative to continue the process and NOT hire a substandard candidate. This is definitely a dilemma especially when school might be just a few days away. It is much wiser to arrange for a temporary substitute than to hire someone who does not really meet the school's and parents' expectations.

### **Providing an Offer of Employment**

In the offer of employment, provide a salary proposal as well as a list of benefits. Give the candidate a deadline for returning the offer with their acceptance or their denial. This will allow the administrator to move forward one way or the other without delay.

## **Induction Process**

Once a candidate accepts the offer, the school must begin the process of induction into the school culture and program expectations. These next steps are critical in the retention of qualified candidates. This demonstrates the school's level of professionalism and quality as an academic institution prepared to train its faculty in being an effective teacher and a contributing member of a team.

The induction process may include meetings with specific individuals such as the technology coordinator, curriculum coordinator, business office, etc. They may have to fill out specific paperwork and receive important materials to help them get started with preparation for the job.

A New Teacher Orientation, led by administration, is an excellent first step in the induction process as it allows the school to provide clear guidelines to new teachers and give them an opportunity to ask questions. Some areas that may be covered include:

- school's mission and vision
- an introduction to Islam
- cultural sensitivity training
- school-wide instructional norms and professional expectations
- Employee Handbook
- professional growth plan
- school calendar and events

Following the New Teacher Orientation, new teachers will be incorporated into the regular Faculty Orientation schedule that would take place prior to the start of school. The school's yearly Professional Development plan should also incorporate the new teachers including review of particular areas that may have been previously covered to knowledge and understanding of the school's teaching expectations.

## **Mentoring**

An essential component in the retention of teachers is a mentoring program. This can be as simple as assigning a teacher or administrator to meet on a weekly basis with new teachers, or it can take on a more formal dimension with specific topics covered throughout the year. In either case, new teachers should have guidance from the administration and/or other members of the faculty.

## **Evaluation Process**

During the orientation process, the school must provide new teachers with the school's evaluation instrument which is used in the clinical supervision model of the professional growth process. Going over the criteria ensures that a new teacher can understand what is expected. H/she can also ask questions to clarify if there is any confusion or uncertainty on what a particular criteria indicates. The administration can also arrange for mini-workshops with new teachers during the year to review particular areas such as lesson planning, classroom management, and research-based strategies to enhance a teacher's skills. During the first few months at least, administrators should be dropping in for informal observations and setting up a

formal observation to determine if a candidate has successfully passed their probation and is indeed a good match for the school.

### Conclusion

Developing a successful recruitment, selection, and retention process in a school should enhance the quality of the teaching staff and help administrators avoid dangerous pitfalls. Ultimately, the goal of the process is to find the most suitable candidate for the specific position, but with any human resource decision, the assumed predictors of success may not always be successful in determining human behavior once a candidate takes the job. This is the next important step – to design and implement an effective evaluation process that provides ongoing professional growth to teachers while also assisting administrators in filtering out an unsuitable match.

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## Instruction in Special Education: Special Education: Classroom Strategies for the Muslim School

*Omaira Alam*

### Abstract

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This paper provides a general overview of inexpensive and accessible techniques to Muslim school teachers and educators to better address the needs of all students. Although designed specifically for students with special needs, these simple methods can also be implemented for the general student population, and used to enhance the overall learning environment while maintaining the current school curriculum.

#### **Tracks:**

- Instructional Strategies
- Differentiated Instruction

### About the Author

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## Instructions in Special Education: Classroom Strategies for the Muslim School

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### **Introduction**

While striving to meet the spiritual and academic needs of Muslim students, Muslim schools are struggling or unable to meet the needs of students requiring special education. In this paper, techniques and strategies are presented that can be incorporated into any classroom in a manner that allows not just the individual student to benefit, but all students. Students within and without the special education spectrum can benefit from what can be termed as a form of empathic learning: a concept where educators and parents focus on the individual needs of the student or child in order to further enhance their Islamic educational experience. Many students have needs based on their individual strengths and weaknesses that can be addressed through these techniques without overhauling the entire Islamic education curriculum. These teaching methods further augment the informal and formal curriculum.

Stemming from the lack of trained special education teachers, lack of resources – financial and otherwise – and no legal requirement to provide special education services in Islamic schools, this paper hopes to provide inexpensive and accessible techniques to Muslim educators to better address the needs of all students. Through this empathic approach teachers are better able to anticipate the needs of the students.

### **Defining Special Education**

When considering special education images of children with physical disabilities are conjured up. The reality of special education is that although children with physical disabilities are part of the spectrum, there are a number of diagnoses that have no or minimal physical manifestations. For these children, because they look “normal” receiving services is difficult especially in settings where such services, like private schools are not required.<sup>1</sup>

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004, the general definition of special education is

“a child after evaluation is found to have a mental retardation, a hearing impairment, a visual impairment, a serious emotional disturbance, an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, an other health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness or multiple disabilities, and who by reason thereof, needs special education and related services.”<sup>2</sup>

According to the Ministry of Education in Ontario, Canada, there is a recognition that all students, irrespective of their abilities, require support from educators, peers, family and friends to truly benefit from their educational experience. In addition to these students, there are those with special needs who require additional supports. These students are defined as having exceptionalities which could include one or more of the following: behavioral, communicational, intellectual, or physical. These are special educational needs “that cannot be met through regular instructional and assessment practices.” They are, therefore, met through accommodations and/or a modified education program which depending on the needs of the individual student could be above or below grade level expectations. In the United States and Canada formal identification through a review process by the school must be made for a student to receive special education services.<sup>3</sup>

The main point that one must remember, however, is that most students requiring some level of additional support may not have any outwardly physical indicators that they need additional supports. Most students with mild to moderate levels of behavioral and specific learning disabilities, as well as with autism fall into this category. Educators need to be aware of the spectrum of special needs and how they can manifest in any student.

### **Nature of Special Education in Muslim Schools**

*Although many educators, parents, and other stakeholders assert that school programs need to be more inclusionary, the real message is that such an effort is not just about a place, a structure, or a method of instruction, but rather a philosophy about the very culture of schools. The unique ecology and culture of Catholic [READ: Muslim] schools makes this effort all the more complex.”<sup>4</sup>*

An informal survey of Muslim schools reveals very minimal to non-existent special education services. Although no formal study has taken place, parallels can be taken from a study conducted by Dr. Denise Bello, professor of education at The George Washington University, on special education services within Catholic schools. Like Muslim schools, Catholic schools function within the private sector and are, therefore, not required by law to provide special education services for identified students. Like Muslim schools, Catholic schools have no formalized system for students with special needs.<sup>5</sup>

Unlike Muslim schools, however, Catholic schools “have traditionally excluded students with special needs due to the nature of the schools’ limited academic curriculum and college preparatory focus.” This is especially true at the high school level. Muslim schools, on the other hand, generally do not turn any student away even if lacking the necessary resources, simply out of a sense of religious obligation to ensure that every Muslim child receives the required Islamic education. Post-entry, however, many Muslim schools find themselves unable to address the needs of some students and find that the best option would be to re-integrate them into the public school system where the vital services are available to them. For this reason, like Catholic schools, Muslim schools have been seen as exclusionary as opposed to inclusionary.<sup>6</sup>

The general makeup of the students with special needs in Catholic schools were those “with learning disabilities (94.4%) and other health impairments, which included students with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorders (ADHD; 79.6%). A small percentage enrolled students with emotional disabilities (27.8%), autism (9.3%), traumatic brain injury (9.3%), and moderate and severe disabilities (5.6%).” A formal survey of Muslim schools would have to be done to determine if there is a similar breakdown in enrollment.<sup>7</sup>

Some of the challenges that Catholic schools face may be similar to what Muslim schools face when attempting to implement some level of accommodation and/or special education services:

“The inclusion of students with special needs presents a unique educational challenge for Catholic schools, and specifically for Catholic high schools. With limited fiscal resources and no official governing body to authorize and coordinate educational support and services for students with disabilities, inclusion efforts have often been hampered, inconsistent, and for the most part, without evaluation.”<sup>8</sup>

Other challenges faced by Catholic schools include:<sup>9</sup>

- Limited faculty and staff interest
- Limited knowledge and skills on the part of administration and/or faculty on how to incorporate into curriculum and assessments
- Need for professional development of faculty
- Difficulty identifying students who need special education services as there is no central Catholic school governing body
- Although professional development was cited as necessary, limited resources and time do not make this possible.
- More staff collaboration needed for what is referred to as “staffings.”
- Although given the option of team teaching, many regular education staff did not utilize this resource when made available.
- Some schools assigned regular education teachers to the resource room for one period a

- day in an effort to help them better understand student needs and accommodations.
- Used a training consultant supplied by diocese on an irregular basis.
  - Teachers desired knowledge in alternative assessments and grading practices, and curriculum development and instructional resources.
  - Limited fiscal resources: like Muslim schools, Catholic schools for the most part are required to generate their own income with primary expenditures for teacher and staff salaries.
  - Developing public school partnerships which were eventually discontinued due to the school's restricted authority of the service.

Although this list of challenges is specifically for Catholic schools, many parallels may be drawn with Muslim schools. In addition to these challenges, it is necessary that a supportive administrative infrastructure and the development of an accountability and evaluation process be set up as it would be beneficial for Muslim schools as much as for Catholic schools. Finally, Bello brings up the key point of sustainability of any such program:

“Building and maintaining an inclusive culture is a challenging task for any school, whether public, private, or parochial. There have been widespread efforts to restructure schools for inclusion, yet the capacity to not only create, but sustain inclusive educational communities has yet to be consistently realized.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Accessibility for All Students**

*The Prophet Muhammad (may God bless him and grant him peace) said:  
"Attainment of knowledge is a must for every Muslim."*

Muslim schools and the administration, staff and faculty that support them must follow the prophetic injunction of making knowledge accessible and available to all Muslim students and those who desire it. Bello, although referencing Catholic schools, adequately highlights the crux of the issue for Muslims schools in discussing further studies and investigation on the nature of special education services in Catholic schools:

“Perhaps, even more importantly, this investigative effort can help Catholic educators formulate a vision for educating students with disabilities and in turn, support the broader mission of ensuring that their schools become available for all Catholic parents who wish to send their children to them.”<sup>11</sup>

Muslim schools are fiscally limited and lack the time available to actually train teachers in special education teaching methodology. What is being presented in this paper are techniques that can be taught at minimal financial and time cost to the teacher and/or school.

Again, the goal is to be able to reach all students to enhance their learning of Islam as well as related studies; to encourage and motivate students such that their needs are met without draining the energies of the teachers. That said, it must be noted that some amount of effort, work and training on the part of teachers and administrators is required in order for these techniques to be adequately implemented. In an effort to understand and anticipate the needs of students, empathy is required on the part of the faculty, staff and administration. As mentioned earlier, a paradigm

shift must also take place to make special education services part of the overall culture of the school.

### **A Learning Needs Assessment for the Classroom: Empathic Teaching**

*“Speak to people according to their intellectual capacities.*

*Do you desire that they reject God and His Messenger?”*

*(Ali ibn Abi Talib)*

The Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) was among the greatest of empathic teachers. He incorporated a form of teaching that took into account the developmental level and the knowledge level of the person he was teaching. In this way he placed himself in the position of his students. As a role model for Muslims, generally, and educators specifically, teachers should look to his example and teach from the child’s frame of reference. This framework is based on recognizing and cultivating the child’s potential through a strategized recognition of the needs of the student, thus, engaging the student in a way which was not previously achievable. Realistically, without especially keen insight and considerable time with the student, any teacher would be unable to determine the particular needs of the student. However, as educators, one must prepare by becoming aware of the potential possibilities in student learning approaches. These would lead to an understanding and acknowledgement of students’ strengths and weaknesses.

That said, it is next to impossible, to cater any lesson to about thirty-five students. However, by designing worksheets, lessons plans, activities and curriculum that focus on the uniqueness of each student, there will be only minimal changes to the curriculum or the program of study required.

In making a needs assessment or a needs survey, educators spend some time focusing on each individual student, making observational notes. Categories in this learning needs survey include triggers of interest and excitement. In addition, what does the teacher notice as strengths of the student? What are his or her weaknesses? When does the student show the most interest during a lesson? Does the student need a break from learning? By answering these questions and having these answers available when planning lessons, teachers are better equipped to meet the needs of all students. This simple task of observing and recording not for grading purposes, but to assess and determine the best way to get and keep the student engaged in the learning process makes for a significant changes in how educators become empathic teachers and reflective practitioners.

### **A Note about Multiple Intelligences**

Most educators are aware of Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences.<sup>12</sup> It is critical to incorporate them into a regular Islamic education program in order to enhance the Islamic curriculum of any school and/or learning environment. These intelligences are:

1. Linguistic
2. Logical-Mathematical
3. Bodily-Kinesthetic
4. Spatial
5. Musical

- 6. Interpersonal
- 7. Intrapersonal

Recently, Gardner added two more intelligences which would be of particular interest to Muslim schools. The eighth intelligence is the *naturalist*. Children who possess this intelligence notices patterns and things from nature easily; they like animals and like to know and remember things about them; they enjoy the outdoors and outdoor activities; they have a heightened level of sensory skills – sight, sound, smell, taste and touch; they collect, classify or read about things from nature.<sup>13</sup> A later section focuses on the need for children to be intimately involved with and be directly in nature.

The ninth intelligence that Gardner has described is referred to as *existential intelligence*. It is defined as

“the ability to be sensitive to, or have the capacity for, conceptualizing or tackling deeper or larger questions about human existence, such as the meaning of life, why are we born, why do we die, what is consciousness, or how did we get here.”<sup>14</sup>

This is particularly critical for Muslim schools who aim to develop a level of God-consciousness in students. An awareness of this intelligence will allow educators to cater lessons around this natural state of children who are inquisitive about God, the spiritual understanding of Islam, and its place in their lives.

Gardner also mentions two implications for educators regarding the Theory of Multiple Intelligences:<sup>15</sup>

- 1) “Individuation (also termed personalization) – Since each human being has her own unique configuration of intelligences, we should take that into account when teaching, mentoring or nurturing. As much as possible, we should teach individuals in ways that they can learn. And we should assess them in a way that allows them to show what they have understood and to apply their knowledge and skills in unfamiliar contexts.
- 2) “Pluralization – Ideas, concepts, theories, skills should be taught in several different ways. Whether one is teaching the arts, sciences, history, or math, the seminal ideas should be presented in multiple ways. If you can present the art works of Michelangelo, or the laws of supply and demand, or the Pythagorean Theorem in several ways, you achieve two important goals. First of all, you reach more students, because some students learn best from reading, some from building something, some from acting out a story, etc. Second, you show what it is like to be an expert—to understand something fully, you should be able to think of it in several ways.”

What becomes apparent with the MI theory is that there are direct applications towards differentiated instruction. In the next section of this paper, an exploration of the possibilities of bringing MI into the classroom is explored using differentiated instruction.

## Differentiated Instruction

*“No two children are alike.  
No two children learn in the identical way.  
An enriched environment for one student is not necessarily enriched for another.  
In the classroom we should teach children to think for themselves.”*  
Marian Diamond<sup>16</sup>

One of the most critical tools for any educator is the ability to differentiate instruction. Although curricular goals – whether for Islamic education or otherwise – remain relatively similar for all students, the pedagogy differs such that these methodologies are varied to meet the individual needs of all students. In order to engage students and be effective, learning must be differentiated.<sup>17</sup> *Differentiated instruction* is defined as:

“... creating multiple paths so that students of different abilities, interest or learning needs experience equally appropriate ways to absorb, use, develop and present concepts as a part of the daily learning process. It allows students to take greater responsibility and ownership for their own learning, and provides opportunities for peer teaching and cooperative learning.”<sup>18</sup>

There are four ways in which differentiated instruction can occur in the classroom. These can include the content of the material presented, the process through which a student completes an assignment, the actual product or completed assignment, and the environment in the classroom.<sup>19</sup> Educators have the ability to control and develop multiple avenues for students to learn in this manner.

### 1. Differentiating the Content/Topic<sup>20</sup>

- Content refers to the knowledge, skills and attitudes teachers want students to learn
- Compacting the curriculum: Pre-test required so that teachers can determine which students need directed instruction and which students can proceed to the application of the concepts to problem solving.
- Use of independent projects for students who have grasped the concepts faster than other students

### 2. Differentiating the Process/Activities<sup>21</sup>

- Varying learning activities or strategies for exploration of the concepts
- Provide alternative paths (i.e. graphic organizers, maps, diagrams, charts) by varying the complexity to investigate the ideas within a concept
- This changes the levels of cognitive processing which generally would match the differing abilities of the students.

### 3. Differentiating the Product<sup>22</sup>

- Provide a variety of options in product (i.e. completed assignment) that students may use to determine mastery of concepts.
- Those students working below grade level may produce less complex products while those above grade level may present products that are higher in complexity and demonstrate advanced thinking skills.
- Allowing for alternative product ideas give students a certain level of motivation because they feel empowered by having options in their education.

#### 4. Differentiating by Manipulating the Environment or Through Accommodating Individual Intelligences.<sup>23</sup>

- Using the concept *multiple intelligences*, and determining how students would respond to variations and stimuli within the environment and to each other.
- There are many approaches to multiple intelligences, but all have some level of merit and when combined increase the engagement of the student to the learning process.
- Some approaches support the ability of the teacher to manipulate the light and sound levels, minimize visual distractions, or provide a more casual seating arrangement for students.
- Providing a variety of teaching strategies plays on the strengths of individual students and increases their level of engagement with the material being presented.
- The multiple intelligence theory allows teachers to ascertain how personality can enhance or detract from the teacher's ability to communicate the lesson to the student.
- A concept developed by Benjamin Bloom, mastery learning is an element of differentiated instruction where students master concepts and skills before going onto other learning. They progress forward based on how they do on "tests", and if they have not reached mastery, then they go back and study more, and then take the test again until they pass it. It is a self-paced program where students monitor their own progress as determined by the teacher.<sup>24</sup>

Some practical examples of differentiated instruction based on the four methods presented above are preferential seating, small group instruction, extended time on assignments, frequent and immediate feedback, positive reinforcement, graphic organizers, reading supports, reduced reading/language level, opportunities to discuss/verbalize subject matter, peer tutoring/paired working arrangement, shortened assignments, highlighted text/materials, assignment/homework notebook, and the use of manipulatives. Using differentiated instruction in the classroom and in any teaching environment provides opportunities to engage various students at various levels. When students are engaged, learning occurs in ways where it was not possible.

### **Classroom Management**

*"I have come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that determines the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or de-humanized"*

*Haim Ginott*

#### **a) Prevention**

As many educators are aware or have come to realize, the best form of classroom management is prevention. This requires educators to anticipate potential problems and prepare ahead through simple measures that ensure that the student feels some level of empowerment, and where the educator remains manager of the classroom.

Before addressing some key practical suggestions for classroom management, there must be an

attitude shift on the part of the educator. The educator must follow the attitude of “assume nothing”. This refers to realizing that although a student may have a behavioral history with the school and with other teachers, they must be treated in a fair and objective manner. Assume nothing also means that all educators must realize and recognize that their students may not ever have heard the guidelines that they are being taught. The attitude of assume nothing is a serious paradigm shift for many teachers and educators. It is however, the ethos of great educators who excel as effective teachers in the classroom.

Muslim educators in particular must be keenly aware of the directive of the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) to leave that which does not concern us. If a teacher feels that any of the behavioral and academic history may in fact affect how the student may perform in the classroom, be acutely aware, that each classroom dynamic is different and the educator has the power and authority to determine the climate of the classroom. Some key components of developing a viable *Instructional Classroom Management System* are listed below:

1) Part of prevention is being proactive:

- To avoid behavioral issues before they start requires educators to set guidelines and limits from the outset. Educators and classroom teachers must be aware of what limits are comfortable for them. In addition to this, although educators can easily post rules, it is important to empower students in developing their own rules, within the guidelines set by the educator.
- Educators must also be very specific in the behavior that they are looking for. It is important to model this behavior for the students repeatedly.
- Every new school year, educators must identify, teach and post the rules or guidelines. Again, one must assume nothing about the students and sincerely believe they are starting with blank slates.

2) As a part of understanding the assume nothing concept, educators must not get frustrated when they have to repeat and remind students of the rules throughout the entire year. Children require this repetition, as do adults, but to a lesser degree. This repetition and reminding ensures that eventually the student will get it.

3) Developing a positive and inviting learning environment allows for an internalization of the rules. A pleasant outcome of this is that students in turn begin to readily remind one another of the rules with minimal teacher intervention. This in turn has the class holding students accountable which can be more powerful and encouraging than when it comes from just the teacher.

4) In greeting students by name whether at the door or as soon as they enter the classroom the teacher establishes a much needed rapport and dynamic in the classroom.

5) Although this point will be elaborated upon in the next section, the manner in which a room is arranged determines how quickly a conflict can be defused, and how many interruptions or disruptions will be in class. Much thought by teachers must be taken in designing a room arrangement that works for them and minimizes distractions for students.

6) Design and develop a system that objectively rewards students in a balanced and fair manner. The number one reward for students is the positive reinforcement they receive in the form of verbal praise. It must be specific to the activity and must praise the behavior of the student.

7) Establish clear consistent routines. Students are less likely to get distracted and disrupt the class if they know generally what to expect. Educators must stick to the routines for the most part as consistency is a security for students and promotes a stable learning environment. In addition to this, teachers and educators should feel comfortable to post the daily agenda on the board or somewhere in the room so that students can refer to it easily.

8) When transitioning from one activity to another in class, strive to make those transitions quick and quiet. If transitions are part of established routines then students will on cue know how and where to move for the next activity.

9) Monitor student learning and adjust the lesson plan accordingly. The lesson plan is a guideline for the teacher, not a script. Therefore, in preparing a lesson plan a teacher should take into account the points and suggestions mentioned for differentiated instruction. Educators must be acutely aware of students who may not understand a lesson as there are usually 5% of students who do not.

10) Accommodate and anticipate student needs. Without too much effort a teacher should take an inventory of each student's strengths and weaknesses to ensure that by playing on the student's strengths and differentiating the instruction to meet their needs the learning objectives will be fulfilled. If the lessons are designed to meet the students' needs, then learning is enhanced and the educational experience is enjoyable for all involved.

### **b) Room Arrangement**

According to Dr. Fredric Jones, an educator and teacher trainer, the further students are from the teacher, the more likely they are to distract and disrupt either on their own or with other students. Effective teachers take advantage of the concept of "working the crowd" whereby they remain mobile throughout the classroom. In addition to mobility, these teachers also use proximity to students as a means of classroom management. In this way, "teachers constantly disrupt the students' impulse to be disruptive." Students are also saved the embarrassment of a public reprimand from the teacher as the teacher is within close proximity to the student. This further decreases the amount of disruptions in the classroom.<sup>25</sup>

In order to use proximity and mobility to the teacher's advantage, the classroom must be arranged in such a way that a teacher has the minimum possible distance between all students. This means that moving the teacher's desk away from the front of the room and any other obstacles that impede the teacher's ability to freely move about the room. Desks should be arranged such that no student has their back to the front of the room. Consideration should be given to the general types of activities that students will be engaged in on a regular basis. These could include cooperative learning activities, group activities, learning centers and others.<sup>26</sup>

### c) Defusing Situations – The Conflict Cycle

No matter how prepared a teacher or educator may be there are many times in a classroom setting that conflicts between the student and teacher as well as with other students arise. In order to better address these situations educators must equip themselves with an understanding of how conflicts develop, how they are viewed by the student, and what are the mechanisms to de-escalate them. This is referred to as the *Conflict Cycle* and was coined by Mary Wood and Nicholas Long.<sup>27</sup>

For students, a conflict may arise from a trivial event, but then escalate based on their set of belief systems as to the expected outcome. For educators, breaking down the steps in the conflict cycle will help them to empower students with mechanisms that allow them to focus their energies on positive outcomes. Below, the four phases of the conflict cycle are highlighted. Further detail is beyond the scope of this paper, but it must be emphasized that educators must begin to understand their own beliefs and attitudes about conflict in order to handle it effectively.

The four phases of the conflict cycle are:<sup>28</sup>

#### 1) Phase One: Attitudes and Beliefs

- In this phase, response to any conflict stem from preset beliefs and attitudes about the conflict.
- These can be based on any of the following:
  - a) Childhood messages that were received about conflict
  - b) Behaviours modeled by parents, teachers and peers
  - c) Attitudes presented in the media
  - d) One's own experiences with conflict
  -

#### 2) Phase Two: The Conflict

- The second phase of the conflict occurs when an individual's needs do not meet his or her expectations.

#### 3) Phase Three: The Response

- The third phase is the point where the teacher is required to take some form of action in response to the student's behavior. Whether a student begins to shout, withdraw, leave or attempt to talk about the situation, a teacher's response is a manifestation of the teacher's personal set of beliefs and attitudes. A teacher's reactions reveal their own patterns of behavior in conflict situations.

#### 4) Phase Four: The Consequence

- Every response will lead to a consequence. Many times the consequence will reinforce the student's beliefs and attitudes about the conflict, which feeds the conflict cycle and begins the process all over again.

It is here that educators must understand their own attitudes and beliefs, and patterns of behavior. Their response to conflict must be such that they do not mirror those of the student, thus perpetuating the cycle. The goal is to break the cycle to elicit positive and unexpected outcomes, and this must be the response of the educator to students caught in the conflict cycle.

**d) Team Teaching**

Muslim schools who are particularly under-funded should consider the idea of collaborative teaching or team teaching. In order to meet the needs of all students, it may be beneficial to have a teaching assistant in the classroom, or a school-wide resource teacher to ensure that students receive the attention they need to be successful in the classroom. Given the high student-to-teacher ratio in most schools, this may prove to be a plausible solution to many of the issues that arise from teaching students with varying abilities.

**Nature for Nurturing the Classroom Community**

Many Muslim schools struggle with students who display symptoms of hyperactivity, minimal attention spans, and an inability to concentrate and remember classroom routines. As previously mentioned these students may be displaying an intelligence known as naturalist intelligence. Study after study has highlighted students' need to be exposed to the natural environment. In September 2004, in a study published by the American Journal of Public Health, researchers determined that children exposed to natural settings helped reduce the symptoms of ADHD or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in children.<sup>29</sup> That same year, a study done at the University of Illinois found that children with ADHD experienced a significant decrease in symptoms after spending time outdoors.<sup>30</sup>

The following year, the California Department of Education showed a 27% increase in student science scores after students spent classes in outdoor education settings. In addition to this, several University of Michigan studies indicated a significant increase in concentration for students who are close to nature. Where schools are unable to provide this proximity to nature, visits to nature centers, extended themes about animals, their habitats, human impact on the environment and visits to outdoor education centers provides cross-curricular opportunities for students to enhance their learning experience.<sup>31</sup> Tying this learning to the role of Muslims and the role of the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) as well as pairing this with Quranic injunctions allows for a holistic approach to learning about nature and its place in the world.

**Flipping the Classroom**

In flipping the classroom, Muslim educators embrace technology and provide videos of their lessons as homework. The next day, after watching the lessons, students are under the watchful eye of the teacher as they work through problems, questions and other such homework assignments. This method requires little technology except a camera, a YouTube account, and a dedicated teacher.

**Conclusion**

The aim of this paper was to present teaching methodologies framed within special education in a way that is inexpensive and accessible for Muslims schools. Muslim schools will be better equipped to address the needs of students with diagnosed special needs, as well as those who show various symptoms and who may not have a specific learning or emotional disability. These methodologies when incorporated into any classroom setting or learning environment inadvertently enhance the Islamic education for all students. Requiring minimal resources, these

options increase the tools that teachers and educators can use. The most that is needed is the training and support from administrations, and support from parents and faculty.

Meeting the individual needs of all students follows the prophetic paradigm of empathic learning in that the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) was able to cater his teaching style to that of each of his companions, his students, and even the curious onlooker and observer.

And God knows best.

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## Encouraging the Curious: The Case for Creative Engagement in Islamic Schools

*Omaira Alam*

### Abstract

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The goal of education is to prepare students for the world at large. For Islamic schools, this means meeting the challenges of the 21st century within the framework of an Islamic worldview. This workshop will use research-based practices to help educators harness a child's natural curiosity. Emphasizing creativity allows a child to develop problem-solving, innovation, process-based thinking, decision-making, leadership and other critical skills. Through this workshop educators will be able to answer the questions: where is the place of creativity in the Islamic school classroom, and why is it necessary for us as Muslim educators to highlight this aspect in our lesson-planning and instructional methodology?

#### Tracks:

- Instructional Strategies
- Differentiated Instruction
- Technology in the Classroom

### About the Author

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### Encouraging the Curious: The Case for Creative Engagement in Islamic Schools

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*“Creativity is nurtured by freedom and stifled by the continuous monitoring, evaluation, adult-direction, and pressure to conform that restrict children’s lives today. In the real world few questions have one right answer, few problems have one right solution; that’s why creativity is crucial to success in the real world. But more and more we are subjecting children to an educational system that assumes one right answer to every question and one correct solution to every problem, a system that punishes children (and their teachers too) for daring to try different routes. We are also...increasingly depriving children of free time outside of school to play, explore, be bored, overcome boredom, fail, overcome failure—that is, to do all that they must do in order to develop their full creative potential.”<sup>1</sup>*

One of the goals of education is to prepare students to successfully navigate the world around them, now and in the future. For Islamic schools, this means not only preparing students for the challenges of the 21st century, but also doing so within the framework of an Islamic worldview. Emphasizing creativity in the classroom allows students to develop critical life skills such as problem solving, innovation, process-based thinking, decision making, leadership, and many more. It creates opportunities for students to develop skills they'll carry with them throughout their lives.

But more than that, inspiring creativity in students brings Muslim educators closer to the pedagogy of the Prophet Muhammad وسلم عليه الله صلى. In all his teachings, he is a beacon of inspiration and practical guidance for all of mankind. By exploring the concepts of intelligence and creativity, this paper present research-based practices and classroom strategies that harness students' natural curiosity and creative growth. And find ways to inspire and engage students who are de-motivated, disconnected, and barely interested in what's going on in class. Classrooms that inspire are ones where student engagement is the key and learning opportunities abound. While exploring the role of creativity in the Islamic school classroom, we'll address some of the common questions surrounding why it's imperative for Muslim educators to inspire creativity in lesson planning and instructional practice.

### **Defining Intelligence**

*“When people are asked on a scale of 1 thru 10 how intelligent they are, they are more than willing to rate themselves to which they have no problem. No one questions the question. Only few have challenged the form of the question and asked what I mean by intelligence. I think that's what everyone should do. I am convinced that taking the definition of intelligence for granted is one of the main reasons why so many people underestimate their true intellectual abilities...”<sup>2</sup>*

The goal of schools and specifically Islamic schools is to expand the horizons of the student. When examining the place of creativity in Islamic schools we need to first explore the place of intelligence and our attitude towards this somewhat controversial concept. Sir Ken Robinson explains that the erroneous view on intelligence goes something like this:

“...we are all born with a fixed amount of intelligence. It's [like a physical] trait [that cannot be changed]. Intelligence shows itself in certain types of activity, especially in math and our use of words. It's possible to measure how much intelligence we have through pencil-and-paper tests, and to express this as a numerical grade...I trust this definition of intelligence sounds as questionable as it is. But essentially this definition runs through much of Western culture, and a good bit of Eastern culture as well. It is at the heart of our education systems and underpins the hierarchy of subjects in education, and stands as the foundation for the whole idea of IQ.”<sup>3</sup>

He further states that

“There have always been criticisms of definitions of intelligence based only on IQ, and in recent years they have been gaining in number and strength. There's a range of alternative, sometimes competing theories that argue that intelligence takes in much more than IQ tests can ever hope to access.”<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Howard Gardner of Harvard University agrees:

“...we have not one but multiple intelligences. These include linguistic, musical, mathematical, spatial, kinesthetic, interpersonal ..., and intra-personal intelligence. He argues that each of these types are more or less independent of each other, and none is more important, though some might be ‘dominant’ while others are ‘dormant.’ He says that we all have different strengths in different intelligences and that education should treat them equally so that all children receive opportunities to develop their individual abilities.”<sup>5</sup>

Which bring us to a deepening understanding of intelligence within the realm of creativity: as Dr. Robinson points out, we should no longer ask as educators, “How intelligent are you?” but in fact we should be asking, “How are you intelligent?” and further explains the impact of this change in questioning:

“The difference in these questions is profound. The first suggests that there’s a finite way of gauging intelligence and that one can reduce the value of each individual’s intelligence to a figure or quotient of some sort. The latter suggests a truth that we somehow don’t acknowledge as much as we should – that there are a variety of ways to express intelligence, and that no one scale could ever measure this.”<sup>6</sup>

Recognizing that intelligence is diverse, dynamic and distinctive<sup>7</sup> opens the doors of creativity in the classroom for any educator. Acknowledging these characteristics in every child allows us as educators to move beyond the limiting view measuring intelligence, but instead understanding its place in the within the realm of creativity in the Islamic school classroom.

### **Defining creativity**

*“To be creative you actually have to do something. It involves putting your imagination to work to make something new, to come up with new solutions to problems, even to think of new problems or questions. You can think of creativity as applied imagination. You can be creative at anything at all – anything that involves using your intelligence...It is because human intelligence is so wonderfully diverse that people are creative in so many extraordinary ways.”<sup>8</sup>*

When defining creativity, Dr. Robinson refers to it as applied imagination; as something that stems from original ideas and has some sort of value. Creativity then has a very practical component and application. He further divides it into three parts: creative dynamics, opening your mind and collaboration.<sup>9</sup>

Creative dynamics refers to recognizing the dynamic nature of intelligence. It involves a process whereby ideas are assessed and developed. It uses media or formats that people work in that they particularly enjoy. The second part of creativity, opening your mind, requires stepping out of our linear, logical thinking and making “connections or similarities between things that we hadn’t noticed before.” When we consider the idea of opening your mind, we are investing ourselves emotionally and spiritually into the work we’re doing. Students would be empowered by this level of engagement and motivation, because it leads to learning that connects them to education through their hearts and souls. The final component of creativity acknowledges that we, alone, do not have all the answers. Creativity requires collaboration by its very nature; this is deeper

than just cooperative group work in a classroom. This type of group work harnesses the differences in intelligence and creative style of its members by not only emphasizing what we give back to the world, but how we think and feel about it as well. Creativity allows students to develop a worldview based on our vested interests and collaborations.<sup>10</sup>

This is particularly significant for Muslim educators in Islamic schools where we struggle to help students adopt a viable Islamic worldview in a pluralistic society. Creativity allows students the ability to grapple with contemporary issues from a perspective that follows the Islamic tradition. It allows students room for positive growth.

Why is creativity so important?

a) In the footsteps of the Prophet ﷺ

*“Historically, Muslims have endeavored to capture the beauty of the Divine as well as the beauty they believed to exist in Paradise in everything they did. As a result, the most beautiful art, architecture, music, literature, cuisine, gardens, homes, dress, and cities adorning the pre-modern world were those crafted by Muslim hands. Even today, after centuries of decline, the carpets, calligraphy, cuisine, tile-work, and other manifestations of brilliant Muslim cultural creation are among the most sought after on earth*

Imam Zaid Shakir

The story of the Battle of the Trench reflects all the components that are required in a spiritually creative community. In learning from the prophetic methodology, we are given a clear example of the creative components embodied in the growth of a new and viable community.

As Dr. Tariq Ramadan points out, the Prophet recognized the dynamic nature of intelligence and acknowledged his own lack of experience in certain areas of life. As was his custom, the Prophet gathered his companions and consulted with them about the situation: ten thousand strong of the Quraysh coming to attack them, and with only a total of three thousand men able to fight, how were they to determine a course of action when the enemy would be upon them in less than a week? The Prophet consulted his Companions. After much back and forth and assessment of the ideas presented, one spoke up. It was Salman Al-Farsi, the Persian who suggested a strategy that was foreign to the Arabs:

“O Messenger of God, in Persia, when we feared an attack from a cavalry, we used to dig a moat around the city. Let us dig a moat around us!’ The idea was unexpected, but all the Companions (138) liked it and helped to implement it. They had to act fast, having only a week to dig a moat sufficiently wide and deep to prevent horses from jumping over it.”<sup>11</sup>

While a new strategy, it was readily accepted as the only plausible solution and in effect had opened their minds to possibilities that were completely novel to their particular region. In addition to this, they worked together to bring the trench or moat to fruition. Even the Prophet Muhammad contributed to the work. Dr. Ramadan comments on this creative endeavor:

“Such inventiveness in military strategy is revealing of the manner in which the Prophet taught his Companions both deep faith and the exploitation of intellectual creativity in all circumstances: they had not hesitated to borrow a foreign war technique, suggested by a Persian, and adapt their it to their situation in Medina. The genius of peoples, the wisdom of nations, and healthy human creativity were integrated into their mode of thinking, without hesitation or timidity. As the Prophet forcefully stated: ‘[Human] wisdom is the believer’s lost belonging; he is worthy of it wherever he finds it.’ This was an invitation to study the best human thoughts and products and adopt them as part of humankind’s positive heritage (maruf, what is acknowledge as good).”<sup>12</sup>

The Battle of the Trench was a lesson in the ability of a community to accept and appreciate the creativity found in all endeavors, and in particular of a spiritual nature. These skills are critical for establishing a resilient, and adaptive community that grows without losing any of the teachings of Islam. Dr. Ramadan continues:

“On a broader level, it meant showing curiosity, inventiveness, and creativity in the management of human affairs, and this appeared not only through his approach to war and its strategies but also, as we have seen through is way of considering the world of ideas and culture.”<sup>13</sup>

Dr. Umar Faruq Abd’Allah explores the concept of culture and Islam in his paper, Islam and the Cultural Imperative. As Muslim educators of American Muslim students, this is critical for us to explore especially along the lines of creativity. Dr. Abd’Allah mentions in the story of the “sons of Arfida” – a linguistic reference to Ethiopians – the Prophet stopped one of his chief companions, Umar, from interfering with the celebrations of this group of converts saying, “Play your games, sons of Arfida, so the Jews and Christians know there is latitude in our religion.”<sup>14</sup> Creativity allows students and teachers to embrace and recognize this latitude.

### **b) Inspiring awe and wonder**

*“In the traditional Islamic world, the hierarchy of the arts was not based on whether they were "fine" or "industrial" or "minor". It was based upon the effect of art on the soul of the human being.”*

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, A Young Muslim's Guide to the Modern World

One of the principles of pedagogy highlighted in the Islamic Teacher Education Program is “Formal instruction is occasional, nurtures reflection, and evokes a sense of awe and wonder.”<sup>15</sup> The prophetic pedagogical example can best be illustrated by the story of Abdullah ibn Masud. He was asked of his students to teach them every day, to which he responded, “The only thing preventing me from speaking to you every day is the fear that I might bore you ... for the Prophet s used to be selective in bestowing his teachings upon us out of fear that we would become bored.” Furthermore, Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani comments on this:

‘...it is recommended to break the continuity of intensity when it comes to acts of righteousness out of fear that it may lead to boredom.’<sup>16</sup>

A number of studies point to the main reason that students drop out of high school: boredom. “It often stems from extremities in scheduling, the lack of spiritual significance or intellectual and practical value of the subject of study.”<sup>17</sup> Perhaps the only reason that students in Islamic schools are not dropping out is simply because they do not have that option. But that does not mean that they are not disengaged, demotivated, and bored by the learning experience in the classroom. An Islamic scholar, Ramzy Ajem of Razi Education asserts

“In an Islamic pedagogy teachers should not only be capable of making their subjects relevant and practical but they should also be able to nurture reflection, awe, and wonder through what they teach. This is especially viable when teaching the sciences; attention ought to be directed towards the beauty, majesty, precision, harmony, and complexity of the cosmos. Students should be inspired and guided by teachers to make connections that transcend the world of phenomena and that lead to the nonphenomenal realities related to the Transcendent Reality and the Divine Attributes.”<sup>18</sup>

This state of perpetual contemplation was common to the Prophet.

### c) Developing 21st century skills

*“In 1970 the top three skills required by the Fortune 500 were the three Rs: reading, writing, and arithmetic. In 1999 the top three skills in demand were teamwork, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills. We need schools that are developing these skills.”*

Linda Darling-Hammond, a professor of education at Stanford and founding director of the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future.<sup>19</sup>

When glancing over the visions and missions of many Islamic schools, you can find the phrase, “developing the leaders of tomorrow.” While this is a great goal and one that should be aspired to, it says little in the way in which Islamic schools claim to do this. According to David Hughes, founder of Decision Labs and professor at UNC Chapel Hill,

“innovation is an essential skill for our global economy. In talking about creativity in schools he says, much of the blame for a lack of creativity, and therefore innovation, can be traced to our traditional educational systems.”<sup>20</sup>

Kyung Hee Kim, a professor of education at the College of William and Mary, analyzed scores on a battery of measures of creativity called the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT). In Kim’s words, the data indicates that,

“...children have become less emotionally expressive, less energetic, less talkative and verbally expressive, less humorous, less imaginative, less unconventional, less lively and passionate, less perceptive, less apt to connect seemingly irrelevant things, less synthesizing, and less likely to see things from a different angle.”<sup>21</sup>

Implementing classroom strategies that encourage and inspire creativity is difficult. Even more difficult it getting teachers to change the way they structure lessons and instruction to draw out the latent creativity in many students.<sup>22</sup> The arguments against creativity are many: it is uncertain, it embraces the idea of failure, emphasizes process as much as or more than the

product, and is just overall too difficult to implement. Those who have embraced creativity see the difficulties as opportunities for the growth of very specific skills: with uncertainty, students learn adaptability; with failure students learn resilience; with emphasis on the process as opposed to the product, students learn problem solving skills; and with challenges, students acquire perspective.<sup>23</sup>

#### **d) Creativity & Identity Formation**

*“While creativity at times is very rewarding, it is not about happiness. ... a successful creative person is someone “who can survive conformity pressures and be impervious to social pressure.”*

Barry Staw, a researcher at the University of California– Berkeley business school specializing in creativity.<sup>24</sup>

One of the main things learned through creative endeavors is the development and strengthening of identity or identity formation.<sup>25</sup> This specifically for Muslim students in Islamic schools is critical, especially with so many schools measuring their success by the leadership qualities in their students, identity formation is at the forefront of why Islamic schools need to develop creative approaches in their classrooms.

While asserting the creative genius and cultural sophistication of “a number of notable Muslim American writers, poets, rap artists, ... stand-up comedians,” interior decorators, artists, and fashion designers, Dr. Abd’Allah points to the developing Muslim American culture which speaks to the level of comfort that young American Muslims feel towards their faith and their place within American society. They take pride in their history and heritage, and use them for placing themselves positively in the present and future as part of their American Muslim identity. That said, however, Dr. Abd-Allah mentions,

“But, despite positive signs, much of the cultural creation taking place over recent years around the mosque, school, home, and campus has been without direction, confused, unconscious, or, worse yet, subconsciously compelled by irrational fears rooted in ignorance of the dominant culture and a shallow, parochial understanding of Islam as a counter-cultural identity religion. The results—especially if mixed with culturally predatory Islamist ideology—may look more like a cultural no-man’s-land than the makings of a successful indigenous Muslim identity.

“Development of a sound Muslim American cultural identity must be resolutely undertaken as a conscious pursuit and one of our community’s vital priorities. It is not a problem that will sort out itself with time and cannot be left to develop on its own by default.”<sup>26</sup>

Dr. Abd’Allah further states,

“We must be producers of culture, not passive consumers of it. A successful Muslim American culture must provide psychological space for all constituents of our highly heterogeneous community, taking on a cosmopolitan cast from the outset like a nationwide peacock’s tail reflecting our rich internal diversity. One size does not fit all.

“Beyond the building of more mosques and institutions, our primary object must be the constitution of a unified self, congenial and self-assured, culturally and Islamically literate, capable not just of being a productive citizen and contributor to society but a leader of the cultural vanguard in America.

“...Culture enables us to be comfortable with who, where, and what we are. Muslim Americans who are comfortable with being themselves have taken the first major step in becoming role models for their children and others and radiate a sense of direction and credibility. Identities that are rooted in deep cultural contradiction are easily thrown into states of confusion and doubt. True religiosity and deep spirituality require inner consistency and stability, which are only possible within a sound cultural nexus.”<sup>27</sup>

As though speaking directly to the critical condition of Islamic schools and the need for creativity, Dr. Abd’Allah asserts,

“Creating a sound Muslim American identity is a difficult and hazardous undertaking and requires personal integrity as well as knowledge and understanding. ...Our sacred law requires us to undertake the task. The work before us is a matter of true ijihad, moral commitment, and dynamic creativity. We must engender a Muslim American culture that gives us the freedom to be ourselves. And to be ourselves, we must have a proper sense of continuity with what has been, is, and is likely to be.”<sup>28</sup>

### **Creativity in Schools**

*“Creativity is as important now in education as literacy and we should treat it with the same status.”*

Sir Ken Robinson

When we consider young children entering Islamic schools, they embody an eagerness to learn and a natural curiosity. As Dr. Robinson mentions,

“All children start their school careers with sparkling imagination, fertile minds, and a willingness to take risks with what they think. We place tremendous significance on standardized tests, we cut funding for what we consider “nonessential” programs, and then we wonder why our children seem unimaginative and uninspired. In these ways, our current education system systematically drains the creativity out of our children.”<sup>29</sup>

Education that in Islamic schools should be awe-inspiring, seems to stifle creative expression and ends up being one that lauds conformity. In addition, students become aware of the hierarchy of disciplines where emphasis is placed on subjects that are considered more necessary for the developing of 21st century skills. We showed in the previous sections how skill development is enhanced through a creative atmosphere. But even more than simply skills, we need creativity in our classrooms to help Muslim students navigate their place in the American landscape. Islamic schools can no longer be images of public schools with Islamic studies and Quran class added in. According to Dr. Robinson,

“Public education puts relentless pressure on its students to conform. Public schools were not only created in the interests of industrialism – they were created in the image of industrialism.”<sup>30</sup>

Dr. Peter Gray, a research professor at Boston College, mentions

“We’re teaching the child that his questions don’t matter, that what matters are the questions of the curriculum... [Children are] designed...to solve problems and figure things out that are a part of our real lives.”<sup>31</sup>

So while we understand as educators what the lack of creativity in the Islamic school classroom is doing, how do we bring this about? How do we make simple, subtle changes that will enhance the opportunities for creative growth, identity formation, and a true investment and ownership in Islam? The first place is in a change in the school’s attitude. This means that all administrators and faculty as well as parents have to have a paradigm shift.

“Unfortunately, the place where our first creative ideas go to die is the place that should be most open to them—school. Studies show that teachers overwhelmingly discriminate against creative students, favoring their satisfier classmates who more readily follow directions and do what they’re told. Even if children are lucky enough to have a teacher receptive to their ideas, standardized testing and other programs like No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top (a program whose very designation is opposed to nonlinear creative thinking) make sure children’s minds are not on the “wrong” path, even though adults’ accomplishments are linked far more strongly to their creativity than their IQ. It’s ironic that even as children are taught the accomplishments of the world’s most innovative minds, their own creativity is being squelched.”<sup>32</sup>

While standardization is seen as necessary, teachers and schools need to make room for enhancing the learning environment, thus encouraging creativity in the classroom.

### **Encouraging creativity in the classroom**

*“Creativity is nurtured by freedom and stifled by the continuous monitoring, evaluation, adult-direction, and pressure to conform that restrict children’s lives today. In the real world few questions have one right answer, few problems have one right solution; that’s why creativity is crucial to success in the real world. But more and more we are subjecting children to an educational system that assumes one right answer to every question and one correct solution to every problem, a system that punishes children (and their teachers too) for daring to try different routes. We are also...increasingly depriving children of free time outside of school to play, explore, be bored, overcome boredom, fail, overcome failure—that is, to do all that they must do in order to develop their full creative potential.”<sup>33</sup>*

Encouraging curiosity in the classroom means setting it up in a way that invites child-directed exploration; the Reggio approach or the more commonly known Montessori approach both shape their lessons around student interests. It would be a worthwhile investment for schools to hire at least one or two professionals who are familiar with and trained in one of these approaches. Shaykh Ramzy mentions in the principles of Islamic pedagogy that lessons should be varied between the formal introduction of new content, reflection time and learning activities. As illustrated in the example of Abdullah ibn Masud instruction should not be so overbearing such

that it bores the students. It should be stimulating and reflective allowing for time for a deeper understanding.<sup>34</sup>

Students should be given choices – an atmosphere that welcomes options. Giving students the choice on how to complete an assignment, how to present it simply allows them a chance to use a medium that they enjoy. Using ongoing evaluation emphasizes the process – the effort – as much as, if not more than the product. It allows students a chance to make corrections and to really think deeply about their work. Instead of giving students who finish their work early another worksheet, why not have a tinker station filled with “junk” and “treasures” from yours and their homes that they use to build something. This gives students an opportunity to work with their hands and a much needed break from the mental work that is school.

When I was in teacher’s college many years ago, we were never allowed to sit down when teaching a lesson. We were actually evaluated on this. The idea was to always be motivating, engaging and the center of energy for the students: constantly being on our feet means that we were constantly expending energy to keep students engaged and motivated. Bring nature into the classroom: have plants, a potted garden, a birdfeeder outside the window and for younger students a water and sand area. Islamic calligraphy and images from around the world really make for an inspiring classroom. Encourage further contemplation and awe by having the Names of Allah in your classroom and use your lessons as ways to inspire reflection on these Names. Varying the schedule for variety, but not to forgo consistency is critical for students and helps to decrease boredom; even the simple act of having classes every other day helps to add that necessary change.

Finally, the layout of the classroom does not always have to be in rows. Consider perhaps a “U” formation that will assist in minimizing disruptions and allow for all students to see the teacher. Also push the teacher’s desk to the back of the room. There is no need for teachers to be sitting at their desk when there are students in the class.

The following is a chart of ideas based on inspirational classrooms. Some may apply to your classroom.

Type of Learning	Age/Grade	Subject	What is It?
Play-based learning	Preschool, Elementary, middle school	Arts, Language Arts, Science, Phys. Ed, History, Languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unstructured play or free play time</li> <li>• Opportunities to get messy</li> <li>• Learning through play</li> <li>• Recess</li> <li>• Pick up sports</li> <li>• Song and whimsy</li> <li>• Pretend play and puppets</li> <li>• Child-led learning</li> </ul>
Nature-based learning	Preschool, K-12	Science, Art, English, Phys Ed, History, Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring green into your classroom</li> <li>• Take the students outside for the lesson, even if it is just reading poetry under the tree</li> <li>• Teach them to appreciate nature</li> <li>• Have a classroom pet</li> <li>• Make them connect with the food</li> </ul>

			they eat: grow a garden in pots or in the soil (share the food with those less fortunate)
Project-based learning	Upper elementary, middle school, high school	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing that students learn best by experiencing and solving real-world problems.</li> <li>• Tackle realistic problems as they would be solved in the real world</li> <li>• Increased student control over his or her learning</li> <li>• Teachers serve as coaches and facilitators of inquiry and reflection</li> <li>• Students (usually, but not always) working in pairs or groups</li> <li>• Different from problem-based learning</li> </ul>
Flipping the Classroom	Upper elementary, middle and high school	Almost All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruction or lecture is pre-loaded – Khan Academy</li> <li>• Pause, rewind, rewatch</li> <li>• Post questions</li> <li>• Self-paced : remediation or moving ahead</li> <li>• Focus in class is application (90%), not instruction (10%)<sup>35</sup></li> <li>• Drawbacks to flipped classroom is the accessibility to technology by all students especially outside the classroom</li> </ul>
360 Degree Math <sup>36</sup>	Middle school, high school	Math, but could be with Physics and Chemistry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students become the performers and the teacher the audience, where he or she can observe students closely, see what their misunderstandings are, and correct them instantly.</li> <li>• Learning is no longer done in isolation or dysfunctional groups with students sitting in desks for prolonged periods of time while the teacher tries to help students individually, often repeating the same reminders and directions over and over.</li> <li>• All students work through the math on the four walls of the classroom while the teacher stands in the middle of room and sees the learning as it happens. The teacher can see student misconceptions immediately and provide feedback to the students in real-time.</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students organically form into social networks of learning during this up-tempo, active learning experience, helping one another grow as learners with the teacher's support.</li> <li>• Based on social, neurological and educational research.</li> <li>• First, it engenders peer support and also fosters creativity, a component that's often missing in traditional math classes.</li> </ul>
Co-op/unpaid internship	Seniors in high school	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-operative opportunities</li> <li>• Un-paid internships</li> <li>• Real life experiences</li> <li>• Experiential learning</li> <li>• Opportunities for partnerships with organizations and companies outside of the school</li> </ul>

### Conclusion

*"It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge."*

Albert Einstein

The obligation of Islamic school teachers is to engage students at a deep level such that they are not only prepared for success in the 21st century, but also in the Hereafter. Creativity in the Islamic school classroom allows teachers that room for serious student engagement and the potential for creative growth. As mentioned earlier, creativity leads to a type of resilience and adaptability that enhances the Muslim American identity. When we review our classrooms, our lesson plans, our yearly plans, we should ask ourselves:

- Does my classroom inspire?
- Do my lessons ignite a passion to learn?
- Is my classroom inviting?
- Would I want to spend my entire day here?
- Is my lesson creative? Does it engage my students in deep and meaningful ways?

And finally, does my teaching inspire students to seek beauty in the Divine through His signs?

**"Do not raise your children the way your parents raised you; they were born for a different time."**

Ali ibn Abi Talib

### Appendix: Useful Resources

*These resources are in addition to the reference list, and were not necessarily used in the paper, but teachers may find them useful.*

Building Creativity into the Primary School Classroom (video) <http://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/The-Case-for-Creativity-in-School-6082886/>

A video that shares a case study of implementing a creative curriculum and the obstacles that may be encountered.

30 Things You Can Do To Promote Creativity in Your Classroom  
<http://www.opencolleges.edu.au/informed/features/30-things-you-can-do-to-promote-creativity-in-your-classroom/>

In addition to some of the strategies presented in the paper, this article provides a useful link on general implementation of creativity in schools. Many of the strategies mentioned overlap with and complement the principles of creativity, as well as the instructional approaches presented.

As Children's Freedom Has Declined, So Has Their Creativity  
<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/freedom-learn/201209/children-s-freedom-has-declined-so-has-their-creativity>

A great piece explaining the use of the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT) and how their results were used to determine the decline in creativity among school-aged children.

Islam and the Cultural Imperative

<http://www.nawawi.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Article3.pdf>

Excellent article that highlights skills that can be developed using the creative approach of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) in working with people of different cultures, among other important lessons.

Teach Preschool <http://www.teachpreschool.org>

Teacher Tom <http://teachertombsblog.blogspot.com>

Play at Home Mom <http://www.playathomemomllc.com>

Nature-based learning <http://richardlouv.com>

360 Degree Math <http://www.360degreemath.com/index.html>

Flipping the classroom <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar13/vol70/num06/Evidence-on-Flipped-Classrooms-Is-Still-Coming-In.aspx>

Why I flipped my classroom: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9aGuLuipTwg>

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## Cooperative Learning is Engaged Learning

*Azra Ali*

### Abstract

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Active classrooms need consciously planned student engagement. Teachers facilitate this engagement. Teachers need practical strategies to develop individual accountability, collaboration skills and increase positive interdependence. Students process information better through face-to-face interactions.

### About the Author

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**Azra Ali** is the Principal of Huda School and Montessori, a private school located in Franklin, Michigan. She has been a school leader for the past six years at Huda School. Azra graduated from the University of Michigan-Dearborn in 1998 with a B.S. in Elementary Education. She worked as the Director of Education and Center Director at Sylvan Learning Centers for three years. Azra returned back to the classroom to teach 4<sup>th</sup> grade and middle school math for almost five years. During this time, she earned her Master's Degree in Education Leadership from Wayne State University. Azra launched her initial school leadership career in charter schools in Detroit for two years prior to taking the Principal position at Huda School. She continued her education by earning an Education Specialist Certificate in Curriculum and Instruction from Wayne State University. Currently, she is pursuing her Doctoral Degree in Education Leadership and Policy Studies at Wayne State University. Azra has spent 15 years in the education field and is passionate about mastery teaching and developing teacher leaders. She is currently part of MEMSPA's "Leadership Matters-Cohort 5" Specialty Endorsement Program. Azra is seeking her National Principal Mentorship training through NAESP this year as well. She has significant experience in Curriculum Design, Classroom Management (PBIS), Explicit Instruction, Cooperative Learning and International Baccalaureate Framework. Azra has successfully implemented the internationally renowned IB-MYP Program at Huda School. She completed her IB-Academy certification with endorsements in IB workshop leading, consulting and site visiting. In addition to her leadership role, she works with the students on many service learning projects. During her spare time, Azra participates in volunteer work and is highly involved in community out-reach. Azra is an active member of ASCD, MEMPSA, NAESP, MCTM, NCTM and other local educational charters. She is a dynamic and dedicated instructional leader, coach and supervisor!

### Cooperative Learning is Engaged Learning

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If you walk-through a school building during class times and you hear a pin drop and it is not a standardized testing day, there is room to ponder whether or not our students are learning in those quiet classrooms. Silence may speak volumes on a school's discipline structure but it may provoke a teaching enthusiast to question the silent learning environment.

As Islamic School educators, we face similar challenges in motivating and keeping our students actively engaged in the learning process. The 21<sup>st</sup> century digital natives that we teach in our classrooms need constant stimulation and sense of gratification. Our task of imparting knowledge is a critical one and one that is 3-dimensional. Most of the traditional models of teaching were based on content and skills. Our newer models of curriculum frameworks include the content, skills and critical thinking processes along with the concept-based approaches. So it is no longer about “Let’s open our books to page 31 and work on #1-20” approach. Students today need learning to be contextualized and conceptualized. There is a big “why do I need to learn this” question that is constantly overarching students’ mindset in the classroom.

As teachers, our role is to facilitate and guide students’ thinking skills. We are no longer the dispensers of information, the correctors of mistakes but more importantly the facilitators of learning and directors of stimulating thinking. As our roles change, so must our approaches to learning and teaching. The craft of teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires conscious planning, skillful articulation and implementation as well as artful presentation. This paper offers suggestions and ideas that any teacher can adapt to his or her classroom needs.

The goal of this paper is to spark the reader’s interest in developing a more student-centered approach to teaching and learning. With the student centered model, the aim is to engage students actively in the learning process. What does active learning look like? Feel like? Sound like? This paper will examine some research based models with Harvard Project Zero and Cooperative Learning Strategies. This paper is structured in three parts: literature review on cooperative learning, sample overview of cooperative learning, Kagan’s Cooperative Learning Strategies and its practical implications to the classroom.

In Cooperative Learning, students work in heterogeneous groups to meet common sets of goals. There is a special emphasis on students’ use of social skills and interdependence to support, monitor and give help to each other. (Kagan, 1994) Students work together to learn with group and individual accountability in place. According to Kagan, the basic elements are:

1. Positive Interdependence - occurs when gains of individuals or teams are positively correlated.
2. Individual Accountability - occurs when all students in a group are held accountable for doing a share of the work and for mastery of the material to be learned.
3. Equal Participation - occurs when each member of the group is afforded equal shares of responsibility and input.
4. Simultaneous Interaction - occurs when class time is designed to allow many student interactions during the period.

Historically, cooperative learning structures have been used for decades in the United States. Cooperative learning strategies have been added as a useful instructional repertoire for the past decade by teachers. Many research studies in the past 20 years have explored the principal questions on the effectiveness of these cooperative learning structures. Most research was centered on cooperative learning as a way to change classroom and hence the activities designed for learning. The central aim is to engage students actively with positive academic interactions

and accountability. Accountability, both group and individual needs to be an integral component in order for cooperative learning to work effectively.

According to Slavin (1994) group and individual accountability was the hallmark of student achievement in terms of using cooperative learning in the classroom. Slavin (1994) suggested group goals to help motivate students to learn providing reasons to cooperate in a meaningful way. (Deutsch, 1949, Johnson & Johnson 1989, Stevens 1994). In an effort to reduce the “free rider effect”, where students may not do their share of work and rely on group members to accomplish goals, the individual accountability system reduces this effect (Joyce, 1999).

The two elements must be consciously planned for and linked to make cooperative learning process effective. The group’s success will be directly linked to individualized output. This interdependence will lead to an increased level of motivation that individuals are contributing to their own learning and group learning and not just completing a task.

Based on synthesized research on cooperative learning, student achievement was significantly more in experiment group than in control group. According to Slavin (1991), positive effects were found across grade-levels, subjects, demographics and subgroups based on 67 studies. Similar results were summarized by Johnson, Johnson & Stance (2000) that linked positive effects of cooperative learning structures.

According to Slavin (1994), students in a cooperative learning classroom discuss, debate, disagree and ultimately teach one another. It is clear and evident that cooperative learning structures, if implemented effectively can enhance student achievement. In addition, the side-effects are even more notable. Slavin(1991), indicates that the positive effects of cooperative learning have been consistently found in such outcomes as self-esteem, intergroup relations, acceptance of handicapped students, attitudes towards acceptance and ability of work cooperatively.

As we glean at contemporary research on cooperative learning, Robert Marzano’s research as summarized in *Classroom Instruction That Works* identifies the nine learning strategies for increasing student achievement. Marzano cites cooperative learning as an effective strategy for increasing student achievement. According to Marzano, students who are regularly exposed to cooperative learning gained 23 percentile points on achievement tests.

Teachers must form groups based on common goals as well as a system that rewards success. For examples team members can earn points or other rewards for their team by performing well on a test (Stevens, Slavin, and Farnish 1991). Since individual success can possibly lead to group success, the team success depends on the learning of each student. This method reinforces the value of helping each group member achieve success. These types of interdependent learning environments reinforce group goals and accountability that each individual has. In essence, this helps students care about the success of their fellow students, become better listeners, and value alternative methods for solving problems (Stevens, Slavin, and Farnish 1991) Since cooperative learning is based on the premise that students who work together are responsible for one another’s learning as well as for their own (Lindauer and Petrie 1997), students must learn communicate with each other and value individual perspectives but most importantly recognize that there is more than one way of solving a problem.

It is critical that teachers plan cooperative learning structures consciously. Numerous studies have shown that in order for cooperative learning to be effective, the essential elements must be present. Dividing students up into groups to complete a task is not cooperative learning. Merely because students work in small groups does not mean that they are cooperating to ensure their own learning and learning of others in their group (Johnson, Johnson, 1993)

There are a variety of readily available cooperative structures pre-designed to help students engage in cooperative learning. Although the names for these structures may vary from author to author, the key elements must be present in order to increase effectiveness. The following elements listed below are essential in all cooperative learning structures:

A clear set of Learning Outcome Objectives
All students in the group have ownership of the targeted outcome
Clear and complete set of task completion directions or instructions are given
Heterogeneous Groups
Equal Opportunity for Success
Positive Interaction
Face-to-Face Interactions
Positive Social Interaction Behaviors and Attitudes
Access to Must Learn Information
Opportunities to complete required information-processing tasks
Sufficient time is spent learning
Individual accountability
Public recognition and rewards for group academic success
Post-group reflection (debriefing) on within-group behaviors

Figure 1.2 Condensed List of Cooperative Learning Activity Format Options, with Benefits and Management Challenges.

CL Activity Format	Benefits	Challenges
<p><b>Group Products/ Performance.</b> The group works together to create a product or performance that meets certain criteria.</p>	<p>The finished product is motivational. Provides the feeling of winning as a group. True interdependence is often required. Has a built-in quality of “going somewhere.”</p>	<p>High stakes create increased chances for conflict and therefore need for conflict resolution skills. Assessment choices will have a dramatic influence on the way the project proceeds.</p>
<p><b>Inquiry-based/Discovery/ Lab activity.</b> The group takes part in collaborative research using an inductive or deductive process.</p>	<p>Inquiry-based learning is inherently authentic as well as engaging. The skills learned in this kind of activity lend themselves to real life applications, and meet many learning style needs.</p>	<p>Inquiry-based learning may be unfamiliar to some students, and will need to be well structured. The process will need to be taught before it can be assumed that students will be able to apply it effectively. It is possible that students can be left behind in the process if they are neglected.</p>
<p><b>Collaborative Content Processing.</b> Students examine information together and discuss it; then report their findings.</p>	<p>The quality of thinking is better as a result of having more perspectives and the opportunity to process verbally rather than just mentally (Slavin, 1994).</p>	<p>It is difficult for the teacher to be sure that the groups are discussing the academic content rather than something else. Having effective expectations in place is critical, especially for such things as noise level, how to take turns, and listen effectively.</p>
<p><b>Jigsaw Model.</b> Students are divided into like-sized groups. Those students learn a topic or skill; each group is then divided into new groups so that each group has a representative who can teach each topic or skill.</p>	<p>This method can be an effective way to present content. Students learn to become experts and to teach to others. With large numbers it can be more efficient than presentations.</p>	<p>The mechanics of the jigsaw are rather tricky at first, and will always require precise coordination of the teacher. Assessment is difficult in that the teacher cannot observe each presentation of content, so must use some other means to ensure quality (Gunter et al, 2007)</p>

<p><b>Graffiti Model.</b> Groups are given a question or topic. For a set amount of time each group writes answers to the question on a sheet of paper. Groups then rotate to the next sheet of paper. When all groups have completed each station, the original group summarizes the findings for their question or topic.</p>	<p>Groups are exposed to each question in the process. Insights from other groups help reinforce the benefits of working collaboratively. Each answer is completed with a depth that no single group could have accomplished.</p>	<p>Logistics need to be clearly established or groups may be confused. Groups need to be encouraged to think independently, or they tend to replicate the comments of previous groups (Gunter et al, 2007).</p>
<p><b>Collaborative Assessment.</b> Groups are given a task and can work together to produce one product or independent products depending on the choice of the teacher.</p>	<p>The quality of the outcome is usually better. The process itself promotes learning and deeper processing of the material. Can be done soundly and reliably (Shindler, 2004).</p>	<p>Collaborative exams are only recommended for groups who have demonstrated advanced cooperative learning skills and levels of responsibility. Having individuals turn in independent products can be a useful compromise design.</p>
<p><b>Collaborative Group Work.</b> Students complete independent assignments, but are allowed to talk to one another and give and receive assistance and peer tutoring.</p>	<p>Students learn how to teach one another and explain material in their own words. Students are free to interact as much or as little as they need to in an attempt to meet their goals and needs.</p>	<p>Some students may use the time to socialize rather than attend to the academic task. Expectations need to be in place for what qualifies as an appropriate noise level, what constitutes cheating, and what actions qualify as an abuse of the privilege.</p>

Figure 1.1 (UNT in Partnership with TEA, 2008)

## Kagan's Cooperative Learning Structures

Structure	Brief Description	Academic/Social Functions
Team Building		
Round-robin	Each student in turn shares something with his or her teammates	Expressing ideas and opinions, creation of stories. Equal participation, getting acquainted with teammates
Class Building		
Corners	Each student moves to a corner of the room representing a teacher-determined alternative. Students discuss within corners, then listen to and paraphrase ideas from other corners.	Seeing alternative hypotheses, values, problem-solving approaches. Knowing and respecting different points of view, meeting classmates.
Communication Building		
Match Mine	Students attempt to match the arrangement of objects on a grid of another student using oral communication only.	Vocabulary development. Communication skills, role-taking ability.
Mastery		
Numbered Heads Together	The teacher has students number off within groups. (1,2,3 and 4). The teacher asks a high consensus question. The students put their heads together to make sure everyone on the team knows the answer. The teacher calls on a number (1,2, 3 or 4) and only the student with the number can raise his/her hand to respond.	Review, checking for knowledge, comprehension.
Color-Coded Co-op Cards	Student memorize facts using a flash card game. The game is structured so that there is a maximum probability of success at each step, moving from short-term to long-term memory. Scoring is based on	Memorizing facts. Helping, praising

	improvement.	
Pairs Check	Students work in pairs within groups of four. Within pairs students alternate-one solves a problem while the other coaches. After every two problems the pair checks to see if they have the same answers as the other pair.	Practicing skills. Helping, praising
<b>Concept Development</b>		
Three-Step Interview	Students interview each other in pairs, first one way, then the other. Students share with the group information they learned in the interview.	Sharing personal information such as hypotheses, reactions to a poem, conclusions from a unit. Participation, listening
Think-Pair-Share	Students think to themselves on a topic provided by the teacher; they pair up with another student to discuss it; they then share their thoughts with the class.	Generating and revising hypotheses, inductive reasoning, deductive reasoning, application. Participation, involvement
Team Word-Webbing	Students write simultaneously on a piece of chart paper, drawing main	Analysis of concepts into components, understanding

	concepts, supporting elements, and bridges representing the relation of ideas in a concept.	multiple relations among ideas, differentiating concepts. Role-taking
<b>Multifunctional</b>		
Roundtable	Each student in turn writes one answer as a paper and pencil are passed around the group. With Simultaneous Roundtable more than one pencil and paper are used at once.	Assessing prior knowledge, practicing skills, recalling information, creating cooperative art. Team building, participation
Inside-Outside Circle	Students stand in pairs in two concentric circles. the inside circle faces out; the outside circle faces in. Students use flash cards or respond to teacher questions as they rotate to each new partner.	Checking for understanding, review, processing, helping. Tutoring, sharing, meeting classmates.
Partners	Students work in pairs to create or master content. They consult with partners from other teams. They share their products or understanding with the other partner pair in their team.	Mastery and presentation of new material, concept development. Presentation and communication skills.
Jigsaw	Each student on the team becomes an "expert" on one topic by working with members from other teams assigned the corresponding expert topic. Upon returning to their teams, each one in turn teaches the group and students are all assessed on all aspects of the topic.	Acquisition and presentation of new material, review, informed debate, Interdependence, status, equalization.
Co-op Co-op	Students work in groups to produce a particular group product to share with the whole class; each student makes a particular contribution to the group.	Learning and sharing complex material, often with multiple sources, evaluation, application, analysis, synthesis. Conflict, resolution, presentation skills.

Once the learning targets are identified, teachers can engage in a conscious planning cycle to identify which Cooperative Learning structure to use. Each of the different activities

will have different benefits. Therefore it is critical that teachers take the time to study the structures prior to implementation. As teachers get more comfortable based on experiences, some activities will prevail more in the instructional cycle than others. The key to designing an effective Cooperative Learning activity is to introduce each of the processes for the learning activity you choose. It is not advised to introduce new content and new structure of cooperative learning at the same time. With each successive attempt, students will begin to feel more comfortable and so will the teachers. It is essential that teachers write out the directions for the students so that visual prompts are available for them. In terms of the procedures, it is important as well for the teachers to ensure that the numbering process for certain activities are carefully planned out. For example, if you have 25 students, consider having groups of 5 rather than groups of 4. Students should not feel left out and neither should the teacher lose valuable class time figuring out how to recalibrate the groups.

Cooperative learning structures also require student roles to be assigned. This is an integral part of individual accountability. According to Johnson and Johnson, (1999), assigning students roles within the group has many advantages and can help set students up for success. Role assignments can provide clarity and ensure that students are able to complete their tasks. Most importantly, students recognize that having roles ensures that students have a dual sense of responsibility, one to themselves and another to their peers in the group. Since teachers are assigning the roles, the students can be matched to their skill sets at times and other times students can be assigned roles that may be out of the comfort zone. This allows for students to have an opportunity to appreciate their own and peers' performance in roles previously avoided. It is highly recommended that teachers keep written copies of role-descriptions for students. Here are some suggested roles that can be useful in various cooperative learning activities (Johnson and Johnson, 1999)

Manager

Reporter

Consensus Builder

Researcher

Monitor

Leader

Recorder

In conclusion, as teachers we use many different strategies from within our repertoire to try to reach students of different abilities and learning styles. Cooperative learning provides a method that achieves this goal, while at the same time promoting active learning and a supportive learning community. Learning collaboratively can be applied in various ways, thus ensuring success for all students.

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## Demystifying Data: Becoming Data Literate

*Asma Ahmadi & Rania Lawendy*

### Abstract

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The word “data” creates a sense of mistrust, fear and apprehension amongst classroom teachers. Educators do not have to be statistical experts to use data to improve their instructional strategies. This presentation will demystify some of the skepticism surrounding data and provide guidelines to harness data to improve student achievement.

### About the Authors

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**Asma Ahmadi** is the part time principal in Kitchener Ontario. She is also an instructor at Western University. She is currently a PhD candidate in Critical Policy, Equity and Leadership Studies. Asma is part of a team of researchers exploring the work of Principals in Ontario. Asma has recently been interviewed by the National Post on her contribution to the book *Discipline, Devotion, and Dissent: Jewish, Catholic, and Islamic Schooling in Canada*. Asma attends conferences regularly and has presented on principals' work; equity and inclusiveness; the purpose of Islamic schools and supporting minority students. Asma is a certified teacher and a certified principal in Ontario.

**Rania Lawendy** was born in Waterloo and has lived in this community her entire life. She is married with four children. Rania has a Bachelors of Science degree and has been a community activist for more than 15 years. Rania is one of the founders of the Kitchener Masjid as well as Al Huda Islamic School, of which she is currently the principal. Recently, Rania was elected to the Board of Directors of the Muslim Association of Canada. She is also a Muslim Chaplain at the University of Waterloo. Rania is the media spokesperson for the Coalition of Muslim Women.

### Demystifying Data: Becoming Data Literate

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“Data data everywhere so much it’s hard to think. Data data everywhere if only it would link” James Turner, Educator

For educators, data plays an important role in driving and shaping instruction. However, many educators find themselves apprehensive about using data and they also may not have the skills to use the data effectively. Usually using data is associated with being good with math, but this is not necessarily the case. While it is important to have a basic understanding of how numbers work, becoming data literate is not the same as being a statistician.

Traditionally, schools were, and are still, operating on a performance-oriented approach, whereby success is defined with respect to recognition and high scores. Educators know now that a learning-oriented culture looks at success through the lens of improvement and progress. Errors in the former orientation are seen as unacceptable and “errors” in the latter culture are seen as a

normal part of the learning process. These “errors” are employed to change instructional strategies to ensure student learning and progress. Data in the learning orientation is looked at as a tool to improve learning. The evaluative approach of performance orientation perceives data as either rewarding or punitive, a pass or a fail, good or bad.

Educators make decisions every moment on how to teach, what to teach, to whom to teach, and how long to teach a particular learning expectation Hamilton et al (2009). This presentation will help educators:

- ‘get to know’ data as part of an ongoing process of driving instruction;
- use data to explore the challenges in the classroom and help guide decisions;
- understand how data can provide information that can be used to engage in thoughtful planning and make informed decisions to move forward;
- unpack the fear surrounding data and provide a space to explore data as a tool for instructional decision-making;
- recognize how using data can drive instruction;
- use data collaboratively with other staff members (Boudett, City, and Murnane, 2005);
- encourage educators to become data users and data advocates.

The purpose of this paper is to inculcate a data-literate educator who:

- knows that different data is used for different purposes;
- recognizes sound and unsound data;
- recognizes different types of data e.g., anecdotes, observations, opinions;
- makes interpretation paramount;
- pays attention to reporting and to audiences. (Early & Katz, 2006).

### **Basic Beliefs**

It is important to articulate the basic non-negotiable belief that is founded on the moral purpose of education for both teachers and students:

- All students can achieve high standards, given significant time and support;
- All teachers can teach to high standards, given the right conditions and assistance;
- High expectations and early intervention are essential;
- Teachers need to learn all the time, and they need to be able to articulate both what they do and why they do it- (be theory-and evidence-based rather than trade-based). (Hill & Crevola, 1999).

### **What includes Educational Data?**

Data according to the dictionary is “factual information, especially information organized for analysis or used for reason or make decisions” (dictionary.com). In other words, it is not just limited to test scores and numerical values but overall factual and objective information of a particular aspect at hand.

When research in education speaks of data it is referred to information. Data can show up in different shapes and sizes such as words, numbers, or anecdotal observations that are collected

systematically and for a specific purpose. Mostly data in education includes (but are not limited to):

- **Student achievement data** such as teacher observational notes of students' performance in class, samples of students' class work, student portfolios, results of formal and informal classroom assessment, report cards or large-scale assessment results.
- **Other student data** relevant to the students such as student mobility, attendance data, behavioral incident data and homework completion;
- **Contextual data** that are not under the direct control of the teacher (such as students' linguistic background, gender or community SES factors) but should be considered when working towards student achievement. (Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat of Ontario, 2008)

### Why instruction and not teaching?

“If there is teaching going on, but the students aren't learning, is it really teaching.”

Teaching is limited to the activity of someone showing someone else how to do something or why something is occurring. However, a classroom is not limited to teaching; there are a variety of other interactions between student, teachers and resources that coexist that encompasses instruction. Cohen, Raudenbush, and Ball (2003) refer to instruction as “a stream, not an event, and it flows in and draws on environments-including other teachers and students, school leaders, parents, professional, local districts, state agencies, and test and text publishers. (p.122).

Educators are shifting their focus from teaching and teaching strategies to learning and learning outcomes. Teaching is important and an integral part of the classroom dynamic, however learning is the focus of student progress not the teaching. Instruction here entails all the activities and the flow that surrounds the learner including inside and outside the classroom

### The Triple P Core Components

Fullen, Crevola, and Hill (2006) in their book *Breakthrough* illustrated The Triple P Core Components that are the integral elements of a breakthrough school system: personalization, precision and professional development.



Figure 1: The Triple P Core Components

### **Personalization**

Personalization is education that “puts the learner at the center” (Leadbeater, 2002, p.1). Personalization is to be carried out with each child. Caroline Tomlinson’s (1998) differentiated instruction is one of the prevalent resources used by educators to personalize an education for a specific child. When personalization does not exist the alternative is a one-size-fits-all instructional strategy that targets the average or the status quo (Fullen, Crevola, and Hill, 2006)

### **Precision**

Precision goes hand in hand with personalization. Precision is to accurately identify the learning needs of the child. Assessment for learning (formative assessment) is “a core precision-based component of reform” (Fullen, Crevola, and Hill, 2006, p.19). Assessment provide feedback to the teacher to modify instruction to meet the needs of the student.

### **Professional Learning**

Personalization begs for precision and precision requires ongoing learning (Fullen, Crevola, and Hill, 2006). Professional learning on a daily basis is fundamental to link new concepts of instructional practice with assessment of student learning (Cohen and Hill, 2001). Research shows that even though teachers and administration deem professional development workshops as important there is little change seen in the classroom after a workshop (Borman et al, 2005). Elmore defines improvement as “a function of learning to do the right things in the setting where you work” (Elmore, 2004, p.73). Research suggests that engaging teachers in “continuous and sustained learning about their practice in the setting in which they actually work, observing and being observed by their colleagues in their own classrooms and classrooms of other teachers” translates to application of this knowledge in the classroom (Elmore, 2004, p.127).

### **Data Driven Instruction Inquiry (DDI)**

Research shows that educators in high-performing schools mention Data Driven Instruction and Inquiry as one of the most important factors in increasing student achievement. DDI is a systematic approach to improving student learning in the classroom. The cycle starts with assessment, analysis, and then action. Another important key principle is also culture, but some overlook this aspect of the DDI. There is no point in assessing individuals if it does not impact learning and instruction. The questions that are infused in this inquiry are: (a) what the students are able and unable to do; (b) where the gaps are in their learning; (c) how do we make sure that we are using the data to close those gaps.

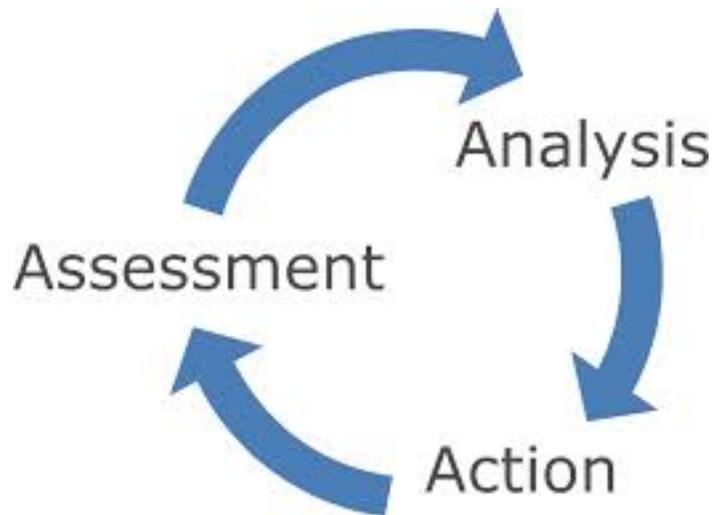


Figure 2: The Inquiry Cycle of Data Driven Instruction

### **Assessment**

Assessment is the very first key principle for data-driven instruction. There are several core ideas with assessment:

- Standards are meaningless until one defines how one will assess them. In other words, the kind of questions the students are expected to answer determines how and what we will teach.
- Assessments are not the end of the teaching and learning process; they are the starting point. Traditionally teachers teach first and then write the assessment, this core idea begs to create a rigorous test and then teach to ensure that students are meeting the standards. (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010, p. 7-9)

Writing a test is a difficult task. Effective Assessment has four main elements:

- Assessments must be the starting point. The reason for this is that “the rigor of the actual assessment items drives the rigor of the materials taught in class” (p.12).
- Assessments must be transparent
- Assessments must be common
- Assessments must be interim

### **Analysis**

Employing effective analysis on the assessment data helps direct the strategy utilized to enhance learning. Interpreting data from assessments allows teachers to systematically identify the students’ strength and weaknesses and therefore determine the steps to bridge the gap.

Paying close attention to the results of the interim assessments, provided to students, gives the teacher a “view from the pool”—analyzing student learning when it happens. The metaphor is used from the 2004 film *Man on Fire* whereby the coach looked beyond the swimmer finishing third in the competition and watched her performance in the pool to direct her learning and success.

Educators use test-in-hand strategy as the basic means to find out answers to why students got the question wrong and which questions they got wrong. Looking at individual questions as opposed to just an overall performance of the student ensures that the educator saves “countless hours of valuable re-teaching time and energy” (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010, p.47). Overall scores may lead to wrong conclusions, however the test-in-hand strategy helps to identify the right way to approach learning for each student.

### **Action**

After gathering the data and analyzing it educators are faced with the task of putting the plans into action. This step of drawing action plans to change classroom practices so that it meets student needs. This step requires setting priorities and goals for individual students and for the class at large. Further strategies are outlined when goals are articulated using the results of the analysis. Lesson plans will have to be created with the action plan in mind.

### **Culture**

Culture is the stream of “norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals built up over time” (Peterson & Deal, 1998). No doubt educators and principals believe that they have high expectation for the students, but saying that one has high expectation is not the same as putting it into practice. The “culture of high expectation” is an essential element for data-driven instruction to thrive. Utilizing data to make instructional decisions have shown four outcomes: (1) greater differentiation of instruction; (2) greater collaboration among staff; (3) increased sense of teacher efficacy; (4) improved identification of students’ learning needs (The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, 2008). Thus, as Donahoe (1997) states “If culture changes, everything changes” (p. 245).

### **Conclusion**

Data-driven instruction comes down to one question: are our students learning? Students learn through focused instructional practice. Data-Driven Instruction requires instructional practice to be open, observed, discussed, and not something that happens behind closed doors. Data can and should be a driving force in improving student and teacher learning (Levin, 2008). Data by itself is neutral, but paired with the proper mindset and interpretation it can become otherwise.

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## Applying Inquiry to Science Lesson Design

*Banu Avsar Erumit & Khadija E. Fouad*

### Abstract

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Teachers often confuse hands-on activities with scientific inquiry, but not all hands-on activities foster higher-order thinking. The order of activities is also important. When students do hands-on first, they are able to apply their experiences and understandings to their scientific explanations. The 5E lesson plan format, engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate, is designed to foster effective science learning in an inquiry setting. This workshop takes teachers through an inquiry activity using the 5E model so they can experience it for themselves. They then apply this model to design their own lessons for their own classrooms.

### About the Authors

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**Banu Avsar Erumit**, originally from Turkey, is currently studying for a PhD in curriculum and instruction for science education at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. Her current research interests are nature of science, teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, and developing students' abilities to ask productive questions during investigations. In Turkey, she worked for two years tutoring small groups of high school students in biology concepts to prepare them for the university entrance exam. At Indiana University she is currently teaching a science methods course for pre-service elementary teachers. She has also taught a class in scientific inquiry.

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## Applying Inquiry to Science Lesson Design

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### Statement of Problem

Integrating high quality inquiry learning experiences into our science classrooms is increasingly important in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The next generation science standards call for the integration of scientific inquiry with content knowledge as a method to apply and use that knowledge in real-world contexts. However, many teachers confuse hands-on learning with scientific inquiry. The two are not the same. Not all hands-on activities foster higher-order student thinking. While hands-on activities are engaging for students, that engagement should lead to the application of scientific practice in order for the activity to be effective in learning science. Thus, science teachers should consider the following question; "How can we plan out our science lessons to go beyond hands-on learning?"

## Review of Literature

Engaging in scientific practices helps students to understand how scientific knowledge forms (NRC, 2012). Research shows that students understand better when hands-on activities are followed by student discussion and writing and when the teacher introduces ideas that challenge student misconceptions. Hands-on is important but not enough to help students learn science. Exploring before explaining is important in learning science. When students do hands-on first, they are able to apply their experiences and understandings to their scientific explanations (Brown & Abell, 2007).

One contemporary lesson plan format for implementing inquiry learning is the 5E model, which was developed by Bybee in 1977. It incorporates three important learning cycle phases, which are explore, explain, and elaborate, while adding engage and evaluate phases (Brown & Abell, 2007). Lesson plans using this model begin with engaging students by connecting to prior knowledge and raising interesting questions. The engage phase helps the teacher to elicit students' preconceptions and misconceptions on the scientific phenomenon that is being covered. Students then explore a scientific phenomenon by raising their own questions and answering them through investigation. Following this exploration, students explain what they have gained from their investigations. They use evidence from their exploration when they discuss. During these discussions with their peers, students gain further insight into the concepts. In the elaborate phase, students then go on to apply what they have learned to a new situation. This helps them to extend their knowledge of the scientific phenomenon and to apply it to another situation. The last phase of the model is evaluation, so that the teacher can assess the understandings students have gained during the lesson.

This sequence of science lessons also aligns with essential features of scientific inquiry. As shown in table 1, essential features of scientific inquiry include "(1) learners engage in scientifically oriented questions, (2) Learner gives priority to evidence in responding to questions, (3) Learner formulates explanations from evidence, (4) Learner connects explanations to scientific knowledge, (5) Learner communicates and justifies explanations" (NRC, 2000). Elementary science teachers can use these important inquiry features in individual lessons. For example, teachers can focus on asking investigable questions in one lesson; they can focus on making scientific observation in another lesson, and making explanations by using their observations (evidence) in another lesson. All of these practices would help students to develop skills and understanding of scientific inquiry (Bybee, 2011).

Elementary teachers can struggle with how to incorporate inquiry in their science lessons. The main struggle lies behind the idea of student-centered teaching. Many science teachers think that scientific inquiry teaching is student centered in which students ask their own questions, collect and analyze their own data, and explain findings on their own. However, inquiry teaching does not only refer to student-directed learning. Although it is true for student-centered inquiry, it is not the only case. There is not only one type of inquiry teaching. There are different levels of scientific inquiry and students can move from one level to another as they develop process skills and enough understanding of inquiry (Banchi & Bell, 2008).

Banchi & Bell (2008) have identified a four-level-continuum which includes confirmation inquiry, structured inquiry, guided inquiry, and open inquiry. In confirmation inquiry, students are provided an inquiry question and given the methods. Results are also known in advance. This

type of inquiry might be useful to consolidate a previously given phenomenon or to help students develop a specific inquiry skill. In structured inquiry, students are still provided with a question and methods; however, students form their own explanation by using evidence. Although, both conformation and structured inquiry are considered as “lower level inquiry”, they are still important for students to develop important scientific skills. As students develop these scientific skills, they can be successful in more student-centered inquiry.

The next level is guided inquiry. In this type of inquiry, students are only given an inquiry question. They design their own investigation and collect their own data (evidence). Then, they make explanations based on evidence. The final type of inquiry is called open inquiry, which is considered as high-level inquiry. In this type of inquiry, students ask their own question, collect their own data, and generate explanations by using evidence (Banchi & Bell, 2008). As it is seen with the classification, not all inquiry is alike. Students might experience different levels of inquiry. Here, we share an activity that has different levels of inquiry.

## **Method**

### **Tops Activity**

In order for teachers to use inquiry learning in their classrooms they should experience it for themselves. For this reason we plan to take teachers through an activity adapted from an Exploratorium workshop (Institute for Inquiry, 2006) in which they experience different levels of inquiry, ranging from less to more learner self-directed, in the context of designing spinning tops. After this experience, they will then reflect on the properties of the different levels of inquiry and engage in discussions on how to implement these strategies in their own classrooms. By going through the process of learning by inquiry themselves the teachers will be better able to use inquiry learning in their own classrooms.

### **5E lesson plan design**

Following this, we will engage teachers in a discussion on developing inquiry-based science lesson plans using the 5E model. Lesson plans using this model begin with engaging students by connecting to prior knowledge and raising interesting questions. Students then explore a scientific phenomenon by raising their own questions and answering them through investigation. Following this exploration, students explain what they have gained from their investigations. During these discussions with their peers, students gain further insight into the concepts. Students then go on to apply what they have learned to a new situation. This helps them to extend and apply their knowledge of the scientific phenomenon. The last phase of the model is evaluation, so that the teacher can assess the understandings students have gained during the lesson.

Notice that the 5E model is student-centered, not teacher-centered. Students are acquiring knowledge for themselves that is rooted in their experiences. The role of the teacher in this type of lesson is to facilitate student learning rather than direct it. As this is very different from the way most teachers learned science when they were in school, we will scaffold a discussion with teachers to help them make connections between the workshop and the 5E lesson parts, engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate. Our 5E lesson plan for the workshop is the following. We will *engage* teachers by connecting the workshop to their prior knowledge and experiences

using hand-on science activities with their own students. They will then *explore* inquiry with the tops activities. During the debriefing of the workshop, teachers will be able to *explain* the different levels of inquiry. They will *elaborate* on these experiences by applying what they have learned to design their own lesson plans. The facilitators will formatively *evaluate* the teachers during the workshop to monitor their learning. Explicitly discussing our use of the 5E model with the teachers during our discussions will hopefully help them to see the connections between the model and an actual lesson which they have experienced.

### **Recommendations of Practical Implementation**

Standards-based education in science requires more than didactic teacher-centered instruction, because the standards themselves include items such as inquiry, argumentation, and nature of science that are best learned explicitly and reflectively in an inquiry setting (NRC, 2012). This type of instruction can be problematic for teachers to implement, especially if they have not had any opportunities to learn science using these methodologies. Many teachers learned science from instructors who used lectures and other teacher-centered strategies. Opportunities for hand-on science were often limited to confirmatory activities designed to reinforce material they had already learned. Having an opportunity to experience student-centered inquiry for themselves will better enable teachers to implement these strategies in their own classrooms to move their own students towards the goal of meeting science standards.

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Table 1. *Essential features of classroom inquiry and their variations.*

More.....Learner Self-Direction.....Less

Less.....Direction from Teacher or Material.....More

1. Learner engages in scientifically oriented questions	Learner poses a question	Learner selects among questions, poses new questions	Learner sharpens or clarifies question provided by teacher, materials, or other source	Learner engages in question provided by teacher, materials, or other source
2. Learner gives priority to evidence in responding to questions	Learner determines what constitutes evidence and collects it	Learner directed to collect certain data	Learner given data and asked to analyze	Learner given data and told how to analyze
3. Learner formulates explanations from evidence	Learner formulates explanation after summarizing evidence	Learner guided in process of formulating explanations from evidence	Learner given possible ways to use evidence to formulate explanation	Learner provided with evidence
4. Learner connects explanations to scientific knowledge	Learner independently examines other resources and forms the links to explanations	Learner directed toward areas and sources of scientific knowledge	Learner given possible connections	Learner provided explicit connection to scientific knowledge
5. Learner communicates and justifies explanations	Learner forms reasonable and logical argument to communicate explanations	Learner coached in development of communication	Learner provided broad guidelines to use sharper communication	Learner given steps and procedures for communication

(NRC 2000, p. 29)

## **Arabic Language Class: Teaching Islam through your Activities in Arabic Class**

*Lina Barbir*

### **Abstract**

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Teaching Islam is one of the most important goals in Islamic Schools. How can we teach Islamic values while teaching language functions in the Arabic class? Can we use Islamic resources and make Arabic interesting, relevant, and fun for students?

Participants will explore how to teach language functions and Islamic values through the use of Islamic songs, pictures, and activities in the Arabic class.

### **About the Author**

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**Lina Barbir** has been teaching in Islamic schools for twenty years in subjects including: Quran, Islamic Studies, Social Studies and Arabic. She currently lives in New Jersey and is an Arabic and Islamic Studies teacher at Ghazaly High School. She has also taught for New Horizons School in Pasadena, California and in Beriut Lebanon. Lina holds a Masters of Education in Science: Curriculum and Instruction, a certification in teaching Arabic in the state of New Jersey and a certificate (Ijaza) in memorizing and teaching the recitation of the Quran

## **Arabic Language Class: Teaching Islam through your Activities in your Arabic Class**

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### **Introduction**

How can we integrate Islamic Studies in Arabic curriculum to teach both language tasks and Islamic values through the use of pictures, anasheed, and activities?

First question we teachers should ask ourselves is: why are we teaching in Islamic schools? One of the factors that influence the way teachers teach is their personal views of learners and learning (Crooks). Therefore, teaching in an Islamic school should be a very important factor to affect our views in learners and learning.

### **Role Model Islam**

Islam is a way of life; therefore incorporating texts and subjects in the Arabic lesson is not a hard task to do.

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However, we have to be aware as teacher, that no matter what we say, students will mainly be affected by what they see. What students see and experience every day with their teachers has way more impact than what they learn through their lessons.

When our students like us and respect us, they will like what we represent. On the other hand, if they dislike us, they will dislike everything we represent, including Islam. When our behavior does not reflect what we are teaching, instruction withers away and we lose credibility.

It was said that the greatest enemy to Islam is a Muslim who misrepresents Islam.

So as we start our journey as teachers in Islamic and non Islamic schools, we have to keep in mind that being role models is key to our da'wa. I think this is the most efficient way to teach our students Islamic values not only through the Arabic class but through any class even in the playground, the cafeteria, and the hallways...

Simple things we could do daily in the class would be for example the respect we show our students, thanking them (جزاكم الله خيرا) when they hand in their assignments or when they are honest, and saying برحمكم الله when they sneeze. In addition, we should be always enhancing their self-esteem as we put in mind we are dealing with our future doctors, engineers, political figures etc, in brief: the future Muslim generation in this country.

### **Integrating Islamic studies in the Arabic class**

Islam interferes with all life aspects thus whenever we are teaching, we can easily relate to the values of Islam and integrate them in our lessons.

Based on that, teachers should focus on content related instruction and use Arabic authentic texts from different sources including the holy Qur'an, Hadith, anasheed, stories, news papers, adds and much more.

As mentioned above, since Islam is a way of life, any theme could be seen from an Islamic perspective. Use activities in a thematic unit and create a real life situation for the activity to be used. Teachers should teach languages tasks through themes based on the age of the children and should create a situation where the students need to use a specific task (for example to describe). Themes make instruction more comprehensible because the theme creates a meaningful context and changes the instructional focus from the language itself to the use of language to achieve meaningful goals (Curtain & Dahlerg, 2004).

In addition, it is up to the teacher to decide which activities are appropriate to the proficiency levels of the students. Choose in a way that you will not use English to explain. For instance the metaphor and simile in the song I will use, suit the advanced level. The teacher could explain some of the words by showing pictures but the students will have to discover the meaning by themselves.

The use of pictures in the foreign language class will help teachers avoid translating the words they are teaching (Bush, 2007). And it is well know that foreign language teachers are required to use the target language and avoid the use of the first language (L1) so students learn it like they learned their native language.

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### **Role playing and video projects**

After a theme has been taught, students can make their own role play/digital video projects, where they can discuss the theme of their short movies (it could be one minute) and assign the roles among themselves; all of this while using the target language (Goulah, 2007). A suitable theme for this activity could be the Islamic etiquettes or role playing stories from our Islamic history. Choose subject that interest the students, because interest significantly extends the student's attention span (Blaz, 1999).

To suit the students' learning styles, activities should be different to accommodate as much diverse learner as possible. Integrate activities involving multiple intelligences explained by Gardner (Snowman, 2009).

### **Lot of stories**

Children like stories and our Islamic library is full of stories; starting by the stories of the Qur'an to the stories of Prophets, sahaba or companions of the Prophet, and historical figures. Stories could also be units rich in different language tasks.

Shared story book reading is effective in teaching vocabulary (Lugo-Neris, Jackson, & Goldstein, 2010). Stories could be read several times a week and teachers would focus on the Islamic values and language tasks they want to teach.

### **Songs**

The use of Islamic Anasheed is a great way of integrating Islamic values and teaching language in the same time. The use of music and songs:

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1. Gives students access to authentic material
  2. Makes the lesson interesting and vivid.
  3. Makes the students relaxed and engaged.
  4. Makes the remembering of new vocabulary words easier.
  5. Helps students remember the lyrics and therefore learn the right.
  6. Helps students learn some expressions and pronunciation with no effort while enjoying singing.
  7. Induces some movements and fun in the classroom.
  8. Carries the target culture in the classroom.
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When teachers choose songs or Anasheed that relate to a theme they should pay attention to the following considerations:

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1. Make sure that the language level suitable to your students' proficiency level.
  2. Find songs that are appropriate to the age of the students (don't choose kindergarten songs for middle school students).
  3. Try to find content that is relevant and interesting to the students.
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### **Examples**

The first nasheed I chose as an example **كن سراجا كن قمرا** by Yahya Hawwa could be integrated in a unit about life style or daily life. This song is suitable for advanced levels because the author is using metaphor and simile. The author is describing the character/life style of a Muslim.

After listening to this nasheed, the teacher provides the lyrics of the songs and asks the students in groups to write 5 characteristics promoted by the song.

Let the students know that they don't have to understand all that is being said. Most of students get frustrated because they don't understand every word. Make it an opportunity to let them know that we should understand the general meaning not every word.

To restate the message of the nasheed students could be asked the following:

“You are in masjid and you have been asked to give a khatira between the taraweeh, about the character of a Muslim.”

The second nasheed is about the physical description of the Prophet peace be upon him. This song could be integrated in the life story of the Prophet when the people in Madina were waiting for him and wanted to know how he looks like. It could be used to teach the task of description.

### **Teaching grammar**

Teaching grammar should be taught in context and part of a subject or theme; in the song I used, we see that the author used a lot the imperative form when inviting people to follow the Islamic way of life. Hence, teachers should cease this opportunity and teach the imperative tense instead of teaching it in isolated structures. We could follow the inductive approach and ask students to underline the imperative form and notice the change from the present tense. Same strategy could be done in other anasheed that teachers could use.

### **In this session:**

Presenter will be using a power point presentation during this whole session.

Presenter will discuss with the audience the concepts mentioned above.

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Presenter will show some pictures and will ask the audience to describe the people they see.

The presenter will show how we can use pictures to integrate Islamic values.

The presenter will show some caricatures related to the famous conquer of the city of Ammوريا

and how the expression “Wa Mou’tasima” has become the cry of women in distress.

Two Islamic songs will be played. The first song invites the listener to be a spreader of peace and happiness and to adhere to Islamic conduct. It uses simile and metaphor.

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1. The audience will be asked to give some of the daily activities of a Muslim.
  2. Some vocabulary will be explained using pictures.
  3. The video will be played and the lyrics of the songs will be distributed.
  4. Participants will be asked to highlight and explain the metaphor in the song in groups.
  5. Each group will share with the audience their understanding of the metaphor and will compare with each other.
  6. Participants will be asked to look for the tense that was used frequently in the text (imperative form). Participants will see that they can also use the song to teach the imperative form of the verbs, a strategy that teaches grammar in context and stray away from grammar-based instruction.
  7. Participants will be asked how they could also use that song for more objectives.
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The second song or nasheed describes the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him based on the description of Ali Ibn Abi Taleb may Allah be pleased with him.

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1. The nasheed will be played and the lyrics of the songs will be distributed.
  2. Participants will be asked to write in groups the description of the Prophet peace be upon him as mentioned in the text.
  3. Each will read the description he understood from the text.
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Some students’ role plays will be displayed.

Presenter will show how to relate some themes to Islamic values through activities.

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company.

## Hands-on Books Closed: Tackling the Islamic Weekend School Effectively

*Tatiana Coloso & Aishia Neal*

### Abstract

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Weekend schools have always played an important role in religious communities. They provide an opportunity for the youth to gain valuable knowledge about their religion, encourage socialization among peers, and offer opportunity to train youth for leadership roles within their communities and beyond. Al-Hasan ibn Ali (Radi Allahu Anhu) said, "Educate yourselves today, for today you are the youth of the community but tomorrow you shall be the seniors" (Alshareef 2012). While weekend schools can prove to be one of the most valuable tools in educating and providing religious knowledge, a weekend school where teachers are untrained and lack resources can cause youth to lose interest and choose less desirable ways to spend their weekends. An unorganized, uninspiring weekend classroom, that has the opportunity to enlighten a child, has now become a student's dreaded task every weekend. This paper will examine common challenges of weekend schools, provide practical strategies for overcoming these challenges, and offer research-based strategies that will help turn an unorganized weekend classroom into a vibrant, interactive, learning environment.

### About the Authors

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**Tatiana Coloso** has been in education for 8 years. She is currently teaching Islamic Studies, Kindergarten through 4th grade at Al-Iman School in Raleigh, NC, where she has helped reinvigorate and develop the Islamic curriculum for the past four years. Her line of research focuses on integrating core subjects into Islamic Studies curriculum using hands on activities. Tatiana has a passion for teaching, nurturing, and stimulating young minds. This has created an enthusiastic environment within her classroom. She has successfully completed the Islamic Teacher Education program from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto.

**Aishia Neal** has taught students ranging in grades three to eight for over 10 years. Working in Islamic schools has encouraged her to explore ways to integrate and "islamify" the curriculum taught in her core content classes. Mentoring others as a Lead Teacher, she has been one who strives to promote application of the latest research based strategies, and the importance of creating a classroom environment that is safe, stimulating, and supportive to all learning styles. She is currently working at Amplify Learning with Math Curriculum Development in Durham, NC.

## Hands-on Books Closed: Tackling the Islamic Weekend School Effectively

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### Introduction

Weekend schools have always played an important role in religious communities. They provide an opportunity for the youth to gain valuable knowledge about their religion, encourage

socialization among peers, and offer opportunity to train youth for leadership roles within their communities and beyond. Al-Hasan ibn Ali (Radi Allahu Anhu) said,

"Educate yourselves today, for today you are the youth of the community but tomorrow you shall be the seniors." (Alshareef 2012)

While weekend schools can prove to be one of the most valuable tools in educating and providing religious knowledge, a weekend school where teachers are untrained and lack resources can cause youth to lose interest and choose less desirable ways to spend their weekends. An unorganized, uninspiring weekend classroom, that has the opportunity to enlighten a child, has now become a student's dreaded task every weekend. This paper will examine common challenges of weekend schools, provide practical strategies for overcoming these challenges, and offer research based strategies that will help turn an unorganized weekend classroom into a vibrant interactive learning environment.

### **Weekend School Challenges**

#### Expectations of Volunteers

One major concern surrounding weekend schools involves lack of training provided to teachers. Understanding that the majority of teachers who volunteer at a weekend school are not formally trained in education helps to put the various challenges into perspective. Lesson planning, classroom management, incorporating current educational trends into instructional deliverance can all be very foreign to a college student, or parent that wants to volunteer at their local masjid's weekend school.

Holding high expectations of weekend teachers and providing the basic teacher training necessary is critical, and should be conducted before the start of a new school year. Although it is the administration's responsibility to provide workshops on classroom management, lesson plans, interaction with students, discipline, and so on, a motivated weekend teacher can find information about all this easily on the web. These are all tools that will provide a successful school year, and more often, the tools that most volunteers lack.

To an untrained weekend teacher the best option to teaching, is delivering instruction right from the textbook and utilizing the workbook. This method, although most utilized, is not always most effective. Research has proven that students today learn best with hands-on interactive activities, discussion, and opportunities to engage in problem driven projects. Again, to a volunteer, taking this step can be overwhelming and confusing. Volunteer teachers require strong support and guidance from the administration, which in most cases, are not teachers themselves, and need assistance navigating the world of Islamic education as well. It is up to administration and teachers alike to work together to develop workshops and resources to help alleviate the burden managing all the variables of instruction.

#### Classroom Management

Another concern for weekend schools is classroom management. Certified and experienced full time teachers have been trained in different classroom management techniques, while the volunteer weekend teacher often has not. Remembering that whether a weekend teacher is

formally trained or not, we as Muslims, have the best training directly from Prophet Muhammad (Sallahu Alayhi Wa Salam).

As a Muslim learning the Seerah of the Prophet can provide valuable tools when interacting with students. Classroom management is not limited to disciplining a disruptive student; it is how the teacher manages his/her classroom on a daily basis. It is also how the teacher treats their students when they are sad or excited. These manners are all found in the Seerah of our beloved Prophet (Sallahu Alayhi Wa Salam). Classroom management is also when a teacher has a set routine and procedures that are reinforced will create a well-managed class.

“Procedures are what will make your students (and you) successful and reduce your stress. It seems difficult at times to practice (and practice, and practice), but the benefits are enormous-so stick with it!” (Wong and Wong 2006)

With a well-planned classroom management system, students know exactly what is expected of them whether it is what they do when they enter the classroom or something as simple as turning in a worksheet. This is a major concern of weekend schools, because teachers understand the importance of setting up these procedures, but may be at a lost as to how to implement them.

#### Time and Resources

The final challenge that weekend schools face is lack of time and resources. Weekend schools teachers are constantly challenged with time for teaching, as well as searching for ideas to create exciting lessons. They are dismayed when trying to manage the immense curriculum in one weekly one-hour period. Understanding time limitations and how to manage is critical to success. Once mastered, finding time to develop ideas, projects, resource materials, and more becomes an attainable goal.

### **Strategies to Overcome Challenges in the Classroom**

#### Holding High Expectations

When in the school or classroom, it is important to have basic standards for behavior. This, in turn, will aide in creating a healthy and safe environment that will allow students to build confidence while promoting positive growth emotionally, socially, and intellectually. It is also very important to have a classroom management plan in place that offers students a clear description of the teacher’s expectations for appropriate behaviors as well as the consequences that can occur when the student does not meet expectations.

It is important to foster intrinsic motivation as well as teach them how to self regulate their behavior. Scaffolding by starting with some tangible rewards as well as intangible rewards, can build good behavior and habits. In addition to scaffolding, having high expectations for all students in the class is essential in instruction. It is important for the teacher to clearly define her expectations and for the students to understand these expectations before proceeding to completing required tasks. When setting expectations for any age, a teacher will have to reflect on what type of behaviors are needed for student success based on their age group and what is

expected of them.

After reflecting on the types of expectations a teacher should have for her students, she then should systematically list the steps needed to take to ensure success for all students. Keeping in mind demographics, learning abilities, and learning styles, while planning how the best way to clearly communicate high expectations is vital.

### Strong Classroom Management

Establishing procedures and a solid routine is crucial for the weekend teacher. There are many variations of beginning and end of day routines as well as ways to effectively deliver a lesson and transition a student from one activity to the next. Exploring different routines and reading teacher comments on the web can help the weekend teacher determine what will work best.

For the beginning of the day procedures, it is very important to have the students get into the habit of putting up their belongings when entering the classroom. Turning in homework as soon as they enter helps to foster responsibility. Then having a morning Warm -Up allows time for latecomers to get into their seats while others are getting straight to work. Concluding this routine with a transitioning step, “meet on the carpet”, gives the students a definite ending to Warm-Up time.

At the end of the day, giving time for students to clean up around the desks, and collect homework gives students more practice with being responsible learners. Respect for the school, their class, and their belongings, grow when the student keeps their area clean. Any questions about homework can be discussed while students listen for their names, and it gives students opportunity to reflect on the learning for that day.

Transitions can be very difficult. Many students cannot handle stopping abruptly one task and immediately beginning another. Giving students a five-minute warning, allows student to mark their places in their books, finish a center activity, or complete a round in a game.

### Time and Pacing

Pacing, or the speed at which a teacher delivers an instructional lesson, is important in every way to student performance and acquisition of new knowledge. A teacher should monitor both the pacing of her daily lessons and the pacing of the whole curriculum for the year. Monitoring pace is essential because if a teacher goes too fast, struggling students can get lost. If the teacher moves too slowly, a good portion of the class can become bored, lose interest and behavior problems might arise. Pacing considerations are also important to keep in mind when planning for a class that includes students who know little about Islam. Different strategies should be used to keep pace but not to lose those students who are still acquiring knowledge about Islam.

Along with curriculum and discipline, time management, or pacing of lessons, is important to ensuring higher student engagement (Hofmeister & Lubke, 1990). There is a need in the classroom for good pacing. Good pacing in the classroom produces positive outcomes, such as holding students attention. Students who pay attention learn, and this circumvents a lot of the re-teaching that results from ineffective pace.

Another reason to think about pacing in the classroom when planning pertains to classroom management and discipline. When the pace is too fast students can get lost and frustrated and act out to express this frustration causing discipline challenges. This can happen in a class where the pace is too slow as well. Students in this case can become bored and resort to finding ways to entertain themselves, and many times others, which can be disruptive. Maintaining a steady pace that is comfortable for the majority of the class is important. With regards to new instructional material, the pace should be slower than material previously taught or that is more familiar.

The weekend teacher will have difficulty with maintaining pace in her classroom, using current trends such as the “flipped classroom” can often cut instructional time in half. Flipping the classroom and providing students with a video recorded lesson to watch at home during the week, prepares the students to engage in active discussion or projects during class time.

### **Hands-On, Books Closed**

Once the basics of holding high expectations for her students, developing a strong classroom management system, and establishing a good pace, the weekend teacher can explore ways to create an exciting interactive classroom. In fact, there are a multitude of ways the weekend schoolteacher can foster the love of Islam and learning in her classroom without the traditional lecture. Three research proven strategies such as involving students in social causes and community work to foster empathy, utilizing visual hands on activities to facilitate information acquisition, and allowing students to take ownership in what is learned in the classroom, can all help ensure success in the weekend classroom.

### An Empathetic Classroom

Understanding how to manage emotions is important for children as they grow. Setting up a classroom that fosters empathy by engaging students in community projects and discussion about world issues is an effective strategy. Many adults still struggle with being empathetic, and starting early with careful instruction is important. Elias states that it’s “understanding how to manage emotions means being able to regulate feelings so that they aid rather than impede the handling of situations” (2003). It is important to achieve this skill because before a person can build meaningful relationships with others, a person must be able to control his or her emotions. Anger, anxiety, melancholy, are all feeling that a healthy adult has learned to control. According to psychologist Abraham Maslow there is a hierarchy of basic needs necessary for every human being to positively grow until he reaches self-actualization, or finding a meaning to life that is important to that person. Maslow also lists several behaviors leading to self-actualization, and “listening to your own feelings in evaluating experiences” is one of them (McLeod, 2007).

Being able to identify with others thoughts and feelings, or showing empathy, must be fostered at an early age. Empathy is being able to feel what another feels, and the being able to step into the shoes of someone else and not think only of your needs. Showing empathy is a slowly diminishing skill in our ever-increasing narcissistic society. Media, and entertainment are large contributors to this problem. Children of today are bombarded with video games that deaden emotion and where characters are killed and resurrected, blood splatters constantly, and the goal, many times, is to achieve points through destruction of life. In the news there are stories filled with poverty and crime followed immediately by stories of well being which can give no time for the viewer to absorb the information and reflect and empathize with others.

As psychologists continue to learn more about the emotional and social development of children, it becomes more apparent that empathy is a major component of emotional intelligence. Howard Gardner, psychologist and author of *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, states that intrapersonal intelligence is the “capacity to understand the intentions, motivations, and desires of other people” (Gardner, 2011). In order to maintain healthy successful relationships at work and home a person must have empathy.

According to M.J. Elias, appreciating diversity is “understanding that individual and group differences complement one another and add strength and adaptability to the world around us”(2003). Appreciating diversity is more than recognizing and accepting diversity. Appreciation of diversity is seeing that without it, innovation ceases, and creative thought becomes limited. It’s important for a child to learn to appreciate diversity because it is essential with the increasingly global communities and workplaces.

### Graphics and Visuals

Students in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century are known to rely heavily on learning through graphics and visuals. Using videos, media, art, graphic organizers, etc. not only helps the weekend teacher deliver important information, but can help students retain information. Graphic organizers are visual tools that communicate ideas and concepts by relating the information in way that is easier for the learner to understand. This is why many teachers have opted to use graphic organizers to assist students in organizing challenging information into more easily understood relationships and /or patterns. Concept maps, Venn diagrams, flow charts, and KWL charts are a few examples of types of graphic organizers.

Before instruction, using an organizer such as a KWL chart can support the extraction of prior knowledge from students by helping to identify key concepts on a topic. Other organizers can support pre-instruction learning by setting up structure for note taking. During instruction, an organizer can give students the opportunity to process their information by organizing what they have learned to that point and then allowing them to reorganize it supporting Assimilation of information can occur after instruction and aide students in summarizing key concepts. Graphic organizers such as web organizers and sequence charts, used after instruction can help with elaborating on topics, identifying relationships and related details.

### Student Leadership

A final suggestion to overcome challenges facing the weekend teacher is to approach the class as a facilitator of learning. As mentioned earlier, student engagement is essential to learning and retaining information. An excellent way to increase student engagement is to have students take the lead as to what is learned in the Islamic Studies class. Increasing autonomy by allowing students to choose Islamic projects and topics to explore and guiding them through their exploration, can give them a sense of understanding of who they are and how to be contributing citizens in their community, their country, and globally.

### **Conclusion**

Coming to the undeniable conclusion that weekend schools hold an extremely important role within the community, the importance of supporting the weekend teacher becomes paramount. This role, held by dedicated volunteers, essentially helps to mold the character of many of our

future Islamic leaders. These students will go on to lead, not only within our Muslim communities but also beyond, sharing the knowledge acquired in their weekend classes. Yahya ibn Humayd said,

“We went to Imam Hammad ibn Salamah once and found him sitting with children narrating hadith to them. When he completed and the children left, we approached him and said, 'O Abu Salamah, we are the seniors of your tribe. We have come to you to learn. Why do you leave us and turn instead to these children?'" "He replied, 'I once saw in a dream that I was sitting on the banks of a river, bending over with a bucket to get water to drink. After drinking, I turned around and saw these children standing there, and so I gave them the bucket of water after me'" (Ibn Abee Ad-Dunya, *Kitaab al-Ayaal*).

Identifying the challenges of being a weekend teacher, and finding ways to overcome those challenges is not only essential to the success for that school year, but the success for the students in this life and the Hereafter. The Muslim youth today are the children of our communities. With practical strategies and basic training, weekend teachers can overcome the challenges faced in order to make a difference in the Muslim youth today.

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## Setting the Stage: Innovative Ideas to Encourage and Engage Learners in Arabic Class

*Amal Sakr Elhoseiny, Nacheda Baroud Tizani & Thouraya Boubetra*

### Abstract

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In an interactive session, presenters will share with participants multiple strategies in setting the stage in class, thus learners of Arabic get excited and motivated to learning from the beginning to the end of the class. In addition, presenters will engage participants in learning how to structure their classroom group activities that enable all students to actively participate in learning.

### About the Authors

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**Amal Sakr Elhoseiny** was born in Cairo, Egypt. She received a master degree in 1990 and Ph.D. degree in 1997 in German, Arabic language and literature from Cairo University in Egypt. She worked as a lecturer in the College of Education until 2000. 2000-2013, she worked as an Arabic teacher at New Horizon School Pasadena. 2004-2013, she has been the head of Arabic department in the Sunday School in the Islamic Center of Southern California. In 2014, she is the head teacher in Sunday School in the ICSC. In 2005, she participated in the translation of the national standards for Arabic. In 2005-2014, she presented in different conferences, e.g. MEC, ISNA, CAIS, SWCOLT, and ACTFL. In 2007 she attended Startalk / HADI Arabic teacher training program. In 2008-2013, she participated as a master Arabic teacher in Aldeen foundation / Startalk Student program. 2009-2013, she held the Membership Committee Chair and the Interim Vice President of the National Arabic Teacher Association. In 2010, she completed successfully the Nuraniyah method workshop that enhances learning and teaching Qur'an. 2010-2014, she taught Qur'an at New Horizon School in Pasadena. In 2013-2014 she is an executive committee member of Southern California Arabic Language Teachers Council.

**Nacheda Baroud Tizani** has a certificate in Early Childhood Education and has been teaching Arabic at New Horizon School Pasadena for the last 19 years. She worked on designing the assessment booklet of "Hayya Natakallam Maan" and formatting pictures for "Lughati Al-Islamiyya". In the past 12 years, she has been a presenter in various national conferences including: ACTFL, ISNA East, ISNA West, CAIS, NCOLCTL, NECTFL, Startalk, the Muslim Conference and the Southern California Arabic Language Teachers Council (SCATLC). She has been a master teacher, teaching Arabic for high school students, in the Aldeen Startalk summer program for the last five years. She worked with other volunteer teachers in establishing the National Arabic Teachers' Association, and is a member on the review committee for their newsletter. She is certified through the Nuraniyah method to teach the Qur'an to students. Nacheda Baroud Tizani has been sharing her experience and tools in teaching the Arabic language with Arabic teachers for sixteen years and it is her goal to work with other teachers of Arabic to enhance teaching the Arabic language.

**Thouraya Boubetra** graduated from Algiers University with a Bachelor's degree in Arabic Language and Literature. She worked as a journalist in a daily and weekly newspaper in Algeria

and Lebanon, and as an Arabic Language teacher in Lebanon and New Horizon School Pasadena. Thouraya also worked with the Bureau of Islamic and Arabic Education (BIAE) to improve the Arabic Language teaching by preparing supplementary material for teachers. She has contributed to the development of the Hayya Natakalam Ma'an Program as a curriculum reviewer.

Since 2010, she has served as the Online Arabic Education Director at Aldeen Foundation, and worked also as the Online Coordinator for the Aldeen - STARTALK summer program. She is serving currently as an executive committee member in the Arabic Teacher Council of southern California, founded by Qatar Foundation. She is an interim board member and the executive editor of the newsletter for the National Arabic Teachers Association. Thouraya is an active board member in several educational and non-profit organizations. Her goal at all times has been to help provide Arabic teachers with the most recent strategies and effective techniques in teaching Arabic as a foreign language, and to promote the importance of professional networking among Arabic teachers

Setting the Stage: Innovative Ideas to Encourage and Engage Learners in Arabic Class

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## أبواب مجلة الرابطة

كلمة ال عدد بساط الريح

المصباح السحري ألف فكرة وفكرة

سؤال وجواب ج سور لغوية

بهارات عربية الحمام الزاجل

الدقائق الخمس الأخيرة فرسان اللغة

خير الكلام دعوة لقهوة عربية

## محتوى أبواب المجلة

- ❖ معلومات نظرية عن تعلم اللغة العربية كلغة أجنبية
- ❖ معلومات عن ورشات عمل ومؤتمرات تهتم باللغة العربية
- ❖ أنشطة متنوعة تتوافق مع المعايير الوطنية للغة العربية
- ❖ أنشطة تواصلية تعزز المهارات اللغوية الأربع
  - ❖ أنشطة تناسب مع التمايز اللغوي للطلاب
  - ❖ أنشطة تعتمد على استخدام التكنولوجيا في

## نشاط: لعبة تراثية «فتحي يا وردة .. غمضي يا وردة»

- مس توى الكفاءة: مبتدى - متوسط
- المعايير: التواصل - الثقافات
- المهارات: الكلام
- الزمن المقترح: 3-5 دقائق
- المادة اللازمة: بطاقات (صور أفعال) - عصي لأسماء الطلاب - كوب
- أهداف النشاط: مراجعة الأفعال - الحصول على معلومات

## خطوات النشاط

- اكتب أسماء طلابك على عصي وضعها في كوب.
- اجمع صور الأفعال المعروفة لدى طلابك على بطاقات.
- ضع البطاقات على الأرض دون أن يراها الطلاب.
- اطلب من طلابك أن يوقفوا في دائرة حول البطاقات.
- اسحب اسمًا من أسماء الطلاب.
- اطلب من الطلاب أن يسألوا «من في الوردة» وليكن «آدم».
- يوقف آدم في وسط الدائرة ويتناول بطاقة من البطاقات من على الأرض.
- ابدأ بالغناء مع الطلاب «فتحي يا وردة غمضي يا وردة»
- اطلب من الطلاب سؤال آدم " ماذا تفعل يا آدم / تفعلين يا ...؟
- اطلب من آدم أن يسحب اسمًا جديدًا فيسأل الطلاب «من في الوردة؟».
- وهكذا تستمر اللعبة حتى نهاية الوقت.

## نشاط: اللوح الذكي

- مستوى الكفاءة: متوسط
- المعايير: التواصل – المجتمعات
- المهارات: الكلام - الكتابة
- الزمن المقترح: 15-20 دقيقة
- المادة اللازمة: اللوح الذكي – حاسوب – ورقة مقواة – مقص – صمغ – ورقة الصور - ألوان
- أهداف النشاط: تحفيز الطلاب على تكوين جمل لسرد أحداث القصة أو ابتكار غيرها

## خطوات النشاط

- استخدم صور القصة أو الدرس أو غيرها من الصور.
- مراجعة المفردات.
- عين طالباً ليحرك الصور على اللوح الذكي مكوناً جملة.
- امنح فرصاً لعدة طلاب.
- أعط ورقة الصور والورقة المقروءة لكل طالب.
- اطلب من الطلاب تلوين وقص ولصق الصور لتكوين جمل.
- اطلب من الطلاب تقديم جملهم لأصدقائهم.
- اطلب من الطلاب كتابة الجمل (للمستوى المتوسط).
- أرسل الورقة إلى البيت ليشارك الطالب أسرته.

## نشاط: الفن التصوري

- مستوى الكفاءة: متوسط - متقدم
- المعايير: التواصل - المجتمعات
- المهارات: الكلام - الكتابة
- الزمن المقترح: 135 دقيقة أو أكثر
- المادة اللازمة: «ورقة أسئلة» - حاسوب - رابط إلكتروني
- <http://www.fotor.com/features/collage.html>
- أهداف النشاط: تحفيز الطلاب على الكلام باستخدام التكنولوجيا

## خطوات النشاط

- دليل الفن التصويري <http://www.fotor.com/features/collage.html> Fotor :
- افتح Fotor اختر collage
- اختر طريقتك في صنع الكولاج (قالب، خياطة الصورة، المونتاج أو الكولاج غير التقلدي).
- اجمع صورك المختارة.
- اسحب كل صورة وضعها في الفضاء الخاص بك واتركها.
- اضبط اللون والحدود والحجم وقرب زوايا الصور إن أردت.
- اكتب ما تريده وحركه إلى المكان المناسب.
- احفظ المشروع أو أرسله لصديق.
- اكتب فقرة من 60 كلمة عن عطلتك/ رحلتك ...

## نشاط: صندوق الحكايات

- مستوى الكفاءة: متوسط
- المعايير: التواصل – الوثقافات
- المهارات: الكلام – الكتابة
- الزمن المقترح: 5-10 دقائق
- المادة اللازمة: صندوق مزين – بطاقات – صور – مجسمات
- أهداف النشاط: مراجعة المفردات والتراكيب أثناء تَأليف الحكاية

## خطوات النشاط

- أحضر صن دوقاً.
- أطلب من الطلاب تزيين الصندوق.
- ضع صوراً أو مجسمات في الصندوق.
- اختر شخصية معينة وابدأ الحكاية: «كان يا مكان في قديم الزمان ولد اسمه رامي / ...»
- اطلب من أحد الطلاب أن يأخذ شيئاً من الصندوق ويكمل سرد الحكاية.
- اختر طالباً آخر ليأخذ شيئاً من الصندوق ويستمر في سرد الحكاية.
- وكرر هذا حتى نهاية الحكاية.
- اطلب من أحد الطلاب أن يكتب ما يسمع إليه من أحداث

## نشاط: شجرة الكلمات

- مستوى الكفاءة: متوسط - متقدم
- المعايير: التواصل
- المهارات: الكتابة
- الزمن المقترح: 5-10 دقائق
- المادة اللازمة: بطاقات - أقلام ملونة - أوراق كبيرة مرسوم عليها أشجار وجذور
- أهداف النشاط: إثراء الحصيلة اللغوية بالمفردات والمشترقات

## خطوات النشاط

- اكتب جزوراً لغوية على بطاقات.
- ضع الطلاب في مجموعات.
- اطلب من كل مجموعة أن تختار بطاقة.
- اطلب من الطلاب إيجاد أكبر عدد ممكن من المشتقات لهذا الجذر.
- اطلب من الطلاب كتابة الكلمات على الشجرة.
- عين وقتاً للقيام بهذا النشاط.
- تفوز المجموعة التي لديها أكبر عدد صحيح من المشتقات.

## خير الكلام

هذا الباب يتناول نصوصاً أصيلة تتنوع

مصايرها، منها:

أ



أ



الشعراء: على سبيل المثال: (نزار قباني –

(محمود درويش – فخري البارودي

أ



اللغة العربية المختلطة، منها: نشيد بلاد

## نشاط: دورة حياة الماء

- مستوى الكفاءة: متوسط – متقدم
- المعايير: التواصل – الربط (العلوم) - المجتمعات
- المهارات: الكلام – القراءة والفهم
- الزمن المقترح: 90 دقيقة أو أكثر
- المادة اللازمة: بطاقات – صور – كتاب علوم / حاسوب
- أهداف النشاط: الحصول على معلومات عن موضوع النشاط: مفردات - تراكيب

## خطوات النشاط (1)

- مهد لموضوع النشيد بطرح عدة أسئلة عن الماء بشكل عام.
- قدم المفردات والأفعال مستعيناً بصور توضيحية لدورة حياة الماء في كتاب العلوم/ الشبكة المعلوماتية.
- اكتب المفردات الجديدة على بطاقات واطلب من الطلاب رسم صوراً لها.
- اكتب جملاً تبين مراحل دورة حياة الماء على مجموعات من البطاقات.
- كون مجموعات من الطلاب وأعط لكل مجموعة منهم البطاقات.
- حدد زمناً واطلب منهم ترتيب مراحل دورة حياة الماء.
- اقرأ النشيد، وأسمع الطلاب الأغنية باستعمال الرابط
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SrEZV31Hyas>
- اطلب من الطلاب الاستماع إلى النشيد في البيت ليألفوا الموسيقى ورسم صورة توضيحية شاملة لهذه المراحل.

الاسم: \_\_\_\_\_  
 اقرأ/ اقترني الجمل الآتية عن دورة حياة الماء، ثم اترنم/ اترني صرورة من البرقة:

شمس - ماء البحر - بخار الماء - سحب أبيض - سحب رمادي - هواء - برق -  
 رعد - مطر - قوس قزح


الاسم: \_\_\_\_\_  
 اقرأ/ اقترني الجمل الآتية عن دورة حياة الماء، ثم اترنم/ اترني صرورة من البرقة:

**Read the following sentences about the water drop cycle, and then put them in order:**

- بعء ذلك بي سقظ المظر على الأرض.
- ثم نرى البرق في السماء.
- الهواء يحررك السحاب من مكان إلى مكان.
- بخار الماء يعلو في السماء ويكوّن السحاب.
- السحاب الرمادي ثقيل جداً.
- فَيَسْرِبُ الْإِنْسَانُ وَالْحَيَوَانُ وَالنباتُ الماءَ الْعَذْبَ.
- الشمس حارة جداً، هي تسخن ماء البحر وتحوّله إلى بخار الماء.
- ونسمع بعءه صوت الرعد ياتي من السماء.

## خطوات النشاط (2)

- وزع ورقة النشاط على الطلاب واطلب منهم قراءته في مجموعات صغرى.
- اطرح أسئلة المضمون (المتنوعة) من، ماذا، بماذا، لماذا، هل، أين، إلى أين، متى، كيف...؟)
- اكتب الإجابات على السبورة مع التصويب الجماعي.
- اطلب منهم تحديد المفردات والأفعال التي تبين مراحل دورة حياة الماء وتسلسلها في النشاط.
- اطلب منهم أن يكملوا ما ناقص من هذا النشاط.
- اطلب منهم المساعدة في ابتكار حركات إيقاعية بسبب أثناء غنائهم هذا النشاط في اليوم العربي.
- يمكن استعمال الورق المقوى، لتحضري تصميم جميل لقطرات الماء، وتزيينها وتلوونها، باللون المفضي للامع.

## نشيد «المطر»

سلسلة دوحه النشيد / الطفل والبحر - كلمات سليم عبد القادر - ألحان خالد جنون -  
إنتاج سنا للإنتاج والنشر والتوزيع - ص ب: 34703 - 31478 المملكة العربية  
السعودية  
حفنة ماء

طارَتْ خَلْفَ طُيُورِ الْمَاءِ	حَفْنَةُ مَاءِ ذَاتِ مَسَاءِ
حَتَّى ضَاعَتْ فِي الْأَجْوَاءِ	قَدْ وَدَّعَتِ الْبَحْرَ وَطَارَتْ
لَيْسَتْ تَدْرِي أَيْنَ سَتَمْضِي	صَارَتْ سُحْبًا فَوْقَ الْأَرْضِ
مِنْ رِقَّتِهَا أَخَذَتْ تَبْكِي	عَنْ قِصَّتِهَا رَاحَتْ تَحْكِي

\*\*\*

## نشاط: استماع وفهم ومحادثة

- مستوى الكفاءة: متقدم
- المعايير: التواصل، الثقافات، المقارنات
- المهارات: الاستماع والفهم - الكلام
- الزمن المقترح: 50-60 دقيقة
- المادة اللازمة: مقتطفات من فيلم **(كليلة ودمنة/ مقدمة الكتاب لابن المقفع)**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZgGx7Y9Uiso>

- أهداف النشاط: فهم الفكرة الرئيسية ومعظم التفاصيل ومن أقشة المشاهد والإدلاء بالآراء والدفاع عنها

## ما قبل النشاط:

### البحث عن معلومات عن عبد الله ابن المقفع

في كتاب «كليلة ودمنة» - الموسوعة - الشبكة  
المعلوماتية

- كاتب عربي من أصل فارسي
- وُلِدَ فِي عَامِ 720 م وَتُوفِّيَ فِي عَامِ 756 م
- تَرَجَّمَ كُتُبًا عَدِيدَةً مِنَ اللُّغَةِ الْفَارْسِيَّةِ إِلَى اللُّغَةِ الْعَرَبِيَّةِ، وَتُعَدُّ تَرَجَمَاتُهُ آيَةً فِي الْبَلَاغَةِ الْعَرَبِيَّةِ الَّتِي تُوصَفُ بِالسَّهْلِ الْمَمْتَنِعِ
- أَمَّا تَرَجَمَتُهُ كِتَابَ «كَلِيلَةِ وَدَمْنَةَ» وَلَقَدْ انْتَقَدَ الْكَاتِبُ مِنْ خَلَالِهِ النُّظْمَ السَّاسِيَّةَ وَالْاجْتِمَاعِيَّةَ فِي الْعَصْرِ الْعَبَّاسِيِّ (750 م - 1258 م)

## خطوات النشاط

- مهد لموضوع الفيلم بطرح عدة أسئلة عن الحكام بشكل عام.
- بعد مشاهدة المشهد الأول : اطلب من الطلاب مناقشة المضمون مع تحديد ردود أفعال أفراد المجتمع المختلفة حيال ظلم الحاكم .
- بعد مشاهدة المشهد الثاني : اطلب من الطلاب مناقشة المضمون مع تحديد دور المعلم ، بالإضافة إلى ذكر ردود أفعالهم الشخصية في حالة قيامهم بدور المعلم في هذا المشهد .
- بعد مشاهدة المشهد الثالث : اطلب من الطلاب مناقشة المضمون مع تقييم ما فعل الفيل ورد فعل القبرة .
- اطلب من الطلاب الكتابة عن شعورهم تجاه حال القبرة بعد أن فقدت بيضها أو تجاه الحيلة التي اتبعتها للتغلب على الفيل .

**(تعليقات) « 1 »**  
**دور الشَّعْبِ وَالْمَحْكُومِينَ**  
 • **صَفَّ رَدَّ فِعْلٍ أَفْرَادِ الشَّعْبِ**  
**فِي هَذَا الْمَقْطَعِ!**  
 • **مَعَ مَنْ تَتَّفِقُ وَمَعَ مَنْ**  
**تَخْتَلِفُ؟ وَلِمَ إِذَا؟**

## تعلیمات ( «2» ) دور المعلم

• ناقش دور المعلم في هذا المقطع!

• ماذا ستفعل إذا لعبت دور المعلم في هذا المجتمع؟ ولم إذا؟

## تعلیمات ( «3» ) القُبْرَة والفيل

• ما رأيك في ما فعل الفيل؟

• كيف تغلّبت القُبْرَة على ه؟

## تعليمات ( «4» ) بطاقة الخروج من الصف

- صف شعورك في نهاية هذا المقطع حيث كان واضحاً كيف أن التعاون بين الضعاف في المجتمع يساعدهم في حل مشكلهم أو التغلب علىها.

### كيف نشأت فكرة تأسيس

كيف نشأت فكرة تأسيس الرابطة الوطنية لمعلمي اللغة...

### الرابطة الوطنية لمعلمي اللغة العربية؟

- سنة التأسيس 2008.
- مجموعة من المعلمين والمعلمات، والإداريين من ذوي الخبرة على تعليم اللغة العربية في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية، ومن مستويات تعليمية مختلفة، ومن مدارس خاصة ومدارس حكومية.

## أهداف الرابطة

- ❖ التواصل.
- ❖ التعاون وتبادل الأفكار.
- ❖ التطور الجماعي (أثر عميق وطويل المدى) مقابل التطور الفردي (ضعيف/ محدود الأثر).

منكم وإليكم

## منكم وإليكم

- ما هي احتياجات معلمي اللغة العربية؟

مصدر الأنشطة المقدمة في هذه المحاضرة

**www.nationalataonline.org**



**الرابطة الوطنية لمعلمي اللغة العربية**

**National Arabic Teachers Association**

تواصل معنا: **nationalata@gmail.com**

مراجع

- <http://www.fotor.com/features/collage.html>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SrEZV31Hyas>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZgGx7Y9Uiso>
- <http://www.al-fateh.net/fateh-d/fa-09-158/kitab.htm>

## **Biological Evolution: Wading into the Controversy- Strategies for Teaching Muslim Students and Islamizing Lessons**

*Khadija E. Fouad*

### **Abstract**

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Biological evolution is an important part of science standards, but teaching evolution presents challenges in the context of Islamic school classrooms. It is important to teach the meaning and uses of scientific theories to avoid misconceptions about nature of science that could interfere with learning. In order to make evolution more relevant to Muslim students, they can be introduced to scientists from Islam's Golden Age, such as al Jahiz, whose ideas on evolution were known in Darwin's time, or to modern Muslim evolutionary biologists, such as Ehad Abouheif, who studies evolution in ants, and Fatimah Jackson, who studies human evolution.

### **About the Author**

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**Khadija E. Fouad** is currently a graduate student at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana pursuing a PhD in science education. Her research interests include using history of science to teach nature of science, professional development of science teachers for inquiry and nature of science, and including science from Islam's Golden Age in science curricula. She taught science for three years at Islamic elementary and middle schools and for 10 years in public high schools. She is currently supervising pre-service teachers in their field placements, and has taught classroom management and scientific inquiry, and assisted in teaching secondary science methods.

## **Biological Evolution: Wading into the Controversy-Strategies for Teaching Muslim Students and Islamizing Lessons**

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### **Statement of Problem**

Biological evolution is an important part of the Framework for K-12 Science Education (NRC, 2012). According to the framework, elementary school students should examine the fossil record and learn how organisms of the past were adapted to their environments. In middle and high school, students are expected to understand natural selection as a mechanism for producing organisms that are adapted to their respective environments. In the 21st century a firm grasp on evolution is important in applying scientific knowledge in medical and biomedical sciences and in epidemiology. For example, understanding of how pathogens evolve aids scientists in formulating effective vaccines to combat disease outbreaks.

When it comes to teaching evolution, misconceptions about the nature of science itself can interfere with student learning. As religious people, we value knowledge based on revelation. The scientific community values knowledge based on empirical evidence and uses this knowledge to construct theories which explain the workings of the natural world. In the science classroom, it is important to distinguish between the two types of knowledge. Knowledge from

revelation can lead us to absolute truth. Knowledge from scientific inquiry leads to theories which can be useful in helping us understand the natural world. Scientific knowledge does not lead to truth, but rather to utility. It is not important whether theories are true in any absolute sense, but rather whether they are useful in solving scientific problems. Problems arise in teaching science in general, and evolution in particular, when we lose sight of the fact that scientific theories are not meant to be true in any absolute sense, but rather that they are intended to provide the best explanation for empirical evidence. As new information and new ways of interpreting information arise, our theories may change. As such, we can consider scientific theories to be tentative, even though they are reliable in the sense that they are based on empirical data.

Although biological evolution is an important biological concept, it can be challenging to teach because some students may be resistant to accepting it based on the mistaken notion that there is a conflict between the theory of evolution and their religious beliefs. This paper outlines some strategies designed to make evolution accessible to Islamic school students.

### **Review of Literature**

Clough (1994) made a series of recommendations for teaching evolution. He noted that students often harbor misconceptions about the nature of science which can interfere with learning evolution. Therefore he recommends teaching the scientific meaning of a “theory” as an explanatory framework scientists use to predict and explain. Teachers should stress a functional understanding of the theory of evolution as something that works to move research in science and medicine forward. To avoid creating opposition to the scientific ideas that are being presented he recommends treating students’ views with respect, even if they harbor misconceptions.

Dagher and BouJaoude (1997) agree that nature of science should be emphasized to address misconceptions both from those who reject evolution because it’s “only a theory” and from those who accept it because it’s a “fact.” They also agree that it is important to respect students’ ideas, and recommend that students be allowed to air their views in a non-judgmental atmosphere. They caution against the teacher taking a neutral stance towards evolution, because this will lead to students learning it only because it is required, rather than because they value it as potentially useful knowledge. This could lead to compartmentalizing their knowledge on evolution, rather than integrating it so that it could be fully used.

Asghar (2013) noted that teachers themselves may have inadequate understandings of both evolution and nature of science. In order for them to be effective as teachers of biological evolution, she recommended that professional development be used to enhance their skills.

### **Methods**

There are several methods that Islamic school teachers can use to make connections between Islam and evolution. One important method is to use Quranic verses on creation. It is easy for teachers to locate pertinent verses, but it is quite difficult for them to find guidance on how to effectively apply these to science lessons. Because science and religion approach nature from different aspects, the Quran should not be used to “prove” or “disprove” current scientific theories. Rather, Quranic verses should be used to help students in stepping back and reflecting

on the natural world and its implications for their moral and ethical behavior. They can also be used to inspire awe and gratitude for the Creator who produced the natural world they are studying in science class.

Another important method for Islamizing science lessons is to connect the science concepts with the work of Muslim scientists. Scientists from Islam's Golden age had conceptions of evolution which students can explore to provide a historical perspective. Their work was commonly known in the West at the time Darwin's theory was introduced. For example, al Jahiz wrote in his Book of Animals, "Animals engage in a struggle for existence, and for resources, to avoid being eaten, and to breed...Environmental factors influence organisms to develop new characteristics to ensure survival, thus transforming them into new species. Animals that survive to breed can pass on their successful characteristics to their offspring" (Masood, 2009).

Important connections can also be made to present-day Muslim evolutionary biologists. For example, Ehab Abouheif, carries out research on the evolution of ants at McGill University. His research team found "supersoldier" ants with unusually large heads in an ant colony. It turned out that they were ancestral throwbacks, like chickens with teeth or humans with tails. By studying these unusual ants, they were able to shed some light on how ants are prepared for different roles in the colony.

Professor Abouheif made some comments on the importance of studying evolution in an interview for Forbes (Farrell, 2012). He stated, "There's a lot at stake here...because it's well beyond evolution. If it's not about the evidence, if you reject science, if you reject evolution as a science and you're not willing to listen to evidence, then that means that for all of science, when it comes into contact with sociological, political conflicts, then you won't believe it either." He also stressed the importance of Muslims studying evolution so that the Muslim world could become innovators in science and technology, and not just consumers.

Fatimah Jackson, a professor of biological anthropology at the University of North Carolina, works on human evolution. Salman Hameed (2013), a researcher who studies Muslims and evolution described her as follows:

Fatimah Jackson, an African American convert to Islam, is professor of biological anthropology at the University of North Carolina. Her research focuses on anthropological genetics and human biological and biocultural variability. She knew and taught evolution before her conversion to Islam in the 1970s and has never considered the two to be in conflict. She took the position that science only tells us "how" things happen, and not "why".

Muslim evolutionary scientists, such as Professor Jackson and Professor Abouheif can provide role models for Muslims students, both as examples of practicing Muslims scientists and as people who have successfully negotiated the relationship between science and religion in their lives.

In order to effectively teach evolutionary biology, educators should understand these concepts, and have access to excellent, standards-based teaching resources. Resources for teaching and learning evolution can be found on the Understanding Evolution website, <http://evolution.berkeley.edu/>. One of the best resources for nature of science is Project ICAN

on this website <http://msed.iit.edu/projectican/>. Both evolution and nature of science are addressed on this website for teachers <http://www.indiana.edu/~ensiweb/>.

### **Recommendations of Practical Implementation**

In order to facilitate Muslim students' learning of biological evolution, it is important to take their own conceptions into account in a respectful atmosphere where students feel comfortable sharing their views. It is also important to keep in mind that many of them will have misconceptions about nature of science which could interfere with their learning. Therefore, attention should be given to helping students understand the role and uses of scientific theories, and the manner in which scientists refine and change theories in light of new evidence.

The interest of Muslim students in evolutionary biology can be raised by introducing them to Muslim evolutionary scientists of the past and present. They can also serve as positive examples of practicing Muslims working as scientists who successfully integrate science and religion in their own lives and world views.

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## Teaching Science from an Islamic Perspective: Mastering Science Education

*Muzaffar Iqbal*

### Abstract

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Teaching science from an Islamic perspective requires (i) a re-assessment of the object of study—the natural world—from an Islamic perspective; (ii) integration of the Qur’anic worldview and Islamic scientific tradition at three different levels of teaching: primary; middle school and high school. All three levels are discussed.

The first part of this paper provides basic principles and background to teaching of science; the second part goes on to provide practical suggestions at three levels of science teaching.

### About the Author

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### Teaching Science from an Islamic Perspective: Mastering Science Education

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***O humankind! Recall the blessings, which Allah has bestowed upon you! Is there any creator, other than Allah, who can provide for your sustenance out of heaven and earth? There is no deity save Him; and yet, how turned away you are! (Q 35:3)***

**Summary of the presentation:**

Today, there is no place on earth where the enterprise of science is rooted in the Islamic view of the physical world. The physical world—which science studies systematically and in an accumulative manner, through a continuous and sustained process building on the work of previous generations, resulting in testable explanations and reliable knowledge which can be duplicated anywhere—can be conceived in many different ways, but all such approaches fold into two primary categories: (i) a theistic conception, involving a single Creator who brought the world into existence from non-existence; and (ii) a conception in which there is no room for a Creator, or which conceives the created world to be caused by more than one creator. These two categories are independent of time and place as well as of the person who conceives them.

The way we understand the physical world has far-reaching implications for science, for not only the “how” but also the “why” of science is governed by this basic framework. Since this primary conception determines how and why we do science, it also, therefore, governs, in various ways, institutions of scientific research, relationships between members of the scientific community and organizations, science policies, funding for science, the manner, and extent to which scientific knowledge is shared, and other aspects related to the enterprise of science. Since the enterprise of science, as it now exists, is also umbilically linked to technology, power, money, politics, defense, wars of aggression, and a multibillion-dollar industrial complex, this initial understanding of the physical world also has a direct relationship with all of these aspects of the contemporary world.

Teaching of science at any level is dependent on teachers’ understanding of the (i) physical world—the subject of science; (ii) the enterprise of science, which includes history of science; philosophy of science, and several other areas related to the vast and complex thing called “science”. These include sociology, politics, and economics of science.

**Conceptualizing the Physical World:**

The object of study of science, the physical world, is all that exists in and around us. If conceived theistically, we immediately encounter two fundamental questions: the *raison d’être* of its creation and our relationship with it. The teacher needs to have a very clear understanding of these two aspects of the object of study.

One must note that there is no logical necessity for these questions to arise in the case of a non-theistic conception: in the absence of a singular, unique and one Creator, the natural world simply exists by itself, needing neither a *raison d’être* for its existence, nor an agency to manage and govern it: it simply is. Human beings and all other creatures can come and go, but it remains and all who come and go can only have transitory relations

with it.

An Islamic understanding of the natural world stems from the following fundamental Qur'ānic concepts:

- (i) The natural world is a creation of Allah, whose Most Beautiful Names (*al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*) include *al-Khāliq* (the Creator), *al-Bārī*<sup>2</sup> (the Originator), and *al-Muṣawwir* (the Shaper and Fashioner of forms). The natural world came into existence through a simple command, *Kun (Be)*.<sup>1</sup>
- (ii) The Qur'ānic creation theme, let us note, includes the physical as well as non-physical worlds—all ontologically linked and existentially dependent upon God.<sup>2</sup> This intrinsic nexus between various levels of existence transforms the multiplicity of appearances into a unity. The ultimate foundation of their interrelatedness at the level of cosmic existence is their ontological dependence on God. Hence the world of nature is related to all other levels of creation. This common ontological foundation made it possible for the Islamic scientific tradition to forge links and share a language of discourse with other disciplines of knowledge which were all arranged in a hierarchy.
- (iii) The unity of existence is a recurrent theme of the Qur'ān which relates it to its central concept of *Tawḥīd*, the Unicity of God. Thus linked ontologically with the realm of the divine, the realm of nature becomes more than the mere physical entity that it is; it becomes a sign (*āya*, pl. *āyāt*), pointing to a transcendent reality beyond itself. This transcendence is semantically linked to the verses of the Qur'an which are also called *āyāt*. But this elegant nexus between the world of nature and the word of God is much more than mere semantics; it is an essential feature of the Qur'ānic metaphysics of nature which establishes an inalienable link between various levels of created things by relating them to an All-Encompassing (*al-Muḥṣin*) and All-Knowing (*al-ʿAlīm*) God who is above and beyond all human conceptions; His transcendence can only be defined *via negativa*, by erasing from the mind any impurity foreign to the idea of pure divinity (*ul-ḥya*). It is through this intense and systematic weeding out of every description, adjective (*ṣifa*), and image (*ṣura*) suspected of directing our understanding (*maʿrifā*) or imagination (*wahm*) to a created object (*shayʾ*, pl. *ashyāʾ*) other than God that we can arrive at the Qur'ānic conception of the Creator: He is not like anything,<sup>3</sup> neither engendering nor engendered.<sup>4</sup> All that God has us know positively about Himself is His singular uniqueness, His extreme remoteness from everything else.

1. Q. 36:81.

2. The Qur'ān speaks of God as being the Sustainer (*Rabb*) and Owner (*Mālik*) of all the Worlds. Q. 1:1; 2:131; 5:28; 6:45; 6:162; 7:54, 61, 67, 104, 121; 10:10, 37; 26:16, 23, 47, 77, 98, 109, 127, 145, 164, 180, 192; 27:8, 44; 28:30; 32:2; 37:87, 182; 39:75; 40:64 to 66; 41:9; 43:46; 45:36; 56:80; 59:16; 69:43; 81:29; 83:6.

3. Q. 42:11: *Laysa ka-mithlih<sup>o</sup> shayʾun* (Nothing is like unto Him).

4. S<sub>ra</sub> 112 of the Qur'ān contains, in a highly condensed form, this definition *via negativa*: *Say: He is Allah, the One; Allah—the Everlasting (al-ʿamad); neither engendering nor engendered; and none is His equal.*

- (iv) Since all things exist through and because of God, their ontological dependence on the Creator simultaneously ennobles them by raising their status from being mere things to signs ( $t \rightarrow y \rightarrow t$ ) of a transcendent Real (*al- $\mu$ qq*), who, nevertheless, remains beyond them. Thus rather than being mere dialectical utterances, the “sign verses”<sup>5</sup> of the Qur $\uparrow$  $\rightarrow$ n have an irresistible urgency which draws our attention to that which lies beyond the phenomena being mentioned. It is this ennoblement that makes the rhythmic alteration of the day and the night<sup>6</sup> and the regularities in the movement of the sun, which *traverses its course by the decree of the All-Knowing; and the moon—[for which God] has made stations [to traverse], till it becomes like an old [and withered] stalk of date-palm.*<sup>7</sup>
- (v) The Qur $\uparrow$  $\rightarrow$ n asserts that commonly observable natural phenomena, such as the orderly movement of the planets, are, in fact, due to the design of the Creator. It draws the attention of its readers to the fact that *the sun does not catch up to the moon and the night cannot outstrip the day; [rather] each revolve in their own orbit,*<sup>8</sup> and asserts that this is not merely the result of certain laws of nature, rather these are “signs” for those who reflect. In fact, the concept of “Laws of Nature”, independent of a Law-Giver, is essentially a secular concept because it makes “nature” a law-giver; in Islam, the authority to make laws rests with God alone.
- (vi) Thus seen from within the Islamic tradition, sciences which explore various aspects of the natural world actually explore one aspect of the Qur $\uparrow$  $\rightarrow$ nic cosmos. This cosmos is made up of both the physical as well as non-physical beings according to a grand scheme, conceived and executed by the Creator. The ultimate destination of this created cosmos is a secret that God shares with none.
- (vii) However, the Qur $\uparrow$  $\rightarrow$ n insists that humans discover the modalities through which nature works. It draws attention to the regularities, beneficence and design of various observable natural processes through concrete examples drawn from the world of nature. These processes fall in the domain of various scientific disciplines such as astronomy, physics, mathematics, geology and botany. But when studied in their proper metaphysical context, these processes become means to gain knowledge of that which lies beyond the laws that govern them. This Qur $\uparrow$  $\rightarrow$ nic invitation to reflect on these natural processes is repeated with such urgency that the spatiotemporal plane which contains the world of nature seems to form the very background of the Qur $\uparrow$  $\rightarrow$ nic universe.<sup>9</sup>

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5. So called because of a refrain that occurs in these verses in various forms such as: *And in this is the sign for those who reflect* (Q. 16:11), or *And in this is the sign for those who listen* (Q. 16:65).

6. Q. 2:164.

7. Q. 33:38-9.

8. Q. 33:40.

9. These so-called scientific verses of the Qur $\uparrow$  $\rightarrow$ n have been the subject of a large number of modern scientific commentaries. The Egyptian exegete  $\square$ anti $\rightarrow$ w $\circ$ Jawhar $\circ$  (1862-1940) claimed to have counted all the verses which refer to natural phenomena; he fixed this number at 750 (with many others having indirect relevance to the

- (viii) These intrinsic links make the high drama of creation, existence and the moral response to revelation out of human volition an integrated whole uniquely anchored in the metaphysical realm though operating in a historical setting. But it must be understood that this varied data—ranging from the natural to the historical—that the Qurʾān presents to its faithful reader is not without an internal plan. This concentrated disposition of material permits the directing thought to shine forth from behind the broad narrative at every instance, from the implicit to the explicit; it emerges by itself, like a design in the midst of the weave; this was one of the most immediate facts recognized by the first Arabs who heard this unearthly text which was neither poetry nor prose but which transcended both. It was this narrative par excellence that would provide pattern to the theologians for fashioning their dialectical process (*al-ʿarqa jadaliyya*) which starts with a positive hierarchy, established *a priori* between the two facts considered (*taqaddum, afʿaliyya*). It passes from the “trunk” to the “branch” (*farʿ*), and concludes *a fortiori*. And it brings back the solution of new question to that of the general problem thus resolved (*radd al-ghayb ila al-shahid*). This method, so poignantly used by the Qurʾān,<sup>10</sup> was taken as a standard and employed by al-Shāfiʿī, (*burhān inn ʿistidlāl*, deduction), Ibn ʿanbal and others who showed that the meaning (*maʿnā*) of the root (*a-l*) had to coincide in every way with the meaning of the branch, so that the deduction might be valid. These linkages become immediately apparent when the sign verses are seen in the context of the creation theme of the Qurʾān—a context that provides us a fundamental framework of inquiry for what Nasr has called the religious order of nature.<sup>11</sup>
- (ix) This physical cosmos observes a Divine Law just as humans are supposed to. Thus, the Qurʾān tells us about the revelation sent to the bee (Q. 16:68); it mentions the submission of the heavens and the earth to God (Q. 41:11); it celebrates the glorification of God by all that exists in nature (Q. 59:1; 61:1; 62:1; 64:1); it unifies the whole of creation in a grand order and establishes the source and origin of that order and then, in a sweeping manner, states that all of this is destined to exist merely for a short duration after which all will perish—that is, all except God. This emphasis on the transient nature of the created world reverberates throughout the Qurʾānic text as a reminder that none other than God is to be worshipped, for all except Him are mere creatures who owe their existence to His Will.
- (x) Within this broad creation theme, the sign verses of the Qurʾān establish a nexus between the physical cosmos and the metaphysical realm by making the physical

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physical universe). He also compared this number to the verses pertaining to legal matters which were “no more than 150”. This is, however, highly problematic. See chapter ten for more details.

10. For example, Q. 14:24: *Hast not thou seen how Allah sets forth a parable that a good word is like a good tree, whose roots are firm and its branches [extend] to the sky; it brings forth its fruits all the time, by its Sustainer’s leave; Allah sets this parable for people that perchance they may be mindful.*

11. This subject was the central theme of Nasr’s 1994 Cadbury Lectures at the University of Birmingham. Published in 1996 as *Religion and the Order of Nature*, Oxford University Press, New York.

entity a projection of the unseen wherein resides its sustaining and governing principle. A fundamental characteristic of these verses is that they do not *always* refer to the natural phenomena; historical events are also spoken of as signs with the same rhetorical embellishment and with the same urgency that is characteristic of those verses which mention natural phenomenon.<sup>12</sup> This establishes a further link, this time with the temporal realm and completes the spatiotemporal domain that is the necessary condition of existence.

- (xi) Thus the natural world is placed in a created order in space and time. But then these verses make a metaphysical leap into the very heart of the Qurḥ→nic message: the unique Oneness of the Creator: *Is He not the One who made the earth a stable abode and created rivers flowing through it, the Qurban asks rhetorically, [the One who] created the mountains therein and created a barrier between the two seas? Is there, then, another god than Allah? Yet, most of them do not know.*<sup>13</sup> In addition, in the general sweep of its narrative, the Qurḥ→n mentions the rain-bearing clouds and vegetation kingdom; it specifically cites the case of “dead earth” which is revived by God after it has been dead.<sup>14</sup>
- (xii) The Qurḥ→nic creation theme specifies the Divine realms and then unites all forms and levels of existence into one organic whole. This unity is then projected on to the human intellect (*fahm*, *ḥaql*) which is endowed with the power to comprehend that which lies beyond the realm of the five internal senses: *hiss mushtrik* (the sense that gathers all impressions); *khayt→l* (knowledge of the sensient kind); *wt→shima* (perception of particular significations: evaluative, estimative); *ḥt→fi□a* (sensitive memory) and *mutakhayyila* (intellective reason). This characteristic is what distinguishes humans (*ins*, sing. *inst→n*) from other created beings—an ability acquired through the knowledge given to Adam, the first human being.

This knowledge was bestowed upon Adam by none other than the Creator Himself, by teaching him names, *asmt→ḥ*. Created on the best of patterns (*f°aḥsan al-taqw°m*),<sup>15</sup> from a clot of blood,<sup>16</sup> externally a body (*jism*), a weak vessel made of clay, infused with spirit (*ruh*), endowed with an inner organ, heart (*qalb*), which is a regular oscillation in the central inner void (*jawf*), the secret and hidden place of conscience (*sirr*) whose secrets will be laid bare at the Judgment, this created being also has a soul, (*nafs*), an aggregate of sensations and actions, an incoherent and obscure mass—thoughts, illusions, desires, feelings—flowing through the body, the principle (*a.l*) which unites the reprehensible

12. For example Q. 2:248 (the example of the Ark); 2:252 (the case of J→l.t); 2:259 (the case of the man with a donkey who was put to sleep for a hundred years and then brought to life) and many more.

13. Q. 27:61.

14. Q. 36: 35: *A Sign for them is the earth that is dead; We give it life, and produce grain therefrom of which ye eat; and We caused to grow in it gardens of palms and vines, and We caused springs to gush forth therein; that they might eat fruits; although it is not their hands that wrought this; will they not, then, give thanks?*

15. Q. 95:4.

16. Q. 96:2.

qualities.<sup>17</sup>

### The Role of History of Science

One cannot teach any subject without having an understanding of the history of that subject.

Thus, science teachers need a general understanding of history of Islamic science. This is particularly important now because teaching of science from an Islamic perspective is often reduced to quoting Qurʾānic verses in the classroom before going back to the plain-old secular science. This creates only a superficial layer.

One must be cognizant of the fact that Islamic scientific works from the pre-modern period, profoundly influenced by the Qurʾānic worldview as they were, seldom mention the so-called scientific verses of the Qurʾān in any direct sense. Numerous examples can be cited. For instance, the *Algebra* of al-Khwārizmī (ca. 184-236/800-850), the pioneering work in its field,<sup>18</sup> neither refers to any Qurʾānic verse in the text of the book, nor uses a verse like *God set all things in numbers*<sup>19</sup> as invocation at the beginning of the book; its purpose is purely practical. Even in Ibn Sīnā's *magnus opus*, *al-Qānūn fī Ḥikm al-Ṭibb*, known to the Latin West as *The Canon*, where one would expect such direct references, they are remarkably absent. In the "Preface" (*Khuḅa tul Kitāb*) of the book, Ibn Sīnā simply seeks Divine help in the task of writing the book, as was customary, and starts the book.<sup>20</sup> The same is true for a vast majority of other scientific works from the classical period of Islam. However, when the purpose of the book was different, there was a free use of the Qurʾānic material. A case in point is al-Bīrūnī's *Kitāb al-Jamʿ al-Jawāhir fī Maʿrifat al-Jawāhir* (*The Most Comprehensive Book on the Knowledge of Precious Stones*) which frequently quotes the Qurʾānic verses in relation to the various stones and minerals. But this work is not merely a scientific treatise on stones, as its title suggests. Rather, it is an amazing collection of scientific facts, ancient poetry, historical anecdotes, meditations and critique of various theories then current. It is also a repository of the author's life-long observations on the state of human beings and matter.

Likewise, during the entire period of Islamic scientific activity which lasted well into the fifteenth century, we see no evidence of any scientific research program directly motivated by the desire to "prove" the scientific verses of the Qurʾān through science. There is no record of such profane uses of the Divine Book. This is so because the

17. See the excellent explanation of the four terms, *al-qalb*, *al-ʿaql*, *al-rūḥ*, *al-nafs* in *Kitāb Sharḥ ʿAjāib al-Qalb*, in Book XXI of al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ al-Ḥayāt*.

18. The full title of al-Khwārizmī's work is *Kitāb al-Mukhtaṣar fī ʿIlm al-Jabr wa-Ḥiṣāb al-Muqābala*; original Arabic text has been published with the poorly translated 1831 English version of Frederic Rosen by Pakistan Hijra Council (Islamabad, 1409/1989). In spite of its reliance on Rosen's inaccurate translation, this is still a useful book because it contains the original Arabic text, a long "Introduction" by the Turkish historian of science Aydin Sayili, and enrichments and some corrections to Rosen's notes by Malek Dosay. See note 37 to Sayili's introduction where he mentions Julius Ruska's critique of Rosen's translation; also see Rashed, Roshdie, "L'idée de l'Algèbre selon Al-Khwārizmī", *Fundamenta Scientiae*, vol. 4, no. 1, p. 95.

19. Q. 71:28.

20. This *khuḅa* is merely a page and a half long. See *al-Qānūn fī Ḥikm al-Ṭibb* (1999), ed. by Saʿd al-Laḥmī, Dār al-Fikr, Beirut.

cultural milieu that gave birth to the Islamic scientific tradition was so thoroughly infused with the Qurʾānic worldview and the cosmologies based on its message that there was no need for any artificial and external imposition of the Qurʾānic verses on the scientific works. When al-Ghazālī mentions various natural sciences in relation to the Qurʾān, his method, context and purpose is entirely different from the twentieth century extraneous and ornamental use of the Qurʾān as a way of Islamization of modern science, as we will see in more detail in chapter ten. Suffice it to say here that the birth of the scientific exegesis (*al-tafsīr al-ʿilmī*) of the Qurʾān is a purely twentieth century phenomena. No one thought of writing such an exegesis during the time when scientific activity was at its peak in the Islamic civilization; the roots of scientific *tafsīr* should be traced in the Muslim encounter with the modern West. Since the last quarter of the twentieth century, the Qurʾānic verses which refer to various natural phenomena have become popular departure points for proving that the Qurʾān is, in fact, the word of God because modern science has established the accuracy of certain verses, or because it contains “scientific truths” which were unknown at the time of its revelation. This approach is inherently flawed for it stretches the meanings of the verses to superimpose them on various scientific theories now current, or it merely attempts to prove a revealed Book through human endeavor which itself remains under constant revision. In both cases, there is little to be gained; it amounts to a gross injustice to both the Qurʾān and science. We will return to this subject in more detail in chapter ten.

Thus modified, the teaching of science would be no different from teaching any other “Islamic” discipline. Science teaching would find its rightful place within an hierarchy of knowledge that is unified through its anchoring in the Qurʾān. Chemistry, physics, biology and other branches of the natural sciences would then not float in a vacuous and disconnected isolation, but would be integral parts of a greater whole embracing all branches of knowledge.

## II

It is not our intention here to bring to the present forum a fully articulated program of science teaching from an Islamic perspective; the scope here is merely to point out its urgent need and provide a few suggestions which can be used to develop such a program. Let us consider the formative period of a student’s life, from kindergarten through high school:

Early Childhood and Elementary School

Middle School

## High School

**Early Childhood and Elementary School:** Recognizing that early childhood is the most important period one's of life, special attention needs to be paid to the teaching of science at this level. The most important goal desired for this age group is to instill an awe and wonder of the natural world in the young minds and souls. This awe and wonder needs to be rooted in certain details about the physical world; it is not produced by sprinkling Qur'ān verses onto drops of rain falling down, but rather is to be attained by providing fascinating details about the natural world—for instance about the mosquito, of which some 3,500 species are found in the world and about which the Creator has said: *Allah does not shy away from giving the example of a mosquito and even smaller than the mosquito, for believers know that this is the truth from their Lord, but disbelievers say 'what kind of example is this?' Indeed Allah uses these parables to guide many and misguides many, and only the rebellious are misguided by this example (Q 2:26).*

Experiential learning is essential for this age group. Every child has experienced a mosquito bite, and thus a science teacher can easily build interest in this wonderful creature, which is seldom longer than 16 mm, weighs a mere 2.5 mg on average, and lives for less than two weeks in its slender body designed for specific purposes. Its head is equipped with a complete system for acquiring sensory information and for feeding, and contains eyes and a pair of long, many-segmented antennae, which detect host odors (including the odors of breeding sites where females lay eggs and which in males are noticeably bushier and contain auditory receptors to detect the characteristic whine of the female). The teacher can easily show young students a real mosquito, magnifying its compound eyes under a glass; so that children gathered around can distinctly see the mesh-like appearance of its two eyes. They consist of hundreds of thousands of tiny lens-capped optical units called ommatidia. Each ommatidium has its own cornea, lens, and photoreceptor cells for distinguishing brightness and color. The teacher can point out how each individual ommatidium guides light through a lens and cone into a channel (the rhabdom), which contains light-sensitive cells. These are connected to optical nerve cells to produce the image. Imagine a classroom of young children enthralled by the understanding that the mosquito in front of them in that glass container is actually looking at them!

The children can be inspired through an actual examination of the thorax of the mosquito, which is its means for locomotion, consisting of three pairs of legs and a pair of wings, which allow it to fly for up to four hours continuously at a speed of 1 to 2 kilometers per hour, an ability that increases at night so that it can travel up to 12 kilometers in a night. The teacher can build on the mosquito bite, which every child has experienced, and provide the young learners an understanding, in simple terms, of the two-way transaction that occurs when they become a host to a hungry female mosquito: they provide a small amount of their blood, which is digested in the abdomen of the mosquito within the next couple of days and used for egg production; and they receive an equally small amount of

mosquito saliva, which contains a mixture of secreted proteins, which create itching and inflammation (because they affect vascular constriction, blood clotting, platelet aggregation, angiogenesis and immunity). In addition, the teacher can tell the young students that since nothing is superfluous in nature, for Allah Most High did not create anything for sport, notwithstanding the itching and the possibility of receiving disease-causing viruses and parasites that a mosquito bite entails, the mosquito does have a role in nature; in fact, the entire eco-system can be dangerously affected if it is eliminated. Add to these details an ongoing dimension of scientific research to complete the picture: scientists are working on the development of anti-clotting drugs based on mosquito saliva molecules, which might be useful for approaching heart-related disease because they are more user-friendly blood clotting inhibitors and capillary dilators.

Such information is readily available; all that a systematic effort aimed at developing content, methods, and pedagogies for teaching science from an Islamic perspective needs to do is develop the framework into which this content can be absorbed and link it to the Qur'ānic worldview at several levels of production, distribution, and delivery. For instance, having instilled a vibrant interest in the hearts and minds of the students in the life of the little creature, a teacher can easily lead them to reflect on the Qur'ānic parable through anchoring the lesson in tafsir tradition: commenting on this verse, Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī (d. 373/983) said that if the entirety of humankind and the jinn were to gather together to create a mosquito, they would not be able to, and that Allah Most High gave the example of the mosquito because it is a marvelous creation. He added, moreover, that it is said that as long as it is hungry it stays alive, but when its stomach is overfull, it dies; so too with man, who transgresses when he pretends to be self-sufficient.

This is just one example which can be used in teaching science from an Islamic perspective. The word of nature, full of wonders as it is, is an ever-present backdrop in the Qur'ān; a child filled with awe and wonder for this world would naturally respond with respect, care, and love for it. As he or she moves to middle school years, a foundation would have been established for building more data-based instructional material.

### III

**Middle School:** Primed to receive data from natural sciences within the framework of the Qur'ānic worldview of nature, the child is now ready to do some hands-on experiments and achieve an elementary understanding of various branches of science and what is studied through them. The overall goal of an Islamic approach to teaching science for this age group is to prepare the learners for a full encounter with modern science when they reach high school. This is a prime time to introduce history of science and launch students into the wonderful exploration of various facets of Islamic scientific tradition. This is precisely the time when students are looking for their roots, and are ready to establish intellectual and affective connections with thinkers and scholars who can provide them ideas and concepts. Thus, science units which introduce them to al-Bīrūnī,

Ibn Sīnā, Ibn al-Haytham and other Muslim scientists who appear in the history of the eight-hundred-year long Islamic scientific tradition—in a manner that is not filled with emotional nostalgia, but is built on solid content—can open many vistas for the young minds. Given substantial grounding at this stage, they will not be blown away when they reach high school and launch into modern science proper, where they will find no Muslim name in the grand parade of names which appear in science textbooks. Corrections to the history of science narrative is, however, only one aspect of the new effort needed to teach science from an Islamic perspective; the second facet is the development of material to provide a basic understanding of philosophy of science and the critical perspective it offers to teachers who can then gain the ability to situate modern science within a meta-scientific framework. Obviously, it is not being proposed that a grade six student be given heavy doses of philosophy of science; rather, teachers need to have a basic understanding of Islamic philosophy of science so that they can open windows onto a new world for their students to give them an inclination of how raw scientific data transforms after passing through an interpretive lens. Students should be given tools to ask critical questions which are dealt with in the history, philosophy, and sociology of science. They should be able to ask these questions and receive answers from teachers and thereby enrich their understanding of Islamic scientific tradition. They can be challenged to research, in their own way and at their own level, biographies of Muslim scientists and what they contributed to the development of science; some bright students can even deal with questions such as the factors which contributed to the rise and fall of Islamic scientific tradition and how modern science emerged in Europe. All of this needs to be integrated with what they are studying in their standard science textbooks in their own grade levels through a creative process which should anchor the entire teaching process in the Qurʾānic worldview.

#### IV

**High School:** Most Muslim students encounter the greatest concentration of troubling questions about science during their high school years, including questions arising from that reigning paradigm of modernity, evolution. In addition, they wonder why Muslim lands are so far ‘behind’ in science compared to Europe and North America. They use textbooks that provide no insights into meta-scientific assumptions on which modern science is built, but are given strong doses of theories which make little sense when viewed from the Qurʾānic worldview. They often receive little or no intellectual support for dealing with this vast amount of data that flows into their lives at this crucial stage.

A well-designed program of teaching science from an Islamic perspective needs to take all these “extra-scientific” aspects into consideration. It needs to deal with fundamental issues young Muslims face while studying science entrenched in the secular view of nature. Furthermore, it needs to provide well-grounded alternatives to specific theories such as evolution. One question that will be of utmost importance in any effort aimed at

developing a program of teaching science from an Islamic perspective is that of origins: How did the world come into existence? How has life started? Other questions that will need to be addressed include: What are the mechanisms in nature that sustain life? How can we explain the disappearance of certain life forms? What are different possible ways in which the same observable data can be explained? This is precisely the time to introduce students to a fully developed Islamic philosophy of science taught through a carefully developed textbook which provides source-based Qur'ānic explanations to fundamental questions about the human relationship with nature. They need to be introduced to the primary Qur'ānic concepts of our custodianship of the created order of nature and our moral responsibility toward it through our honoring, as reflected in the title given to us in the Qur'ān: *khulafā'*, the successors, deputies, and custodians.

Establishment of a program of teaching of science from an Islamic perspective is an enormous task which cannot be achieved by an individual. A network of scholars needs to actively engage in building a core program which can be adopted by various schools around the world with necessary changes and modifications. This network does not exist at present, but can easily be established by an umbrella organization which can affiliate educators and education-related institutions from around the world, develop a core team, and start the thousand mile journey with a small but firm step.

*Wa'Ilāhul-musta'ān, wa mā tarwīqī illā bi'Ilāh.*

## Resources: Classroom Management that Works!

*Mehnaz Kafray & Shereen Qaddoura*

### Abstract

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The reality of teaching includes managing a class of unpredictable and individually unique students. Though there are no cookie-cutter methods to managing children, there are numerous resources that can turn a frustrated teacher and struggling class into an effective one. With technology becoming a fabric of our society, the demand for it in the classroom has become vital. This workshop exposes teachers to a plethora of technological resources that are effective and can immediately be implemented in the classroom with little effort or time. Issues and resources will be presented for the five main teaching areas: assignments, discipline, parents, classroom instruction, and self-efficiency.

### Meet the Authors

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**Mehnaz Kafray**, M.Ed., graduated from the University of Texas with her Master's Degree in Educational Leadership and Texas Certification in Principalship. With over a decade of educational experience, Mrs. Kafray began as a high school English teacher and then moved on to teach Elementary and Middle School. Working in the educational setting at different levels and capacities has exposed her to student learning at all stages, empowering her at her current position. With a passion for education and improving Islamic Schools in the US, Mrs. Kafray currently serves as the Assistant Principal of Brighter Horizons Academy (BHA) in Garland, Texas.

**Shereen Qaddoura** has her Bachelors of Historical Studies from the University of Texas at Dallas. She started her teaching career at Brighter Horizons Academy in 2001 as a second grade teacher and went on to teach third grade, fifth grade Science, U.S. History, and World History. After falling in love with the Elementary environment she went on to pursue her Master's Degree in Teaching from Texas Women's University with EC-4<sup>th</sup> Certification. Shortly after, she moved to Jordan and then Qatar to teach, juggling the British Curriculum. However, after teaching in different countries and schools she returned to BHA in 2012 and currently inspires her fourth grade class.

### Resources: Classroom Management that Works!

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Technology is becoming an increasing part of our day to day lives. Thus, it is inevitable that it should come into the classroom. America has shifted from conversation about the importance of technology in the classroom to standards for technological use such as those created by the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). Stephanie Hicks discusses the shift in her article, "Technology in Today's Classroom: Are You a Tech-Savvy Teacher?" with today's students being referred to as "digital natives", "the saturation of technology in students' lives has produced an entirely different type of student, shaping the way they think, learn, and experience the world around them" (Hicks, 2011). Thus, the use of technology has become a necessity instead of a novelty. The disconnection between technology and classrooms currently being used is becoming more apparent. By adding structure and implementing a few resources,

technology can transform a frustrated teacher into an effective one. This paper explores five main aspects of teaching: assignments, discipline, parents, classroom instruction, and self-efficiency. It explores the challenges of each one, reviews current trends, and presents specific resources available to address these challenges.

### **Assignments**

If managing assignments was as easy as distributing assignments, grading them, and putting the score on paper, there would be no issues. From start to finish, assignments require many more steps, the most time consuming being averaging grades, following up on missing assignments, and studying grades as data to drive instruction.

Many schools have already adopted systems such as Edline, Rediker, or Sycamore that are comprehensive. They can be used to manage administrative and front desk issues, scheduling, libraries, and provide a communication link between parents and teachers regarding grades and classroom activities.

A great resource that can be used to remind parents and students directly is Remind 101. Remind 101 is a free application that solves communication obstacles between parents, students, and teachers. What makes Remind 101 unique is it allows teachers to text a simple message from their phone that will be sent to parents or students without displaying the teacher's cell phone number. Also, what makes it a safe application is it is a one way broadcast system in which teachers cannot see their students' phone numbers and students never see the teacher's number, nor can they respond to the text message. It is great for homework and test reminders, schedule changes, fun facts, trivia, and field trips. In Islamic Studies, students can be reminded to pray, read Surah Kahf on Fridays, do certain ibadaat, or be given an Eid Mubarak message. A convenient feature is the teacher can pre-schedule messages to be sent at a later date or time. Last but not least, all messages are saved for teachers to reference later if needed (Kopf, 2013).

### **Discipline**

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), "educators have consistently rated discipline as one of the most serious obstacles to promoting effective teaching" (Kratochwill, n.d). Discipline is an area that needs constant attention throughout the day. With teachers spending a significant portion of their day on character building and discipline, this aspect of teaching requires creativity and effectiveness. Writing student names on the board or moving pins up the Red, Yellow, Green light has temporary advantages but looks outdated.

Some challenges to discipline are the time it takes from the classroom to execute, the time it takes from the teacher's day to communicate with parents, paperwork involved, and a lack of appeal to students. Furthermore, it is difficult to use the traditional discipline process while not in the classroom. In the case of field trips, students in the hallways, and recess, the discipline process needs to be available.

Current research places more of an emphasis on the philosophies behind disciplining. Methods such as *Love and Logic*, *Positive Classroom Discipline*, *Assertive Discipline*, and *Responsive Classroom* are all excellent philosophies on how to interact with students during the discipline process. All of these methods require an efficient follow up to implement in the classroom. The

resources listed below can be used to maximize any philosophy of discipline and make it a practical and efficient process in and out the classroom.

Class Dojo is a free application that can help improve behaviors and engagement in the classroom by awarding and recording real-time feedback. Teachers can manage the classroom without saying much and focus on the lesson by adding or subtracting points for students. Students are motivated to perform because they create their own avatars and can see the number of points they have while the dojo is projected on the board. Students can be conditioned to display certain behaviors as well by being rewarded for behaviors the teacher is expecting. Teachers can generate behavior reports or email them to parents. These can be kept on file to use during parent teacher conferences, submitted to the administration, or even used to track when students start misbehaving. Class Dojo's best feature is that it can be accessed on the teacher's smartphone, which makes it particularly useful during field trips, recess, musalla, dismissal, and outside classroom areas that make discipline a challenge. The application keeps parents engaged and connected to their child's behavior in the classroom. Repeat offenses can be directed for Tarbiyya conditioning (Chaudhry, 2013).

Too Noisy is an application that keeps the noise level of the classroom at a reasonable level by displaying the intensity of the noise. This application is great to use when students are working in group and works as an assistant for the teacher where students can see if their noise level has reached an unacceptable level. Students can work with each other to reduce the noise level when it gets too high. When the noise level is at a healthy level, a smiley face graphic is displayed. In addition, the teacher can control or adjust the noise level depending on the activity taking place in the classroom. This can also be an effective tool to show students the etiquette of our voices in classrooms, gymnasiums, or even the musalla (Walsall Academy, 2012).

The Teacher's Class Behavior Pro application can be purchased for \$.99 in Google Play store and is designed for teachers to record behaviors throughout the day. The teacher can record preset behaviors by tapping a button next to the student's name. In addition, teachers can review behaviors in a daily log where it will list the behavior and the time it took place. The best feature of this app is that the logs can be saved and emailed (Kekabe Developments, 2014).

OoGali is a free application that is a simple and fast way to document and record behavior in class using QR codes. The teacher prints out each individualized code and tapes them on the student's desk. Then, the teacher can walk around the classroom and scan the code without looking on the screen. The teacher will feel a vibration or hear a sound, and can tap a button for positive or negative according to the child's behavior. Students can even wear the QR code on their ID badges for use of this app in the hallways and field trips. Reward students in hallways for displaying Muslim Manners. OoGali boasts its convenience for teachers, making an app they believe is "eyes free" (Taniguchi, 2014)

Win a Spin can be purchased for \$.99 from the Apple app store or Google Play Store. A teacher can personalize her wheel by entering six different prizes. Students can also be rewarded for doing good deeds or submitting Salah charts that are completely filled in. This is also a great way to give incentives to students during lesson plans or to condition excellent behavior (Doodle Smith Ink, 2013).

## Parents

Challenging parents are an aspect of teaching that can affect even veteran teachers. Parents can range anywhere from being overly involved or completely absent. More so, many teachers get frustrated with parent requests, questions, and unprofessional manner of communicating with teachers. How many times have parents come in the morning trying to communicate with teachers about their child's education while the teacher is preparing for the day? How much time do teachers spend on responding to emails about assignments, due dates, and what is occurring in the class?

CNN posted an article by Ron Clark, an award-winning published teacher and founder of the Ron Clark Academy. This article describes a principal who won the "Administrator of the Year" award but left the profession because of difficult parents. According to Mr. Clark, new teachers remain in the profession for an average of four and a half years and many end their careers because of "issues with parents" (Clark, 2013).

There is no doubt that this global challenge leaves teachers disheartened and flustered. There is one technique that may take a little bit of time but is an effective way of dealing with the wide spectrum of parents: over-communicating. The more information a teacher presents to parents, the less questions they will be consumed with. Over-communicating with parents will satisfy overly involved parents, motivate busy parents, and put the accountability back on what happens at home. There are many resources, both at the school and classroom level that are available to facilitate communication.

One major insecurity that parents face is if there is enough happening in the classroom to provide their children with quality education. This is heightened in private schools where parents pay tuition for their children. Teachers can have excellent lesson plans but since parents are not in the classroom to witness these lessons or projects, it leaves uncertainty. Social media sites such as Facebook are excellent tools to post pictures of what is occurring in the classroom. When parents feel confident that students are learning and the teacher is challenging students in a creative fashion, they become more confident in the teacher and tend to ask fewer questions.

Weekly newsletters are also a surefire way of keeping parents informed. By putting all the classroom information on one document, parents know where to go to get information about assignments and tests coming up for the week. This takes the guess work out of what they are required to do with their children throughout the week, hence reducing questions about due dates and homework assignments.

A quick way to set appointments without spending time on communicating is through Google Calendar. Google Calendar allows users to set "Appointment Slots". Users can create multiple slots in increments for multiple parent conferences or they can set it for their office hours. Instead of pleading with parents in the morning before school or at times where focus needs to be on student supervision, emailing parents the link to the appointment booker will allow for parents to choose an appointment time that the teacher sets. Teachers will receive an email when parents book a time on their calendar and have the option of accepting or denying the appointment.

## **Classroom Instruction**

Technology for classroom instruction contains the richest amount of resources and research. There are a plethora of resources available, using all types of technology in order to enhance instruction. Furthermore, textbook publishing companies have already moved toward integrating technology with instruction by using interactive white board lessons, providing additional online activities for students to gain extra practice, using podcasts, and projectable student editions with links to supplemental resources. These resources are provided when purchasing curriculum, namely from big publishing companies such as McGrawhill, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, and Scott Foresman. The following resources are independent of the major publishing companies, making them accessible for any teacher to use.

Teacher Clicker Socrative is a free application that engages the class by allowing teachers to select an activity where it will control the flow of questions and games. Students log in and interact with the content, responding to multiple choice, true/false, and short answer questions. The application allows teachers to create quizzes and even exit tickets at the end of the class. Next, the application allows the teacher to view reports online on a spreadsheet or email the information in Excel format (Socrative, 2014).

Stick Pick is an application that can be purchased for \$2.99. Teachers can randomly pick a name from the virtual stick pick. The application uses Bloom's Taxonomy related questions and ESL skills to ask questions at student learning levels. Whether cognitive or linguistic, this is an assessment tool that tracks student answers. Data can be saved and emailed to both the teacher and parents. Also, students can use the application during small group work by asking one another questions, increasing the likelihood of students staying on task (iPad Curriculum, 2011).

Edmodo is a free application that provides a safe and easy way for both students and teachers to engage and collaborate anytime and anywhere. Edmodo allows teachers to continue classroom discussions online, give polls, and award badges to students based on performance or behavior. Also, teachers can track student progress and capture understanding, confusion, or frustration (Edmodo, 2014).

Brain Pop is by membership and creates animated videos, engages students, and is a great online educational resource to have on hand. Brain Pop helps introduce and explain new topics and allows teachers to record students' accomplishments through quizzes, game playing, and activities. The application can help in Science, Social Studies, English, Math, Engineering and Technology, Health, and Arts/Music (BrainPop, 2014).

## **Self-efficiency**

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) published their research entitled *The High Cost of Teacher Turnover*. They found that the national cost of public school teacher turnover is \$7 billion a year. In their findings they discussed the rate of teacher dropout (Carroll).

NCTAF's findings are a clear indication that America's teacher dropout problem is spiraling out of control. Teacher attrition has grown by 50 percent over the past fifteen years. The national teacher turnover rate has risen to 16.8 percent. In urban schools it is over 20 percent, and, in

some schools and districts, the teacher dropout rate is actually higher than the student dropout rate. (Carroll)

For teachers who are feeling frustrated and overworked, technology can provide structure and realistic ways to maximize time in and out of the classroom. Staying positive is also an important aspect of working through frustration. Jon Gordon describes the impact of being positive in his article, *The Power of a Positive Educator*. In this article he introduces the *Positive Teacher Pledge* which includes 16 positive statements that teachers pledge to do in difficult situations. This pledge can be downloaded and printed for posting or distribution (Gordon).

Running an efficient classroom will also combat feelings of frustration and burn out. A well-managed classroom should run with little teacher intervention. Interrupting your lessons for classroom management issues is tiring and inefficient. The following methods are ways technology can assist in making classrooms more efficient.

1. “Flip” your classroom: Students learn at home through online lectures and homework is done in class. This creates a personalized classroom in which teachers can focus on student understanding of material instead of how to present the material
2. Research lesson plans so you do not have to create them. Some sites include Scholastic, Teachers Pay Teachers, Discovery Education, edHelper, Smithsonian Education, The Teachers Corner, PBS, and USMint.gov
3. Manage lesson plans through Planboard. Align your lessons to standards, add in your schedule, and replicate lessons from previous years.
4. Bring creativity to your delivery and classroom through Pinterest, Prezi, Glogster, Thread, Visual.ly
5. Keep the pace of the class moving at a healthy pace by using [www.online-stopwatch.com](http://www.online-stopwatch.com). Students can keep track of their own pace if projected on the board.
6. Start your class with a discuss on a hadith. Project a hadith from the “Daily Hadith” app or [hadithoftheday.com/daily-inspiration](http://hadithoftheday.com/daily-inspiration)
7. End your class with a digital check off sheet. Instructions can be found on [sharingkindergarten.com](http://sharingkindergarten.com). Though the site explains how to use the app for kindergarten, this can be customized for any grade level.
8. Keep students on their toes and paying attention in class through Stick Pick or go further and track student answers over time and email results through Pick Me!
9. Track student progress through [benchmarkgrading.com](http://benchmarkgrading.com). Teachers may add assignments with the benchmark met for each assignment. Teachers can create reports or just view how many assignments use certain benchmarks and student performance and/or mastery of each benchmark.

Though there are many challenges to teaching, technology can assist teachers in all aspects of the classroom, including classroom management. Technology has shifted from instructional assistance to a complete way of managing the classroom. With some effort on the part of the

teacher to set up these resources, a teacher can facilitate a smooth and efficient class from the beginning of the year until the last day of school.

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## Guidance Counselors: The Undervalued and Overlooked Essential

*Salman Khan*

### Abstract

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Guidance counselors are often looked upon as superfluous to the success of an Islamic high school. Most Islamic high schools around the country have other staff members fulfill the position of a guidance counselor as a secondary position. Regrettably, by making them secondary we inevitably make our schools' success secondary. This in turn leaves the students with no focused attention helping them prepare for college, and strategically plan for their greater career goals. This paper will analyze just how essential guidance counselors are to the success of Islamic schools within the United States.

### About the Author

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**Salman Khan** was born and raised in New Jersey and attended Rutgers University. He is the Founder of Hidayah Services, a guidance counseling service for Muslim students. He launched Hidayah Services to help the Muslim community reach new heights of education, while retaining their Islamic principles. Additionally, for the past four years, he has served in various leadership positions in many Islamic organizations including Young Muslims on a national, regional, and local level. Other organizations include the newly established Inspiring American Muslim Youth (IamY) Conference, the Muslim Extravaganza, SMILE for Charity, and more.

## Guidance Counselors: The Undervalued and Overlooked

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### Statement of problem

Islamic institutions within the United States have not yet realized the importance of having proper and up to date guidance counseling. Many of our students make poor decisions due to incorrect information and misguidance by school staff. These uninformed decisions lead many of our students to waste massive amounts of time and money in college, due to rectifying the poor decisions they previously made. This manifests into many different issues, for example one common problem that arises is when a student changes their major in their 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> year- a time when they should be finishing up their major not starting one. The student has to spend more time in college, and therefore spend more money on tuition. If the student is taking out loans this can be even more disastrous. This is just one example of how poor guidance counseling can negatively affect a student's future.

The way to fix this problem is by having schools provide qualified and knowledgeable guidance counselors that can help students properly prepare for their college lives. In a successful school model, this will happen in two parts. First, the guidance counselor offers advice and the proper planning tools for a student's educational path, preparing the student for life after high school. Second, the guidance counselor directs students through the application and application process. Many Islamic Schools thus far have not taken the guidance counselor position seriously and this has had terrible effects. The top high schools in the country are rated mainly by how well they

prepare their students for college and life after high school. Not coincidentally, guidance counselors are essential in helping students prepare and apply to college. They are fundamental in helping students reach high levels of educational achievement. Without them students are often underprepared for the college application process and college.

### **Review of literature**

Numerous literature demonstrates that the best rated high schools in the country are the best, because of how well the schools prepare students for college. Newsweek and The Daily Beast rank schools based on, “the ones that best prepare students for college.”<sup>21</sup> Both of their analyses looked upon six main factors:

1. On-time graduation rate,
2. Percent of graduates accepted to college,
3. AP/IB/AICE tests per student,
4. Average SAT and/or ACT scores,
5. Average AP/IB/AICE scores,
6. Percent of students enrolled in at least one AP/IB/AICE course;<sup>22</sup>

If we look closely at each of these factors, we find a strong indication of whether a student is prepared for college. The only factor that is semi-unrelated to college is on-time graduation rate, which even then is still partially relevant to going to and preparing for college. Every other indicator is based upon the premise of college readiness and acceptance.

Comparing this to U.S. News and their rankings we find a similar trend. U.S. News, in conjunction with the American Institutes for Research (AIR), uses a three step process to rank high schools.<sup>23</sup> The first two steps compare high schools on a state level, focusing mainly on how adequately schools compare within their own states. However, the third step which allows schools to be ranked on a national level, uses a “college readiness index” (CRI).<sup>24</sup> The CRI is based on a school’s AP/IB participation rate and the scores of such test takers. The reason for using AP/IB exams as the filter for rankings is, because these two exams demonstrate college preparedness for high school students. The Washington Post uses a similar format to U.S. News to rank high schools nationally, except along with the AP and IB exams they include the AICE. It is important to note that U.S. News, Newsweek, The Daily Beast, and the Washington Post are all of the major institutions that rank high schools nationally.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, according to all major high school ranking sites in order to excel as a high school and be among the “best,” the most important and determining factor is the college readiness of the students. Why is all this relevant in regards to guidance counselors?

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<sup>21</sup> Lauren Streib, “America’s Best High Schools 2013: Behind the Rankings.” *The Daily Beast*, May 2013. Web.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Morse, “How U.S. News Calculated the 2013 Best High School Rankings.” *U.S. News*, April 2013. Web.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Winerip, “In Lists of Best High Schools, Numbers Don’t Tell the Whole Story.” *The New York Times*, June 2012. Web.

The main two tasks of a high school guidance counselor are the social development of students and preparing students for life after high school, which in most instances translates into college. Preparing students for college is roughly 50% (if not more) of what a guidance counselor must do. Having strong and qualified guidance counselors is fundamental to having students that are adequately prepared for college. If we truly want to be among the best high schools we must prepare our students for college to the best of our ability.

Most of our high schools get students in to college, but they do not prepare students for what they will actually face in college. Most Islamic schools boast a 100% graduation rate, but with most of their graduates entering colleges with little to no preparation, this is not a meaningful feat. We must prepare our students for the social difficulties, the academic challenges, and the financial horrors they will face, and the way to do this is through guidance counselors. By not preparing them appropriately, we set them up for tremendous hardship and many times failure. The average student changes their major three times in college.<sup>26</sup> These are students who on average have some sort of guidance counseling, now imagine students graduating Islamic schools, who many times do not even have a guidance counselor. The number will be higher, which means more students spending more time and money in college trying to figure out what they want to study and what career they want to pursue. This results in a substantial financial drain on the community, whether in regards to a family spending more money on tuition or in professionals being developed over a longer period of time.

We need to ensure that our students are doing their best academically and getting into colleges that match their academic and intellectual capabilities. Too often our students settle for colleges that are easy to get into or colleges that their friends went to. In many of our current systems choosing a college is not a question of compatibility (in regards to both academic and social factors), but rather a question of familiarity. This is a huge problem, because our students are not achieving their full potential and instead of attending top universities are settling for state and many times community colleges.

All of these issues can be dealt with, if our schools incorporate qualified and competent guidance counselors to help students prepare for college. Guidance counselors that understand the numerous difficulties students will face in college, from choosing a major to taking out student loans. The position of guidance counselor needs to be taken seriously and needs to be filled by qualified professionals.

## **Methods**

This paper is the result of personal experiences, primary sources, secondary sources, and first-hand exposure to Islamic schools within the Tri-State area. Unfortunately, no organic research was conducted to further bolster the claims made in this paper.

## **Recommendations of practical implementation**

Islamic schools desperately need to add **qualified** guidance counselors to their faculty and staff. Having a multi-dimensional position where the math teacher or vice principal serve as the guidance counselor is not sufficient. If we want to truly prepare our students for college and life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we need to take the position of the guidance counselor seriously. They are

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<sup>26</sup> "College Majors." *Princeton Review*. Web.

primarily responsible for helping students prepare for college, and so by dedicating a full position to college preparation, we can better prepare our students.

If schools cannot afford full-time guidance counselors there are other models to follow. The use of a contracted or part-time guidance counselor has been implemented in a few cases and has shown to be a more cost-effective alternative (for those that cannot afford full-time guidance counselors). In this model a contracted guidance counselor can be used on a “needs” basis. For example, if a school has seniors that need help with their college applications a contracted guidance counselor can work for a three month period until the seniors finish their applications. The third and least effective method is to have a teacher or vice-principal serve as the guidance counselor. This, although, not recommended is better than having no guidance counselor at all. In this case, it is critical that the staff member filling the role be someone who went to college in the United States and has a good grasp of what students will expect. They should also be actively learning to increase their understanding of the college process.

## A Modified Way for Teaching Arabic Grammar: The Content-Based Learning Approach

*Mahmoud Mansour*

### Abstract

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Arabic grammar is hard for non–Arabic-speakers to understand, and it is often not very interesting. It is full of complicated rules, and each rule has exceptions. The content-based learning approach is the solution to this problem. Presenting Arabic grammar rules with a background of interesting content can be both effective and fun.

### About the Author

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Mr. **Mahmoud Mansour** has been teaching Arabic & Quran at American Youth Academy in Tampa [www.ayatampa.com](http://www.ayatampa.com) since 2011. He is originally from Egypt and earned his BA in Arts and Education from Benha University in 2004. In 2008, he was awarded Fulbright Scholarship {FLTA} to teach Arabic as a foreign Language at Ramapo College of New Jersey. During his time at Ramapo College, he developed in his American students an awareness of Arab culture and the Arabic language. From 2009 – 2011, he taught Arabic to foreigners at The International Language Institute in Cairo. He is certified to teach Modern Standard Arabic and Egyptian Colloquial Arabic for non-Arabic-speakers. He is also certified to teach Quran using the Nuraniyah Method.

## A Modified Way for Teaching Arabic Grammar: The Content-Based Learning Approach

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### Proposal

There are two main goals for the language students: fluency and accuracy. There should be a balance between accuracy and fluency in language learning. Accuracy is achieved by learning how to say, read and write intact Arabic sentences. This is done through a full understanding of the language structure. Fluency is achieved by speaking, communicating and reading under the supervision of a knowledgeable native speaker. This can be easily achieved by applying the communicative approach in teaching the language. However, in our schools in the US, two main factors for this communicative approach are not easily found. These two factors are the native speakers of the Arabic language - the standard not the slang- and the frequency of applying this approach. In most of the Islamic schools in the US, Arabic is taught two or three periods a week. It is about one hour and forty five minutes a week, which is not sufficient time for teaching a second language effectively.

In addition, presenting grammar topics is a problem in itself. For most Arabic teachers, it is hard to find two Arabic text books following the same order in presenting Arabic grammar topics. Each author follows the way that he/she learned Arabic grammar. There is no agreement on a

certain sequence of grammar curriculum. Even if a good grammar curriculum is found, it is often separated from other language standards such as interpretative reading or listening, presentational writing or speaking and interpersonal communication.

The image appears to be complicated. The problem is finding a suitable consequence of Arabic grammar topics and presenting these topics in a modern technique that matches the modern language learning. The solution is Content Based Learning. A balance can be achieved by setting up a suitable consequence of Arabic grammar topics in an integrated curriculum that includes all other language standards in one product.

Arabic grammar topic sequence is meant by presenting grammar rules in a gradual way from easy to difficult, then to high difficulty rules. Also, it has to be taught in a gradual way from necessary to high-necessary rules. Language acquisition for foreigners is achieved by learning less-complicated structures first, then more complicated structures after that.

Presenting Arabic grammar inserted in an integrated content means creating a language unit including all the language standards and grammar in each standard. Grammar has to be integrated in presentational writing and speaking so that the student can write and say an accurate sentence. Also, grammar has to be integrated in interpretative reading and listening so that the student can understand and communicate effectively.

In this paper, a sequence of consistent grammar topics is presented. This method has been previously tested and has proven to be successful with both children and adults, at American Youth Academy (AYA) in Tampa. The two books, “Bil-Araby El-Faseeh Book 1 and 2“, which are based on the proposals put forth in this paper, have been used for two years at AYA with great success.

A Power Point Presentation accompanies this paper.

### **The Paper**

The PPT begins by exposing the reader to the students’ levels that are targeted in this paper. The students’ levels are Novice-Low, Novice-Mid, Novice-High Intermediate-low, Intermediate-Mid, and Intermediate-High. The placement of these levels is based on the ACTFL standards and requirements.

The main goal of the paper is demonstrated in the second slide. The slide summarizes the goal of bringing the learner to the level at which he/she is able to read, write and simply analyze the Arabic text in all forms of readable and listenable texts.

After that, the PPT confronts the problem and the solution. The first problem is the method that should be followed to teach Arabic grammar. The solution is to adopt content-based learning approach. The second problem is the sequence with which the content will be taught. The solution is to follow the principles of gradual teaching of easy topics first then harder by harder and from smaller topics to bigger ones.

The next slide in the PPT shows that there are many ways for teaching Arabic grammar. Three well-established ways are shown and a short comparison is made between them.

The three ways are:

3 الطريقة المعدلة	2 الطريقة الاستقرائية	1 الطريقة القياسية
<p>1 يعرض المعلم نصا أو حوارا به جمل مترابطة في المعنى و بها القاعدة الجديدة المستهدفة</p> <p>2 يساعد المعلم الطلاب في استنباط القاعدة بأنفسهم</p> <p>3 ثم إجراء تطبيق شامل على النص والقاعدة</p>	<p>1 كتابة أمثلة متنوعة و منفصلة مستهدفة القاعدة الجديدة</p> <p>2 يساعد المعلم الطلاب في استنباط القاعدة بأنفسهم</p> <p>3 ثم إجراء تطبيق على القاعدة</p>	<p>1 المعلم يقوم بكتابة أو ذكر القاعدة الجديدة أولا</p> <p>2 ثم يقوم المعلم ايضا بكتابة أمثلة متنوعة منفصلة عليها</p> <p>3 ثم إجراء تطبيق على القاعدة</p>

The third method, known as the “Modified Way”, is the method adopted in this paper. The "Modified Way" is the real translation of applying a student-centered learning approach and not a teacher-centered one. After enhancing the student’s awareness of the changes that happen to the Arabic word, which is usually accompanied by a grammatical rule, the student will be able to at least notice that change and ask the teacher about the reason. For example, if the teacher is targeting the “Dual noun” in a text he is showing to his students, the students will notice the difference between the singular noun that they use to see and that new form of noun that ends by “انَ تانَ”. We shall expect the students to come up with the rule. However, if this does not happen, the teacher should highlight that new term and try to attract the students’ attention to think about it. This way of teaching grammar is also very suitable to the content-based learning method that is applied for the other language strands.

The next slide shows how to start the content using the very first topic in any language, which is the “Alphabet”. The teacher should begin by “showing the big image first, then show bit by bit later” way. Basically, the first class should begin with the teacher showing the students the whole alphabet and all the characteristics relate to the sound, shape and the name for each letter. After exposing students to the big image of the whole alphabet, and after studying all the concepts of strong and weak letters, vibrated and non-vibrated letters, long and short vowels and connected and disconnected letters, it would be easy for students to study words that contain the target letter in the beginning, middle and at the end of the word, because they already saw these letters before. After finishing the alphabets, the sun and moon letters and Hamza should be taught in two separate, full content-based learning style classes. At this point, the student finishes novice-low level and is capable of reading and writing any Arabic word.

After that, the sequence starts with presenting the main features of the Arabic text at the background of the studied content. It is the text that is composed of several sentences. The sentence, in turn, is composed of few words, and the words are analyzed into “noun, verb and article”. The noun is more frequent in the Arabic text than the verb, and the teacher should, therefore, begin with analysis of the noun.

The first traditional noun-analysis is that a noun can be a person, an animal, a plant, an object or an abstract meaning. The second analysis is that a noun can be categorized according to gender - into male and female noun; according to number - into singular, dual and plural noun; according to definition - into definite and indefinite noun; and according to existence - into human and non-human noun. The third analysis that will be expanded upon later is the grammatical categories of the noun:

“الاسم المرفوع والمنصوب والمجرور”

Before presenting this third noun-analysis, the subject and possessive pronouns will be presented in two separate units in the content. After that, how to blend the grammar in the content regarding the number analysis to the noun will be explained. According to that analysis, a noun is divided into singular, dual and plural forms. For the singular noun, the topic of jobs, which is very rich with words that will help as a base to the following forms, can be chosen. For the dual noun, the topic of body parts, that includes many pairs as two of hands, arms, legs, eyes, ears, elbows, and knees, can be used. For plural nouns, teaching jobs again with new vocabulary plus the previously taught ones, can be effectively used.

The biggest noun analysis is for the grammatical classifications of nouns. According to the position of the noun in the sentence, and according to the features of the words before or after noun, nouns are classified into three main categories. They are “الاسم المرفوع والمنصوب والمجرور”. Each category can be taught in a separate unit presenting the changes which happen to each noun according to gender and number.

For the first category “الاسم المرفوع”, the teacher could choose “the adjective” as the leading content to that grammatical category. For the second category “المنصوب الاسم”, the teacher could choose the “Negation” as the leading content to grammar by the help of “names of places” as a sub topic. For the third category “الاسم المجرور”, the teacher could choose the prepositional phrase as the leading content and could use the objects’ positions as a sub-topic. At this point the student finishes the intermediate-mid level.

#### **Audience Interactive Activity:**

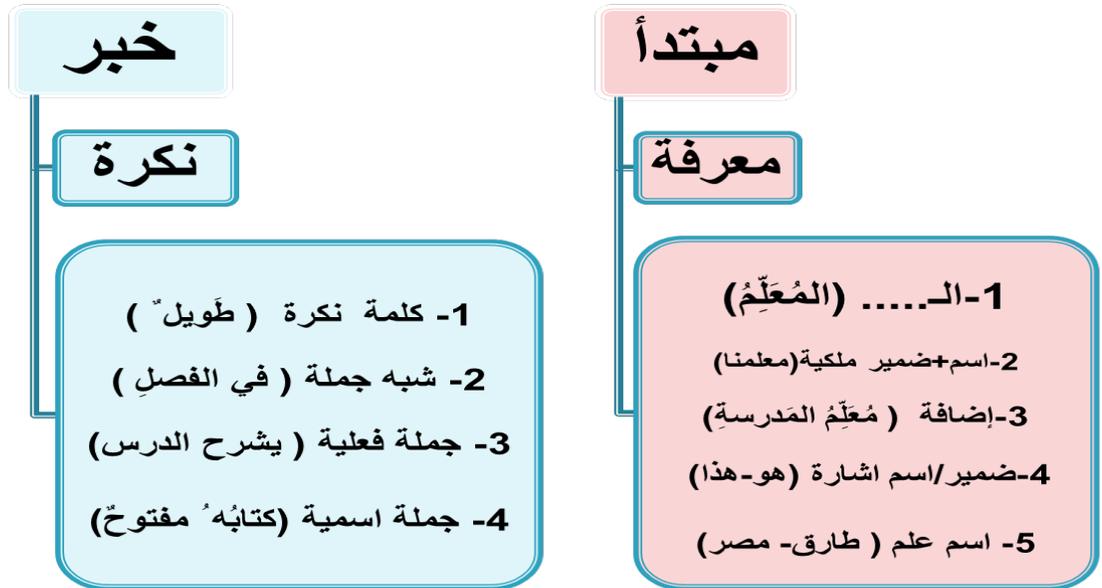
During the presentation of this paper, the audience will be included in an interactive activity. On slide number 17, the audience will be asked to read and form questions about the grammar rules that have been previously mentioned. They will be given a chart to be filled in by words from that text that is presented to them.

التحليل الكامل للاسم في اللغة العربية		
التحليل الثالث	التحليل الثاني	التحليل الأول
<p>الاسم المرفوع: لماذا؟ .....</p> <p>مذكر :</p> <p>مفرد: ..... مثني: ..... جمع: .....</p> <p>مؤنث:</p> <p>مفرد: ..... مثني: ..... جمع: .....</p> <p>الاسم المنصوب: لماذا؟ .....</p> <p>مذكر :</p> <p>مفرد: ..... مثني: ..... جمع: .....</p> <p>مؤنث :</p> <p>مفرد: ..... مثني: ..... جمع: .....</p> <p>الاسم المجرور: لماذا؟ .....</p> <p>مذكر :</p> <p>مفرد: ..... مثني: ..... جمع: .....</p> <p>مؤنث:</p> <p>مفرد: ..... مثني: ..... جمع: .....</p>	<p>النوع:</p> <p>مذكر: .....</p> <p>مؤنث: .....</p> <p>التعريف:</p> <p>معرفة: .....</p> <p>نكرة: .....</p> <p>العقل و التفكير:</p> <p>عقل: .....</p> <p>غير عقل: .....</p> <p>العدد:</p> <p>مفرد: .....</p> <p>مثني: .....</p> <p>جمع: .....</p>	<p>اسم انسان: .....</p> <p>اسم حيوان: .....</p> <p>اسم نبات : .....</p> <p>اسم جماد : .....</p> <p>اسم معنى مجرد: .....</p>

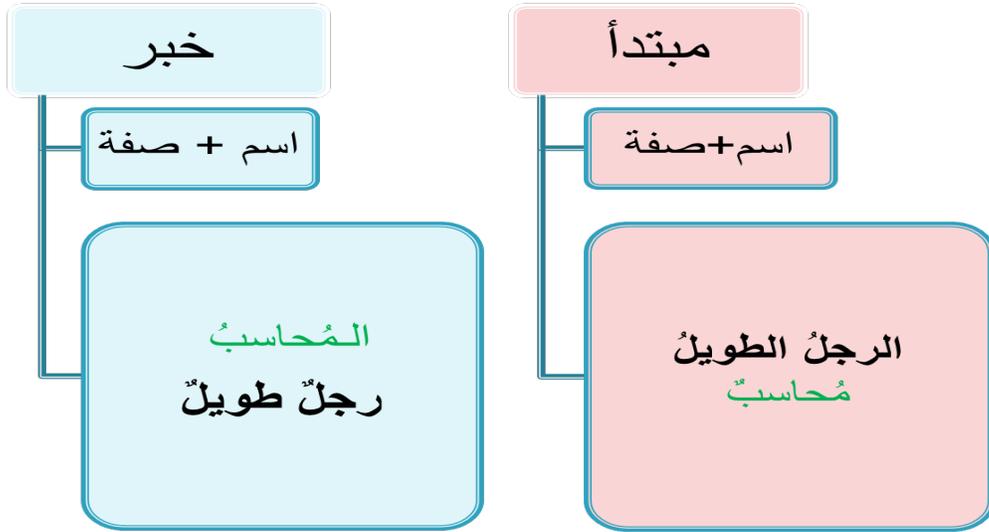
Although, in the previous units, texts were used as the content around which the grammar was taught, the Arabic sentence was fully analyzed. Therefore, the learner by this step should be ready for studying the sentence structures and features accompanied by each structure. The learner is now ready to study the nominal sentence that starts with a noun only, so we are still inside the noun circle.

Through the modified way of teaching Arabic grammar, the text will be presented, and the students will be tested on mentioning the reasons why some words end with some different endings from other ones. Depending on what previously taught, the students will be able to say the reason is because one of the words is “الاسم المرفوع”, it ends with special ending that is different from the other two categories; “المنصوب الاسم” and “الاسم المجرور” according to their positions in the sentence. Now the teacher can teach the students that these grammatical categories have other names. In the Arabic nominal sentence, it has two main components; Novice and Predicate lie under “الاسم المرفوع” and both of them have many types. The types of Novice will be introduced that are exactly the same types of the Arabic definite noun; the types of the predicate will also be introduced as follows:

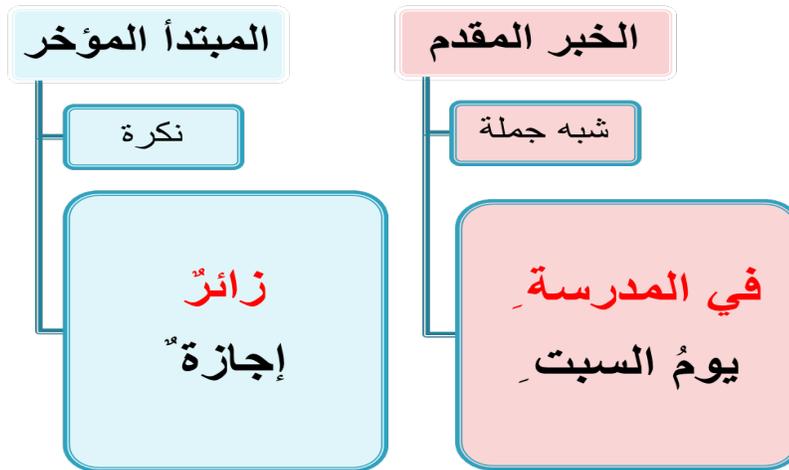
### تقديم الجملة الاسمية 1



### تقديم الجملة الاسمية 2



### تقديم الجملة الاسمية 3



After finishing the nominal sentence, a text will be presented in which nominal sentence features are targeted. The text example is on slide number 21. The audience is presented with a method for using the modified way for teaching Arabic grammar through content in that text. The audience will then be given a handout about several types of questions about that text.

#### صَدِيقِي الْمَفْضَلُ

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ، أَنَا اسْمِي عَمْرٌ. أَنَا أَسْكُنُ فِي الرِّيَاضِ. الرِّيَاضُ مَدِينَةٌ سَعُودِيَّةٌ جَمِيلَةٌ. بَيْنَتْنَا كَبِيرٌ. هَذَا حَسَنٌ. هُوَ طَالِبٌ سَعُودِيٌّ. حَسَنٌ صَدِيقِي الْمَفْضَلُ. عَمْرُهُ خَمْسَةَ عَشَرَ عَامًا. بَيْتُ صَدِيقِي أَمَامَ الْمَدْرَسَةِ. نَحْنُ نَذْهَبُ إِلَى الْمَدْرَسَةِ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ. حَسَنٌ يُحِبُّ الْمَدْرَسَةَ. حَسَنٌ كَتَابَهُ جَدِيدًا. هُوَ يَقْرَأُ فِي كِتَابِهِ. هُوَ يَتَنَّهُ الْقِرَاءَةَ وَالسَّبَاحَةَ.

# اذكر نوع المبتدأ و الخبر لكل جملة في هذا النص:

المُبْتَدَأُ (نَوْعُهُ)	الخَبَرُ (نَوْعُهُ)
1 السَّلَامُ: مَبْتَدَأٌ مَعْرِفَةٌ (الـ.....)	عَلَيْكُمْ: خَبَرٌ شِبْهُ جُمْلَةٍ
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	

Now it is time to enter the realm of the “Verb”. This does not mean that the verb was not introduced until this stage. The verb was introduced in each text presented previously, but without any grammatical analysis. It was presented very simply in one tense, which is the present simple tense, and with “he or she” as subjects to that present verb.

At this stage, the focus will be more on that verb. On slide number 22, the background target verb’s tenses chart are presented. This chart is to be clear in the teachers' mind.

Since the Arabic noun was introduced within the grammatical analysis of “الاسم المرفوع والمنصوب” , the same method will be followed with the verb as “الفعل المرفوع والمنصوب والمجزوم” . Based on this concept, one of the problematic issues for teaching Arabic verb’s tenses will be resolved.

Some Arabic teachers prefer to teach the past tense first, as it relates to the root. Then, by adding the prefixes to it, they can get the present and imperative forms.

It is best to start by teaching the present simple tense first; to teach **الفعل المرفوع** in all cases of affirmative, negative and interrogative forms. After that, the future tense should be taught. Technically, there is no term called “Arabic future tense”, as it is considered as present tense, but the term can be used as an entrance to teach **الفعل المنصوب** in the negative form. After that, the imperative or commanding case and prohibitive case to introduce **الفعل المجزوم** that comes after the prohibitive “NO” can be taught.

On slide number 23, the word analysis process that is called **الإعراب** is presented and gives the audience a real example of how students’ answers to a question relate to this aspect.

B- أعرّب الخجل الثالثة: (30 درجة)

1- يكتسب المصطلح الدرس في الفصل.

العلامة	الحالة	الوظيفة	الكلمة
ضمة	مرفوع	فعل مضارع	يكتسب
ضمة	مرفوع	فاعل	المصطلح
فتحة	منصوب	مفعول به	الدرس
Blank	Blank	حرف جر	في
كسرة	مجرور	اسم مجرور	الفصل

2- المهديسان الثونسيان يزر كتابان الشياركتين

العلامة	الحالة	الوظيفة	الكلمة
ان	مرفوع	مبتدأ	المهديسان
ان	مرفوع	صفة	الثونسيان
ان	مرفوع	فعل مضارع	يزر كتابان
ان	مرفوع	مفعول به	الشياركتين
ان	منصوب	مفعول به	يزر كتابان الشياركتين

30  
30

B- أعرّب الخجل الثالثة: (30 درجة)

1- يكتسب المصطلح الدرس في الفصل.

العلامة	الحالة	الوظيفة	الكلمة
ـ	مرفوع	فعل مضارع	يكتسب
ـ	مرفوع	فاعل	المصطلح
ـ	منصوب	مفعول به	الدرس
ـ	ـ	حرف جر	في
ـ	مجرور	اسم مجرور	الفصل

2- المهديسان الثونسيان يزر كتابان الشياركتين

العلامة	الحالة	الوظيفة	الكلمة
ان	مرفوع	مبتدأ	المهديسان
ان	مرفوع	صفة	الثونسيان
ان	مرفوع	فعل مضارع	يزر كتابان
ان	منصوب	مفعول به	الشياركتين
ان	منصوب	مفعول به	يزر كتابان الشياركتين

30  
30

The general classification of the Arabic verb, which is divided into two main categories: **الفعل** **المعرب** و **الفعل المبني** are presented in slide numbers 25 and 26.

On slide number 28, a chart is presented that shows the three ways of analysis for any word. They are the word's function in the sentence, the grammatical case under which this word is listed and the ending that discriminates this word from another word of a different case or function.

الكلمة	الوظيفة	الحالة	العلامة
تَانِ تَانِ تَانِ	مبتدأ	مرفوع	ـُ ـِ ـِ
تَانِ تَانِ تَانِ	خبر	مرفوع	ـُ ـِ ـِ
	صفة	مرفوع- منصوب مجرور	
	حرف جر		
تَيْنِ تَيْنِ تَيْنِ	اسم بعد حرف الجر	مجرور	ـِ ـِ ـِ
تَيْنِ تَيْنِ تَيْنِ	اسم بعد فعل النفي "ليس"	منصوب	ـِ ـِ ـِ
	مضاف	مرفوع- منصوب مجرور	
تَيْنِ تَيْنِ تَيْنِ	مضاف إليه	مجرور	ـِ ـِ ـِ
	فعل مضارع	مغرب مرفوع	
تَانِ تَانِ تَانِ	فاعل	مرفوع	ـُ ـِ ـِ
تَيْنِ تَيْنِ تَيْنِ	مفعول	منصوب	ـِ ـِ ـِ
	فعل مضارع بعد لن	مغرب منصوب	
حذف النون	فعل أمر	مبني على السكون	على حذف النون
	فعل مضارع بعد لا الناهية	مغرب مجزوم	
حذف النون	فعل ماضي	مبني على الفتحة	على حذف النون
حذف النون	فعل مضارع بعد لم	مغرب مجزوم	حذف حرف العلة
	لم	أداة جزم المضارع	
	لن	أداة نصب المضارع	

On slide number 29, the final analysis to every single word and/or sentence that can be found in the text at this stage in this paper is presented.

الجملة الفعلية	الجملة الاسمية	الحرف	الفعل	الاسم
في المضارع	مبتدأ+خبر	حرف التعريف (الـ)	مضارع	مفرد/مثنى/جمع
في المستقبل	المبتدأ المعرفة (5)	حروف الجر	مستقبل	مذكر/مؤنث
في الأمر	الخبر (4)	حرف العطف ( و )	أمر	معرفة/نكرة
في الماضي	الاسم و الصفة	حرف النفي ( لا )	ماضي	عاقل/غير عاقل
مثبتة/منفية	المبتدأ المؤخر	حرف النهي (لا)	مرفوع	مرفوع
الإستفهام	الخبر المقدم		منصوب	منصوب
			مجزوم	مجرور
			معرب/مبني	

Finally, some examples of texts that are targeting the four Arabic verb tenses and cases will be presented. The texts that will be presented show, first, the present simple tense, then the future case, then the imperative case, and, lastly, the past simple tense. The texts are on slides from number 30 to 33.

If any time remains, the audience will be divided into four groups, and each group will be given one of the four texts around which to design a sample lesson plan to decide how to teach the grammar through content based learning style at the background of “Modified Way for Teaching Arabic Grammar”

## Data-Driven School Improvement with MAP Assessments

*Jelena Naim*

### Abstract

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Learn about the experience of Al-Falah Academy with the Common Core-aligned Measuring Academic Progress skills assessments. We outline the timeline of MAP use, the benefits for teachers, students and parents, and the principal's program of staff development in data analysis that yields immediate applications in the classroom.

### About the Author

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**Jelena Naim** has been an educator for over 25 years. With Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the University of Illinois and certification from Mercer University in Atlanta, she has taught and developed curricular materials for students from elementary to college levels. She has worked in public schools and universities, and conducted training programs for teachers and school supervisors. In 2004, she was part of the founding team and board at an Atlanta-area public charter school, participating in the writing and approval of the charter, and then joining the administration of the school for the next 8 years. In 2012, she joined Al Falah Academy of Lilburn, GA (suburban Atlanta) as Principal.

### Data-Driven School Improvement with MAP Assessments

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#### **Part 1: Background on MAP testing**

##### **The MAP test:**

The MAP (Measuring Academic Progress) Assessment is a nationally and internationally renowned computer-based assessment in Reading, ELA, Math, and Science. The full version of the test is adaptive; that is, the test items are selected for the test-taker based on his/her previous answer, so that each test is customized to the level of the student. This means there is virtually no "floor" or "ceiling" to the test; a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader may receive test items that match 5<sup>th</sup> grade standards, or s/he may get test items that reflect 1<sup>st</sup> grade standards, depending on his/her response to the previous question.

The MAP for Primary Grades provides an interactive, lively audiovisual format for young learners. There are a variety of MAP Survey tests and Screening tests that contain fewer test items than the full adaptive version—these are useful for more abbreviated placement tests for our private schools. Finally, there are short MAP Skills Checklists that allow teachers to systematically test student achievement in primary literacy and numeracy goals, such as alphabet recognition, phonics patterns, and number skills.

The full adaptive versions of MAP assessments are available in state-specific standards alignments as well as in the Common Core version. The latter is especially interesting in that selected responses are creatively authored to demonstrate higher critical-thinking skills characteristic of Common Core enhancements.

Islamic schools should know that an annual contract for MAP can be obtained at a reasonable cost. At approximately \$12.50 per student, with a school investment in a minimally-outfitted computer lab, a sophisticated level of testing and teacher comprehension of differentiation needs can be achieved. The contract includes full-version MAP testing up to 4 times per year (in delineated seasons called Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer); unlimited Surveys, Screenings, and Skills Checklists; access to 40+ reporting formats, suitable for classroom teachers, specialist teachers, parents, students, and administrators); and membership in a learning network, with webinars, articles to download, blogs, online newsletters, professional development in a variety of formats, and the resources and publications of an assessment think tank, the Kingsbury Center.

### **NWEA**

The MAP test was developed over the past 30 years by the NorthWest Evaluation Association, a non-profit research organization based in Portland, OR. The NWEA runs the Kingsbury Center, a research institute on K-12 student assessment. It has played a key role as expert advisor in formulating the Common Core assessments that are now being developed nationally.

With 7 million students tested annually, in the only national standardized test that offers well-researched data on the growth of students over the course of the year, and with state-of-the-art test item techniques that target critical thinking skills suitable to meet Common Core requirements, the MAP test is recommended as the platform for all Islamic schools to consider.

### **Our School Context**

Al-Falah Academy is a private Islamic school in Lilburn, GA, a suburb of Atlanta. In its 4<sup>th</sup> year of operation, Al-Falah has masha'Allah 220 students from Preschool to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. There are 175 MAP test-takers from grades K-8, taking the test in our Computer Lab, which is outfitted with 18 desktop computers in a wireless setting. Al-Falah students take the MAP online test in the Common Core-aligned versions in Reading, ELA, and Math. The test is administered three times per year: August, January, and May.

Our MAP testing figures prominently in our annual school calendar. There are Teacher Workdays dedicated to the analysis of our MAP assessment results multiple times in the year, to ensure a data basis for the differentiation we require in teacher lesson plans. These workdays devoted to MAP data analysis are what allow our staff to make real-time adjustments that truly impact student learning.

### **Part 2: Tools For Teachers**

At Al-Falah, we focus teachers on 4 key reports: Class breakdown by RIT, Class breakdown by Domain (subcategories of a subject), DesCartes Learning Targets, and Growth Reports.

First, it is helpful to understand the basic unit of the MAP test, the RIT score. As the Student Progress Report Quick Reference document explains, "RIT stands for Rasch Unit, which is a unit of measure that uses individual test question difficulty values to estimate student achievement. The RIT is used to measure how "tall" a student is on the curriculum scale and scores can be compared to tell how much growth a student has made, similar to measuring height on a yardstick. This score is independent of the age or grade of the student but reflects the

instructional level at which the student is currently performing, helping teachers plan instruction at an appropriate level for the student.” It is an elegant, systematic means to understand student achievement over time—indeed, our students, once entered into the MAP database, receive a full recap of all previous reports with the addition of each set of results of each testing season, thus offering schools and parents a clear overview of student progress over all the years of MAP testing.

In the **Class Breakdown by RIT** report, teachers get an overview of the scores of their students in all the tested subjects (in our case, Reading, ELA, and Math). The data is viewed in a chart dividing the class of students into 10-point RIT “bands” of achievement. Such a format shows how widely students vary—in my experience, metro schools have a much wider variety of student achievement, such as the 7-8 RIT bands of student levels that we see at our school per classroom, as opposed to schools I’ve visited in rural areas of Georgia, where most classrooms have only about 3 RIT bands of student levels of achievement. Additionally, this report points to where the class falls on a national comparison. In our data analysis workshops, we ask teachers to notate which RIT column represents the national average, as well as which column indicates the Al-Falah average, so that we have a broad overview of the status of our students academically. This report feeds the Student Progress Report, intended for parents, with a summary of overall achievement and growth in the subjects.

In the **Class Breakdown by Domain** report, the scores of the students are placed in tabular form by key subcategories; in math, that means numbers and operations, geometry, measurement, etc, and in reading, that means phonics, comprehension, vocabulary, etc. This is the action-oriented report that teachers use the most to plan learning. One teacher told me this report is her “seating chart”, setting up the homogeneous small groups used for Guided Reading or math centers. This report feeds the Student Goal-Setting Worksheet, intended for students to visualize exactly what their domain strengths and weaknesses are, so they know how to move each domain forward in a more targeted fashion.

The **DesCartes Learning Statements** are the heart of the system. These are the learning targets which form a tool to guide teachers to translate student scores into a useable plan. They are the basis for constructing the test items to match goals of the Standards, and are currently being revised to reflect the Common Core standards. There are thousands of learning target statements in the K-12 levels. The DesCartes statements are organized by subject, goal area (subcategory or domain of a subject) and RIT level, and are presented in three columns. To effectively utilize this tool, teachers may reinforce and enhance the skills and concepts that fall below the student’s RIT score, and they may introduce, with appropriate supports, skills and concepts that fall above the student’s RIT score. The DesCartes learning statements form a rich vocabulary for differentiation in a classroom; teachers can more precisely pinpoint how to organize assignments in centers, or for homogeneous small groups of students, using the wording provided in DesCartes that offer a “learning continuum” view of any target.

The **Achievement Status and Growth Summary Report** is a key report to focus on in January and May iterations of the assessment. This report provides what we find is the key value of MAP testing over other popular forms of assessment. It outlines the expected growth of each student, based on years of experience averaging typical growth patterns of millions of MAP test-

takers around the nation and world. Then it indicates if the individual student in question is meeting, exceeding, or missing that expected level of growth. The teacher-friendly second-to-last column offers a simple “Yes” or “No” response to the question, Did the student meet the expected growth for the period of time under observation? The last column indicates, with the plus or minus sign, how close or far off the student was in growth, with zero indicating that the student matched exactly his/her growth expectation successfully.

This latter report is enhanced by the more visual **Student Growth Summary Report**, offering a summative blue bar indicating the average growth of the class or grade level, combined with a gold star noting the specific point at which the typical growth of the class/grade level is met. School personnel seek to meet or exceed the growth pattern with the blue bar reaching at or above the point of the gold star. In one poignant visual such as this, a school administrator may make a case to board members, funders, or parents for shifting the strategy for learning through staffing adjustments, resource acquisition, or other refinements of the educational plan.

### **Part 3: Tools for Parents & Students**

MAP test results offer highly visual, colorful, and user-friendly reports for all stakeholders, to simplify interpretation of results.

The **Student Progress Report** is intended for parents about their individual child. In the form of a bar chart, it offers comparisons of the child’s individual achievement level to the child’s grade level average as well as to national grade-level peers, thus in one picture, placing the child on a scale with peers at school and nationally. Past results on this comparison are offered on the same page if the student has taken previous MAP tests, giving an informative picture of the growth and comparative progress of the child over the years. Additionally, the Student Progress Report states whether a student rates high, average, or low in subcategories (“Goal Areas”) of each subject tested, so parents are aware of their child’s areas of relative strength and weakness, to form an action plan supported by the home. Finally, the report provides Reading Lexile score that can be used as a more accurate basis of selection of texts for the student.

The **Student Goal-Setting Worksheet** is generated automatically just like all reports in the MAP test results; however, it is meant, as stated, as a worksheet that is written on by students to form an action plan for future growth and self-improvement. Since it is meant for students, there are no comparisons on it to the school and national achievement levels. Instead, the philosophy guiding this document is that the student is in a race with himself/herself. Whether the student is at the bottom of the national scale or not, each student has an area of relative strength vis-à-vis his/her other skills, and this is highlighted in green as a fact to celebrate and improve upon for further strength. Whether a student is at the top of the national scale or not in another subcategory of a subject, every student has a relative weakness, compared to his/her strengths, that could form the basis of a plan for self-improvement. The targeted focus of specific domains within a subject are an excellent way to guide students (and their supporters) towards curricular resources that match their specific needs, so the message is not simply to “improve in math”; rather, the domain of, say, geometry may be the area that needs boosting. Paired with the DesCartes learning statements categorized in the RIT band of the student’s score, an action plan can be systematically formed to give students ownership for their learning in an actionable, child-friendly manner.

## **Part 4: Data Analysis for Teachers**

### **FALL**

The teacher's fluency in student data at the beginning of the year sets the tone for student progress all through the year.

We capture the baseline data of students in Reading, ELA, and Math soon after the start of school in August, and then we analyze that on the Teacher Workday the day after Labor Day in early September. This allows teachers to have a fluent understanding of the achievement levels of each of their students right at the beginning of the year, so they may form homogeneous groupings for literacy and numeracy centers, assign "study buddies" at different levels for peer tutoring and mentoring, and plan for differentiation in general right from the start of the year.

We start with a two-hour session going through a worksheet of questions leading us to basic understandings about our students, early in the year. We review our school standing overall, comparing school, grade level, and national scores. We look at our School Improvement Plan, partially created by the collaboration of teachers and administration the previous May, to see if we continue to view the same trends that led us to our original idea of what and how to improve. Teachers view the results of their classes in each subject to determine student groupings for differentiation in the skill areas, and they gauge the overall class strengths and weaknesses in subcategories (goal areas, domains) of each subject in order to alter their annual plan, created before the MAP test, by pushing forward areas of weakness in their calendar in order to afford more time for those areas over the course of the year. For example, one year we noted that students were weak in Geometry. Rather than teach the Geometry unit later in the year as originally planned, the teacher decided to move it to the early part of the first semester so that the Geometry concepts could be reviewed more times throughout the year. This allows the students to strengthen their understanding of this domain by the end of the school year.

Another area of analysis in this Fall workshop are the DesCartes Learning Targets. Teachers view the specific RIT bands their students fall into by score, and plan literacy and numeracy centers and units around the actual current achievement levels in the class using this practical tool. Proficiency in explaining the data results to parents is also on our agenda. Teachers pair up to conduct a short skit with each other, taking turns being the "Teacher" or the "Parent", to explain the Student Progress Report to parents, which they will often be called upon to do when parents have questions, or if teachers invite parents in to discuss a concern about a student. Finally, teachers receive the Student Goal-Setting Worksheet generated by the MAP test, populated with individual data for each student, so they can formulate a plan for student buy-in and self-assessment routines. Teachers are free to create or select, from the MAP network of schools, other ideas for a visual format for student goal-setting that is appropriate for the age of the children in question. The school administrator requires teachers to plan for students to log in the work they do to achieve specific goals weekly at a minimum.

### **WINTER**

In January, after the results of the second MAP testing season are in, teachers meet on another full Teacher Workday—typically the day after the mid-January Martin Luther King Jr Day—to view the results from the point of view of Growth. The goal of differentiation is growth. The

formula for growth includes “just right” lessons—differentiated lessons that match the learner’s needs.

First, analysis of all the six key data points, just as was done in the Fall and underlined in the above section, is completed in a two-hour workshop. Then we move to determine student growth in the first semester as seen in the **Achievement Status and Growth (ASG) Report**. We find this to be a critical analysis, in which we identify students who are meeting or exceeding the MAP-provided projections of typical student growth mid-year, as well as those who are not. The latter data set allows us to spend the remainder of that Teacher Workday refining plans for students who are not meeting the expected pattern of growth with revised assignments or teaching strategies, student placement in either Intervention or Advanced classes, planning units and lessons with remediation or extensions to meet specific needs, identification of resources that may need to be purchased to meet those students’ needs, implementation of professional development opportunities or peer teacher mentoring to help teachers differentiate better, or other intensive analysis, so that the second half of the year is marked with more growth.

### **SPRING**

Finally, in May, we offer the summative iteration of the MAP tests, and regard the data in our Post-Planning days to see the full picture of achievement and the growth pattern of all our students. Yet again we start with a full analysis of the most recent status of student achievement. To this we add the “big picture” reports which allow us to reflect on our efforts. The **Student Growth Summary Report** is a one-page visual document offering a clear view of see the growth trends in each grade level. The **Projected Proficiency Summary Report** gives us the most powerful visual of all: one tri-color pie chart depicting Fall to Spring results in Reading and Math in terms of the percentage of students who tested below, at, or above proficiency levels—a visual “report card” for the school on our level of attainment of our goals. This visual is shared with all stakeholders, and is the basis of the following year’s annual School Improvement Plan, with all the implications of hiring, training agenda, resource acquisition, and school schedule structure. Finally, we are given a short set of **Reflection Questions** for specific ideas for program improvements next year.

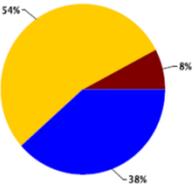
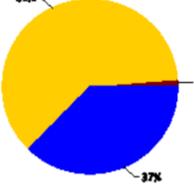
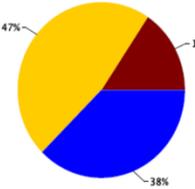
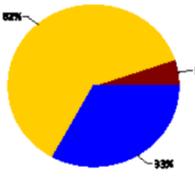
This analysis takes us full circle through our School Improvement Plan goals. A Fall-Winter-Spring routine of MAP testing offers students, parents, and teachers an excellent tool for viewing and understanding student progress.

### **Part 5: Results**

Part of our School Improvement Plan is a response to the MAP test results of the Fall. In 2012-2013, the school goal was to raise MAP scores of our low-achieving students for Reading and Math with targeted adjustments in our curricular offerings, curricular resources, and hiring decisions. We surpassed the RIT score targets for our academically below-proficient students that year, as seen by the following charts. Red indicates “below proficient,” Yellow indicates “proficient,” and Blue indicates “exceeds proficiency,” all comparing to state summative assessment proficiency levels (known as the CRCT in Georgia).

In summary, all but a handful of students moved from below-grade-level ranges (represented by the red slices) to on-level RIT bands (yellow) that year. The fall-to-spring Projected Proficiency Summary Report is a concise visual depiction synthesizing the results of multiple grade levels in

the subjects of Reading and Math. In the 2012-2013 school year, the following summary of our progress was generated by the MAP tests.

<p>Fall 2012 Reading: 8% Below Proficient 92% Meet/Exceed Proficiency</p>	<p>Spring 2013 Reading: 1 % Below Proficient 99% Meet/Exceed Proficiency</p>
	
<p>Fall 2012 Math: 16% Below Proficient 84% Meet/Exceed Proficiency</p>	<p>Spring 2013 Math: 5% Below Proficient 95% Meet/Exceed Proficiency</p>
	

Though we met our goals that year, we noticed another trend as we analyzed growth data from the January and May test seasons. Our numbers of students at the top levels of achievement (blue) are not increasing; in other words, unlike the successful push from below to on-level proficiency numbers of students, we are not similarly pushing top “proficient” students into RIT score bands that indicate mastery or “exceeding proficiency.” This is precisely our goal during the 2013-2014 school year, and our staff development on rigor and differentiation, curricular resource purchases, hiring decisions, and course design reflect this push. Insha’Allah, we hope to achieve a significant growth in the numbers of students “in the blue zone.”

**Final Thoughts**

A recently revived call to educators on the Islamic Educators’ Communication Network (IECN) email list serve asks schools to consider how Islamic schools in North America can compare themselves with each other, for the purpose of benefitting underachieving schools and identifying practices that work for academic success. MAP offers the measurement framework, professional development and networking capacity, and clearly articulated reports and statistics that would enable Islamic schools to partner and use common terms and standards to help students achieve higher goals.

As an administrator in two schools, I've seen the benefit of using MAP testing to frame the assessment landscape of a K-8 school. These tests may be used for formative and summative purposes, they have the benefit of being both norm-based, comparing students to the school, district, and nation, as well as criterion-based, with the Common Core revisions. The non-profit NWEA research centers applies high-quality standards to ensure the tests are valid and reliable, and the proficiency and projection norms are updated frequently—every 3 years, which is a high standard for the assessment industry. With 7 million users, the quantity of data by which to compare and norm is outstanding, so that the current status, growth, and projections of students offer a highly accurate view of student achievement. Finally, the format of the visual, user-friendly reports allows both students and teachers to “own” the data and the achievement at a level that was not experienced by us with other testing products.

I feel that Islamic Schools in the United States would benefit from using a common assessment tool, to leverage the results into strategies and goals that would be easily communicated to other Islamic Schools. This would increase the collaborative capacity of our community schools to help improve each other, by using the same evaluation terms and goals as we strategize for higher student performance. Using the same assessment tool would also provide parents with a consistent tool to recognize the level and quality of teaching and learning around the country, in this highly mobile society. Our schools' professional development goals and strategies could also unify for cost savings at scale, when even the annual ISNA Ed Forum could provide opportunities for Islamic School educators to gather annually for the more effective yet costly trainings that NWEA provides.

## Classroom Technology: A Tool to Enhance Arabic Learning

*Lamya M. Najem*

### Abstract

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Communicating technology has recently been advancing, and Arabic classrooms have been adopting such technology to help students learn and enjoy Arabic. Students have shown high motivation to learn Arabic via Movie Maker and Comics among other tools. With such tools, the student feels in control of his learning time; as he can repeat, adjust, and retry every step along the way, in class as well as at his free time. The flexibility to re-do his activities, listen to the vocabulary under consideration, and watch the cultural segments, as many times as he wishes, have helped improve the learning process and in return have improved the classroom management and understanding Arabic culture. The student in fact feels he is part of his own learning process; he is creating something useful. Results have shown that the more number of words acquired and repeated, the better the learners express themselves in Arabic. Students have also shown a great interest in these fun-to-learn activities, better engaged, decreased anxiety level, and increased love for the Arabic Language.

### About the Author

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**Lamya Mukhlef Najem** was born in Baghdad, Iraq, after completing her work in the High School in Baghdad, Iraq, she moved with her husband, Shakir Al-Ani, to the United States of America. She entered a correspondence college and earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Islamic Studies and Islamic Law in December of 1997. In May of 2010 she graduated with a Master in Education from Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota. She is currently teaching Arabic language to elementary age students in the Islamic School of Columbia-MO and to college age students in Moberly Area Community College.

## Classroom Technology: A Tool to Enhance Arabic Learning

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### STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Teaching the Arabic language to elementary students in a private school in Columbia, MO has been my passion for many years. My classrooms are filled with diverse learners and many backgrounds.

Thinking that Arabic is too difficult to learn, students were hesitant to speak the target language and use it outside the classroom or even among each other. As an effort to let the students become more engaged in loving the language, I started filling the classroom with fun opportunities for them to lower their anxiety levels by adding many technology tools to be used to present their work and preserve what they do to share with others. Specifically, this study addresses the following research questions:

How would the use of technology tools enhance learning Arabic as a foreign language in a K-12 classroom?

How can the use of technology tools help engage and motivate students to learn the Arabic language in the classroom?

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research in the teaching and learning of Arabic as a foreign language is very minimal; as it is a new area of study in the world of languages. Mamouri (2005) stated that, “There is surprisingly little scientific research conducted on Arabic reading acquisition and even less of it in the Arabic region itself.” Accordingly, this literature review will touch on related topics that will help support this action classroom research using technology as a tool to enhance learning Arabic.

Learning a foreign language is exciting and engaging for learners, however it faces some obstacles including anxiety and nervousness of using the foreign language especially with others. Horwitz et al. (1986) has associated foreign language anxiety to three related performance anxieties: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and the fear of negative evaluation. The learners’ fear here is not limited to test fear; going far beyond that by being sensitive to what others might say about him. Horwitz et al. (1986) added more elements to these three types of fears by conceiving that foreign language learning process comes with challenges to the learners that they do not face while learning other fields using their own native language. Without realizing such a natural fact, the learner may face this foreign language anxiety with the possibility of bearing its consequences or not. Many learners quit learning a foreign language altogether. The role of the teacher is crucial here. She has to explain to the learners this fact so as they will not lose their high self-confidence. The teacher must either help her class cope with the existing anxiety-provoking situation, or try to make the learning context less stressful (Horwitz et al. 1986).

In the case of the Arabic language, which is considered among the Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTL), learners’ anxiety is even more apparent. From one side, the Arabic alphabet is different from the Latin alphabet. The nature of Arabic cursive writing is another issue that may add to learners’ anxiety. The Arabic culture, where Arabic is naturally understood, is different from the American culture, which in turn adds to learners’ anxiety. On average, an English native needs 1,320 hours of intensive Arabic program to be at the same level of proficiency for which it takes him 480 hours to learn French (AlKhafaifi 2005). The gap between MSA and SA is also a factor in anxiety development. The fear that a learner may have is that, even if he is able to master MSA, he may not be able to adequately communicate with Arabs themselves. It is also a possibility that those who master an Arabic dialect have the fear that they may not be able to read an Arabic newspaper, or comprehend an official speech, radio or TV pod cast. These anxiety sources are to be considered in addition to those discussed above which are not specific to the Arabic language.

One of the ways to reduce such anxiety is to keep the learners' age group as homogeneous as possible and by reducing the number of learners within each group itself by adopting the workstation approach (Najem 2010). It was my observation during that research that led to this action classroom research which specifically focuses on the role of technology in enhancing learning of Arabic.

The use of online videos such as YouTube to increase learners' acquaintance with the Arabic language being spoken will greatly decrease anxiety and increase their engagement with the language. I have used such videos to send students home with so as they could listen to and interact with and become better aware of the language dialogue and cultural inferences. Using my observations, I have seen this anxiety levels decreasing gradually due to the many varieties of technological tools I used in the classroom to enhance their learning.

Students now live in the technology era and are excited about using the computer in different ways. Allowing them to stay connected with their love of technology along with learning a new language will motivate them and remove this anxiety and fear. They can express themselves by using tools that they love and master in many ways.

### MOTIVATION, TEACHING AND TECHNOLOGY

Taking a glimpse at a foreign language classroom today, one can see that the new innovative technology has reached the classrooms. It is very important that technology become integrated with foreign languages in the classroom (Hussein, 2010). This usage also encourages students to take their education to a higher level of being creative and using the language naturally. The increased use of technology in the classroom involves both teaching and learning as it does not only support or guide the learner, but also the teacher.

Huang & Liaw (2005) stated that, "no matter how sophisticated and powerful the state of technology maybe, the extent to which it is implemented depends on users having a positive attitude toward it."

Part of the writing workshop process, in my classroom, is to revise and edit students' work. The majority of the time students are very resistant to this step and would completely shut down and refuse to do anything further. In order to help students improve their writing skills as well as accept the editing process, I ask students to write a story in a paragraph form so as they would transfer it to a comic form, or as part of their movie. This way students are more eager to edit and accept revisions to their writings so as they could get on a computer and start making their comic using a program called Comic Life, or to record themselves retell the story they made for the movie.

### TECHNOLOGY AND CULTURE

Integrating technology with foreign language learning is very important in engaging all eyes and ears of students to better understand the language and culture. Integrating the use of videos and making videos help "present real-life cultural situations, thus creating meaningful classroom environments" (Ambard, 2012). To help students who are not able to visit countries where the target language is spoken, Svensson and Borgarskola (1985) stated that "video is an excellent tool to provide cultural insights...and effectively shifts the teaching methodology from memorization to more flexible strategies for the acquisition, organizations, retention, and application of foreign language learning. Shrum and Glisan (2005) further elaborated on this concept by explaining that, that "video, whether obtained from the web or other sources, is a useful tool to introduce authentic sociolinguistic elements into the classroom, alleviating the need to travel abroad" (Ambard, 2012).

### VOCABULARY AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

A child in the Arab World starts his schooling at an early age with about two to five thousand words already orally acquired from the society (Mamouri 2005). But, a child who starts to learn Arabic as a foreign language may not have any prior knowledge of Arabic vocabulary. It is dependent upon the teacher to create the atmosphere in which such a student builds his vocabulary acquisition. The more words the student knows, the better he/she comprehends the text and the more proficiently he/she may use the language. Knowing the words is one side of the story, using them in meaningful ways is another (Joshi 2005.)

That is why it is very important for the students to understand the vocabulary and be exposed through many means by providing more opportunities of usage to better communicate. Repetition also enhances vocabulary acquisition and skill. However, repetition does not entail randomly reading and re-reading vocabulary words to memorize. Technology tools provide many ways for teachers and students to present different ways to show student understanding and usage of the target language through videos, PowerPoint, movies, and other ways. It entails using the vocabulary through several language games and occasions where students would communicate with understanding and comprehension.

It was through the observation during my previous research (Najem 2010) that led to this action classroom research where the role of technology is being closely monitored while teaching Arabic as a foreign language.

## **METHODS**

Through my many years of teaching the Arabic language to many different groups of students of all ages and backgrounds, I have found that many can learn lots of vocabulary words and to read and write. However, their lack of communication skills has stopped them from successfully using the language outside the classroom. Young students mainly associate language learning with boredom and uselessness. They learn it only for religious purposes which are not comprehensible at this age. They feel it is mandatory to learn the language, but without much inner motivation. This helped me realize how much I needed to change the teaching of the language to make it more engaging and motivating for the students. My goal was not only that my students learn the language, but also to communicate successfully at any given circumstance, depending of course on their proficiency level.

My classes are part of a private school in the Midwest, where English is the spoken language in the society and Arabic is used only during one hour, five days a week. My students are encouraged to use Arabic at least during that hour. When they are outside the classroom, they either speak English, their native language, or a combination of both. Modern Standard Arabic, MSA, and the Spoken Arabic, SA, are mainly used in the classroom to communicate with the students to help them become more acquainted and immersed with the language.

At the beginning of each unit of study, I present to the students the new vocabulary words and the content of subject matter through many different technology tools, such as PowerPoint, cultural videos, and pictures just to mention a few. I found that students become more excited and engaged in learning and using the technology to enhance the target language communication skills. For example, I would give each pair of students a picture so they discuss the contents of

the picture in a meaningful way. This way they are expected to use the vocabulary with each other to better understand how to communicate about the topic.

Currently, I teach Arabic to three groups of diverse students; 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders. I started teaching at this private elementary school since the days when there was no mention of classroom technologies. As these technologies developed, I worked on introducing them to my students. To help preserve these projects and memories, I have created a DropBox account especially for the Arabic class to make accessible in the future wherever they may be. I report here on three such tools:

1. **Moviemaker:** At the end of one unit of study, students are asked to present their projects using Moviemaker. An example of such project is “During the Eid.” After discussing the subject of Eid and the importance of giving and sharing the happiness with all Muslims, students are expected to do the following:
  - a. Students are given four printed-out pictures with related words and asked to write a story about the occasion.
  - b. I would then proof-read their stories for them to rewrite in a more accurate way.
  - c. Afterwards, I have the students come up with a list of pictures they want to use in their movie.
  - d. I then find those pictures online using Google Images, for example, and place them in a file on their computer.
  - e. They will put together their movie and narrate their stories as they record the words that go along with the pictures.
  - f. They are expected to listen to their recordings to make sure the pictures match the words being narrated.
  - g. Students finally publish the movie and present it to the class.
  - h. To share their movies with their families, I place their movie file in DropBox where parents are able to access from home.
2. **PowerPoint:** Using this tool, students present their projects with sounds and comments. Each student prepares the topic, audio records their narrative, and inserts the narratives and the sound into the PowerPoint presentation. The Four Seasons, My Family, and My Favorite Place to Visit are among the topics students presented using this program. The following is how students created this kind of project.
  - a. Students answer the major questions about each topic including What? Where? How? Who? Why? And When?
  - b. Students prepare their presentation using pictures to answer those questions as well as record themselves to narrate their explanations to each.

- c. Students use special effects and other tools to enhance their presentation.
  - d. They finally publish and present their work to their class.
  - e. To share with families, I place their PowerPoint presentation in DropBox where parents are able to access from home.
3. Comic Life is used to add an extra element of fun to the class.
- a. Students are asked to read funny stories such as those of Juha then make up their own story.
  - b. Students are required to write their own funny story using their own Arabic expression and search appropriate pictures using Google Image or create their own.
  - c. They then add dialogue to each character to complete the story.
  - d. Comic Life is a tool to make a comic strip with lots of effects and shapes. When published, it can be printed into a booklet format and kept in the classroom library.

With these three tools, students are required to become familiar and learn to type using the Arabic keyboard. These tools have added a positive environment and energy to my Arabic class. Kids at this age are native to the technology era we live in now. They love to explore and play with these tools, and while playing they are also learning the Arabic language as well as the Arabic culture in a higher efficiency than what I had witnessed before this era. They also realize that Arabic after all is not an old fashioned language, neither is it boring nor impossible to learn. Students find themselves engaged in a hands-on learning approach where they are the learners as well as the creators of the learning material. Students have shown better self-discipline, acting responsibly, confidence, and well engaged in the learning process. All these positive attitudes have helped me as a teacher to better manage the class, better communicate with the students, and made the teaching/learning Arabic process more joyful and less stressful.

In fact, with these tools, my classroom is no more a place where I lecture while my students are at the receiving end. It has become an interaction workplace where the learner is also part of the teaching process. Students can create their own learning material, criticize what they create, repeat and adjust while listening to the Arabic text, uttering it, and trying to make some sense of it in their mind.

### **RECOMMENDATION OF PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION**

Many times we overhear students and teachers of the Arabic language complain that the Arabic subject is very boring and the students are not motivated at all and as a result classroom management and behavior management are at high risk of failure. I have found that with these engaging activities and ideas, both students and teachers eagerly look forward for the Arabic

class. I recommend that each teacher of any foreign language, and more specifically the Arabic language, to research within her classroom for resources and ideas she may acquire from her students that would enhance learning and motivation. There are many resources that make learning and teaching such technology tools for teaching a foreign language much easier and more user-friendly.

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## **The SIOP Model for Islamic Schools- A Research-based and Validated Instructional Approach for Teaching All Learners Effectively**

*Farah Naz*

### **Abstract**

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The SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) Model is a product of several research studies since the early 1990s. Though originally developed to target the needs of English language learners, the SIOP Model encompasses universal techniques and strategies that have proven to be useful for all types of students.

### **About the Author**

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**Farah Naz** holds B.A., B. Ed., and M.Ed. degrees from The University of Karachi. She has Montessori certificate from London School of Montessori Teachers and Post Graduate Certification in Advanced Professional Studies from the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, UK. Farah Naz also holds several educator certifications from the Texas Education Agency, which include EC – 4 Generalist, ESL, GT, Reading 4-8, Instructional Leadership Development, and Professional Development and Appraisal System.

During her 18 years of experience as an educator, Farah Naz has worked at schools in Pakistan, New Jersey, and Texas in diverse capacities. She currently resides in Texas, and is the principal for a full time Islamic School- Everest Academy. Farah Naz was the leading member of the committee that founded the school six years ago. Under her leadership, the school received exemplary accreditation from SACS/CASI in the third year of its inception; and school enrollment has grown from 5 to 215 with a waiting list for most classrooms. Farah also volunteers at some Sunday Schools and has provided webinar training to MCNA schools that was attended by 100+ teachers from all over the USA.

Farah Naz attended the SIOP Summer Institute in summer of 2012 and adopted implementation of the SIOP model as the annual professional development goal for 2012-13 at her campus. Teachers were strategically trained on one component at a time through face to face training and book study of ‘Making Content Comprehensible for Elementary English Learners’. This has promoted academic success of all students as evident in overall school culture and student test scores.

## **The SIOP Model for Islamic Schools- A Research-based and Validated Instructional Approach for Teaching All Learners Effectively**

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**SIOP-** Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol aims at teaching of grade level curriculum strategically thereby making content concepts comprehensible while promoting academic English development. The universal strategies and concepts that fall under the SIOP Umbrella are beneficial for all types of learners. The high-yield SIOP techniques empower teachers to

make instruction meaningful and promote academic success of their students. Given the scarcity of resources due to budget constraints in most Islamic schools, it is especially crucial for our Islamic school teachers to gain an understanding of SIOP features and incorporate them in their lessons.

The SIOP model encompasses 30 features that have been grouped into 8 components.

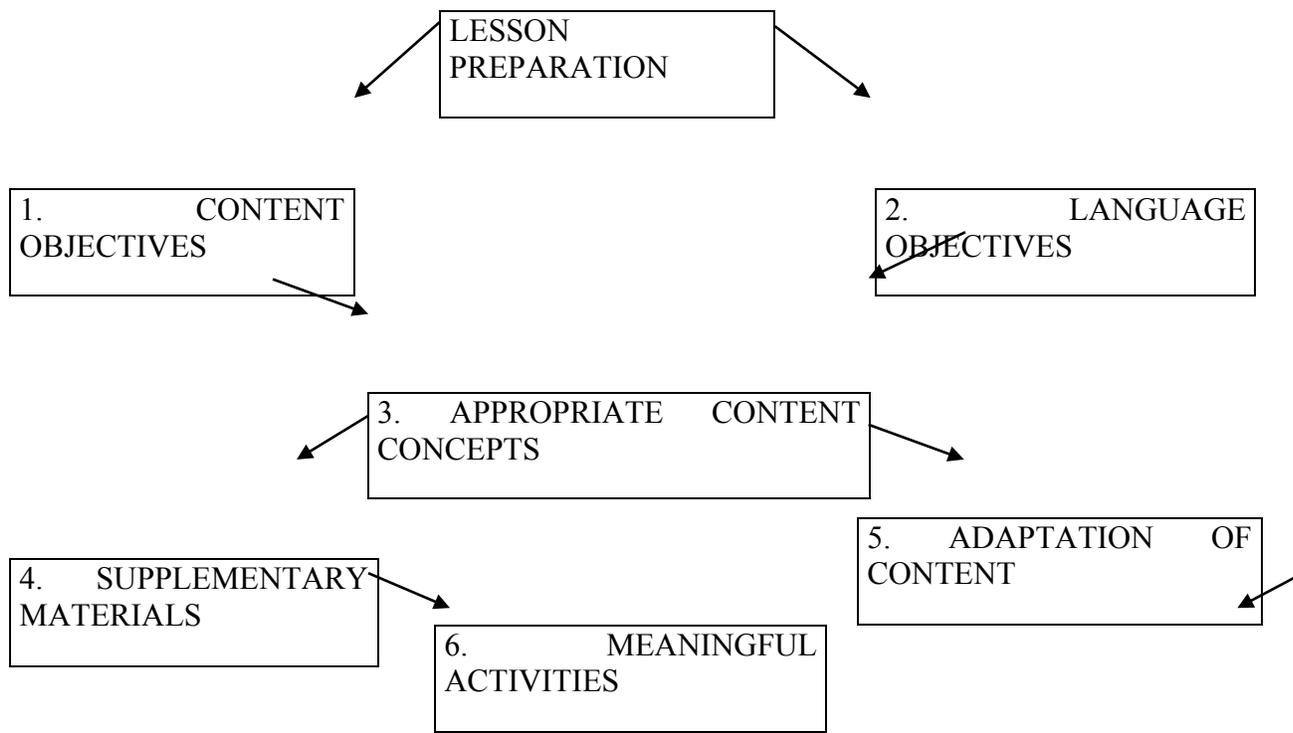
<b>Components</b>	<b>Features</b>
<b>Lesson Preparation</b>	1. Share content objective orally and in writing.
	2. Share language objective orally and in writing.
	3. Use appropriate content concepts.
	4. Use supplementary materials.
	5. Adapt content as needed.
	6. Make activities meaningful.
<b>Building Background</b>	7. Links to students' background experiences.
	8. Links to students' past learning.
	9. Emphasize key vocabulary.
<b>Comprehensible Input</b>	10. Use appropriate rate of speech.
	11. Explain academic tasks clearly with writing Instructions and modeling.
	12. Use comprehensible input techniques (visuals, Video clips, role play, gestures, etc.)
<b>Learning Strategies</b>	13. Give opportunities to use learning strategies.
	14. Provide scaffolds.
	15. Use a variety of questions types and tasks.
<b>Interaction</b>	16. Give frequent opportunities for interaction.
	17. Have various grouping configuration (at least 2 per lesson).
	18. Provide wait time.
	19. Clarify in L1 if needed and if possible.

<b>Practice &amp; Application</b>	20. Provide hands-on materials for practice.
	21. Have activities that apply know knowledge.
	22. Integrate all four language skills in activities.
<b>Lesson Delivery</b>	23. Review content objective at end of lesson.
	24. Review language objective at end of lesson.
	25. Engage students 90-100% of the time.
	26. Use appropriate pacing.
<b>Review &amp; Assessment</b>	27. Review key vocabulary.
	28. Review key content concepts.
	29. Give regular feedback to student output.
	30. Assess comprehension and learning of objectives throughout lesson.

Sheltered Instruction (SI) can apply to many classroom situations: classes composed entirely of ELLs, mixed classes or entirely native learners. It also caters for the wide range of learners and learner abilities.

We will now look at each main component and their corresponding features. It is important to understand that it is not necessary to follow the same order in implementing the SIOP model: the components and features are all interrelated and should be integrated into every lesson.

Reference: Making Content Comprehensible For English Learners. The Siop Model” Jana Echevarria, Maryellen Vogt, Deborah J. Short. Pearson Education, 2008)

**Component 1- Lesson Preparation:**Content and Language Objectives clearly defined and articulated:

At the start of each lesson, it is very important to state, explain, and write the lesson objectives in student-friendly language. Content objectives should be written in terms of what students will learn to do; language objectives define the processes students will use to learn. It may be necessary to limit content objectives to 1 or 2 per lesson to reduce complexity

In general, content and language objectives should be: \*Observable; \*Written and presented in language the students can understand; \*Content objectives related to the key concept of the lesson; \*Language objectives promote student academic language growth; \*Language objectives connect clearly with the lesson topic or lesson activities; \*Teacher has a plan for assessing student progression on meeting these objectives.

(For lesson plans consult: “99 Ideas and Activities for Teaching English Learners with the SIOP Model” – Vogt & Echevarria, 2008; also: [www.cal.org](http://www.cal.org); also: [www.siopinstitute.net](http://www.siopinstitute.net)).

### Content concepts appropriate for age and educational background.

The concepts, language, illustrations, etc. must be appropriate to the students' age. Lessons should include ways of activating students' prior knowledge. If the gap between what a student knows and what is required to be learnt is too great, the lesson should include background building i.e. reviewing key background concepts.

### Supplementary materials used to a high degree

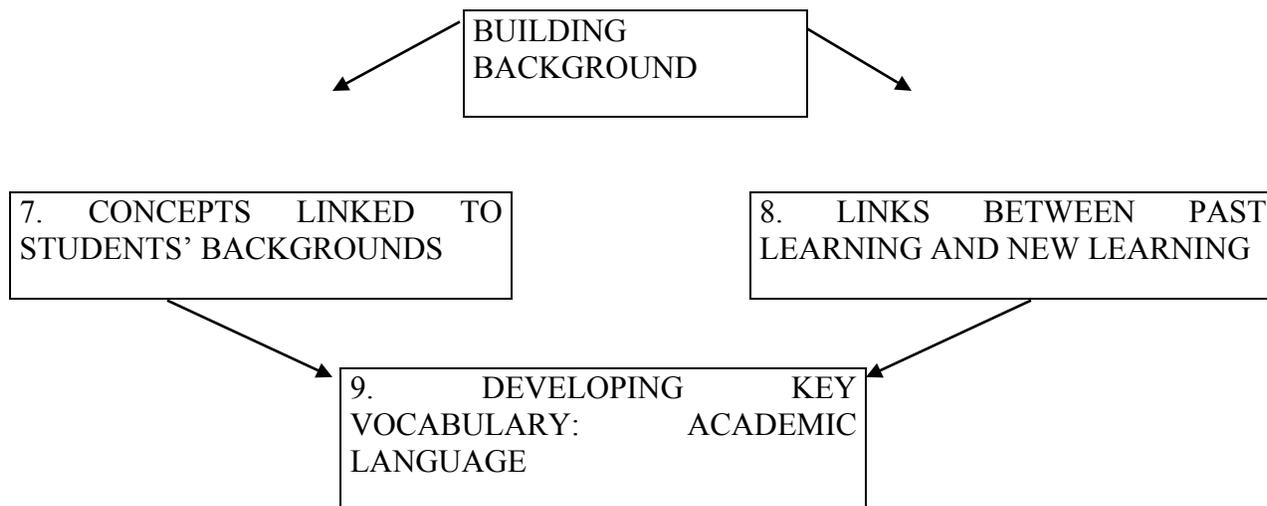
Effective SIOP teaching involves the use of many supplementary materials, which contextualize learning. The aim of using these materials is to enhance meaning, clarify confusing concepts, and make lessons more relevant. They can also help to bridge the gap between students' knowledge and the new concepts. Example include: \*Hands-on manipulatives (manipulating objects helps to learn new vocabulary and concepts); \*Realia (they make connections to the students' own lives); \*Pictures/Photos; \*Visuals (graphs, charts, maps, timelines, bulletin boards, etc.); \*Multimedia (DVDs, C.D. ROMs, Internet, video clips – see: [www.unitedstreaming.com](http://www.unitedstreaming.com)); \*Demonstrations (by teacher or students, individually or in groups); \*Related literature (fiction and non-fiction), including graded readers.

### Adaptation of content to all levels of student proficiency

Texts and other materials should be accessible to all students, but without “watering down” – i.e. not simplifying so much that content is lost. Throughout the lesson, reading strategies: pre-reading, whilst-reading and post-reading should be used. Examples: \*Graphic Organizers (schematic diagrams that provide conceptual clarity for information that is difficult to understand – e.g. Venn diagrams, timelines, text maps, word webs, clusters, etc.); \*Outlines (prepared by the teacher as an aid to note-taking, or partially prepared, leaving the students to fill in the remaining information); \*Levelled Study Guides (with summaries, guided questions, hints, etc.); \*Highlighted Texts; \*Taped Texts; \*Adapted Texts (rewriting and simplifying texts without “dumbing down”); \*Jigsaw Text Reading (the class is divided into groups, 1 or 2 “experts” from each group form another group and read a difficult text together, the teacher makes sure they understand the text – which can be divided into sections – then the “experts” go back to their original group and explain and read the text together with their colleagues.); \*Marginal Notes; \*Native Language Texts.

### Meaningful activities that integrate lesson concepts with language practice.

We must provide oral and written language practice that is relevant to lesson concepts. Authentic, meaningful activities are best, rather than abstract experiences.

**Component 2: Building Background:****Concepts explicitly linked to students' background experiences**

When students lack the prior knowledge necessary to understand, 3 teaching interventions may be used: 1. Teach vocabulary as a pre-reading step; 2. Provide experiences; 3. Introduce a conceptual framework to enable students to develop appropriate background information.

In order to activate prior knowledge, use activities like brainstorming; reading a story, an article, a play or picture book about the lesson topic; viewing a related video; using the “Insert Method”; “Pretest with a Partner”

“Insert Method”: Photocopy the text to be read, hand out one per student, ask them to read with a peer, while reading they insert the following codes into the text: a tick indicates a concept or fact they already know; a question mark indicates a concept/fact that is confusing or not understood; an exclamation mark indicates something unusual or surprising; a plus sign indicates a concept/fact new to the reader. When the partners finish, they share their markings with another pair of students – question marks that are cleared up via discussion are replaced by asterisks. When the groups finish working, the whole class discusses what they have read with the teacher.

“Pre-test with a Partner”: the pre-test should be similar or the same as the post-test to be administered at the end of lesson. Distribute one pre-test and one pencil per pair of students, they pass the pre-test and the pencil back and forth, reading each question aloud, discussing possible answers. They come to a consensus and write an answer. This activity gives students an opportunity to activate prior knowledge and also share background information, while the teacher circulates to assess what the students know, noting gaps, and misinformation.

### Links explicitly made between past learning and new concepts

The teacher must build a bridge between previous lessons and concepts and the current lesson. Many students do not automatically make such links. Explicit links can be made through an initial discussion (“who remembers...?”), or by reviewing graphic organizers, previous lesson notes, transparencies or PowerPoint slides – all to review key concepts and key vocabulary.

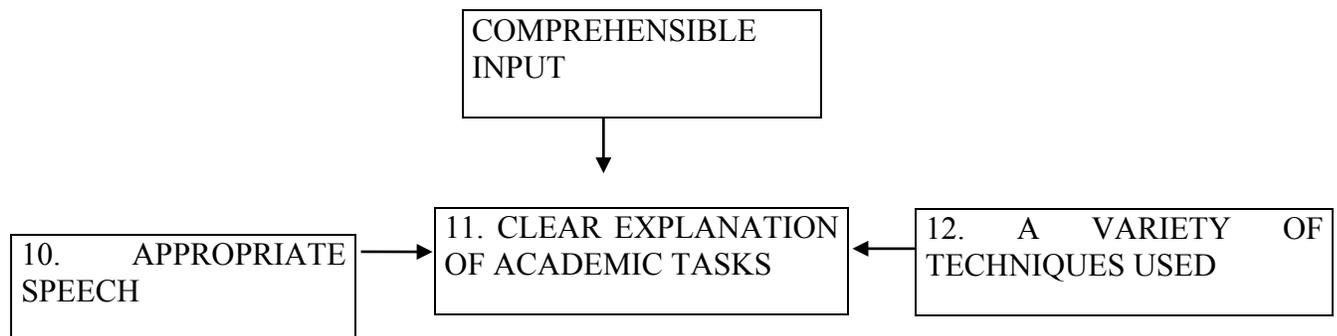
### Key vocabulary emphasized (introduced, written, repeated, and highlighted)

So-called “academic language” has 3 key elements: 1. Content words – key words, terms and concepts associated with a particular topic; 2. Process/Function words – words to do with functional language e.g. how to request information, state conclusions, etc. Also language used in the classroom for processes and tasks (e.g. discuss, classify, graph, etc.). Also “transition words” (therefore, in conclusion, moreover, etc.) and “sequence words” (first, then, next, finally, etc.); 3. Words and word parts that teach the structure of English, based on English morphology. Teachers should help students to recognize roots and base words, prefixes and suffixes. Useful information about academic vocabulary can be found at: [www.uefap.com/vocab/select/awl.htm](http://www.uefap.com/vocab/select/awl.htm)

Four important principles for teaching vocabulary: 1. Students should be active in developing their understanding of words and ways to understand them; 2. Students should personalize word learning (e.g. personal dictionary, mnemonic strategies, etc.); 3. Students should be immersed in words (surrounded by word exercises, wall charts, etc.); 4. Students should build on multiple sources of information to learn words through repeated exposures (letting students see and hear new words more than once, etc.). There is little benefit to selecting a list of words and asking students to copy them and look them up in the dictionary. The number of words should be tailored to the students’ English and literacy skills and the words should be presented in context, not in isolation. Vocabulary tasks must be meaningful. Besides dictionary training, here are some examples of tasks: \*Word Sorts: students categorize words or phrases. The categories can be set up by the teacher – e.g. word endings, derivations, sounds, spelling, meaning, etc.; \*Contextualizing Key Vocabulary: the teacher selects key vocabulary from the text to be studied, introduces the terms at the beginning of the lesson and systematically defines and/or demonstrates them; we can divide the students into small reading groups; \*Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy (VSS): after reading a text, students self-select several words that are essential to understand concepts; they make a class list of vocabulary for a particular lesson or unit; ask students to demonstrate their knowledge of these words through written and oral activities; \*Personal Dictionaries: similar to VSS; \*Word Wall: words are listed alphabetically on a large poster; these words are “re-visited” frequently through-out the lesson/unit; it should be carefully maintained and not over cluttered – every so often the students decide which words they no longer need on the poster; \*Concept Definition Map: this is a good activity to do before attempting a composition exercise; \*Cloze Sentences: to teach or review words (gap-filling); \*List-Group Level: part of a brain-storming exercise – students brainstorm key words and invent categories (labels) to group the words into; \*Word Generation: e.g. write “-port” on the blackboard and elicit words like “report, import, export, etc.”; \*Word Study Books: students group their selected words by form or meaning; \*Vocabulary Games; \*Self-Assessment: on a 4-point score - 1. Never seen or heard the word; 2. Seen it or heard it, but don’t know the meaning;

3. Vaguely know the meaning and can associate it with a concept or context; 4. I know it very well.

### **Component 3: Comprehensible Input:**



Comprehensible Input means making the content understandable for students. Comprehensible input techniques are essential to help ELLs understand what the teacher is saying. Teachers will increase students' understanding by using appropriate speech, coupled with a variety of techniques aimed at making content clear.

#### Speech appropriate for students' proficiency levels

“Speech” refers to: 1. Rate and enunciation; and 2. Complexity of speech. The first addresses how the teacher speaks, and the second refers to what is said (level of vocabulary, complexity of sentence structure, use of idioms, etc.). For beginner ELLs teachers should slow down their rate of speech, use pauses and enunciate clearly; idioms should be avoided: the language should be straight-forward, clear and accompanied by a visual representation. Paraphrasing and repetition enhance understanding. Simple sentence structures should be used: subject- verb-object. We should reduce or eliminate embedded clauses.

#### Clear explanation of academic tasks

It is very important for ELLs to have instructions presented in a step-by-step manner and also shown or demonstrated. Oral directions should always be accompanied by written instructions.

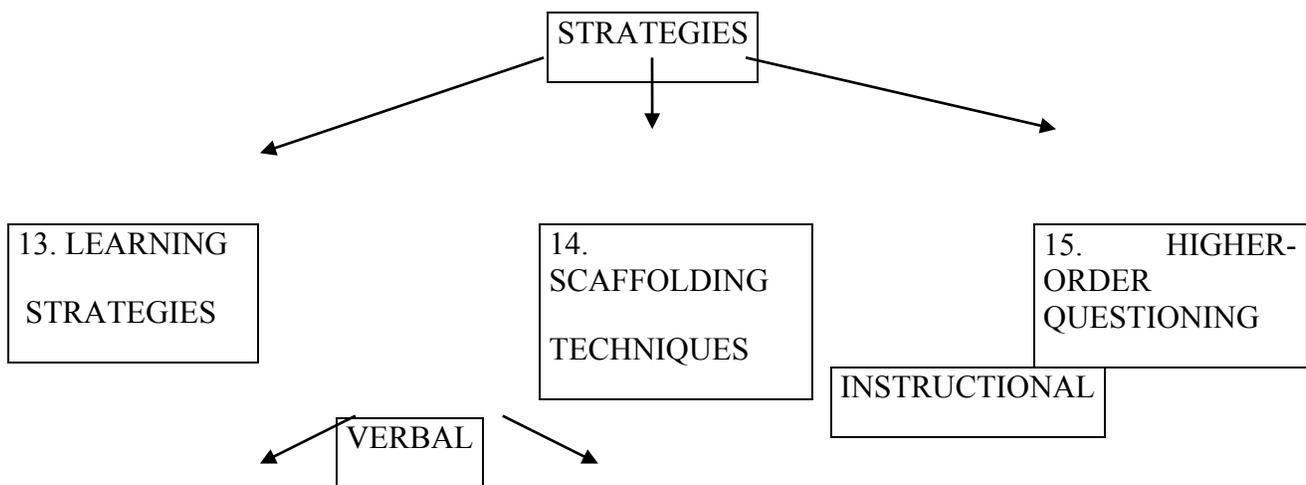
#### A variety of techniques used to make content concepts clear

High-quality SIOP lessons offer students a variety of ways for making the content accessible to them:

\*Use gestures, body language, pictures and objects to accompany speech.

- \*Provide a model of a process, task or assignment.
- \*Preview material for optimal learning – allowing students to prepare themselves for the information that is coming, allowing them to focus on key concepts and access prior knowledge.
- \*Allow alternative forms for expressing their understanding of information and concepts. Students need to be able to express the information they are learning in a variety of ways.
- \*Use multimedia and other technologies in lessons.
- \*Provide repeated exposures to words, concepts and skills. Repetition is very important but we must also avoid monotony – i.e. repeat, but in different ways.
- \*Use “sentence strips” – e.g. students can review events in a story by writing each event on a sentence strip, then sequencing the strips to retell the story.
- \*For teenagers, be succinct – they may not be able to store many ideas at once, so the amount of input should be limited. Instructions should be straightforward and given one at a time.
- \*Use graphic organizers effectively – to show key points graphically – but they should match the task in hand and lead to attaining the lesson’s objectives. Some graphic organizers may be simple, such as a problem/solution chart or a web with vocabulary definitions.
- \*Audiotape texts – a taped version of a text may help comprehension considerably.

#### **Component 4: Strategies**



Techniques and methods for learning and retaining information are systematically taught, reviewed and accessed in effective SIOP classes.

### Ample opportunities provided for students to use learning strategies

Three types of learning strategies have been identified by researchers: 1. Metacognitive Strategies; 2. Cognitive Strategies; 3. Social/Affective Strategies. Other research suggests there is a continuum of strategies occurring during the teaching/learning process – from teacher-centred, teacher-assisted, peer-assisted and student-centred. The ultimate goal is for students to develop independence; however, many ELLs have difficulty initiating an active role in using learning strategies because they are focussing mental energy on developing language skills, so SIOP teachers must assist them to develop these strategies – they need to know: what the strategy is, how to use it and when and why to use it. Teachers should use a variety of approaches, e.g.: \*Mnemonics; \*SQP2RS (“SQUEEPERS”) – this is an instructional framework for teaching content with expository texts:

1. Survey (students preview and scan the text, looking for key concepts – 1 minute); 2. Question (in groups, students generate questions likely to be answered by reading the text; teacher writes out the questions and marks the most frequent ones); 3. Predict (as a whole, the class comes up with 3 or 4 concepts they think they will learn from the text); 4. Read (while reading, in pairs or small groups or in small groups with the teacher, the students search for answers to their questions and they jot them down); 5. Respond (students answer the questions, orally or in writing with partners or group members and then formulate new questions for the next section of text – if it is a long text; the teacher leads the discussion of key concepts, clarifying any misunderstandings); 6. Summarize (orally or in writing, alone, with a partner or in small groups). Other learning strategies include:

\*Gist (= Generating Interactions between Schemata and Texts) - together, teacher and students read a section of a text; after reading it, teacher assists students in underlining 10 or more words or concepts thought to be the most important in order to understand the text; list the words/concepts on the blackboard; without the text, together write a summary sentence or two, using as many of the listed words as possible. Repeat the process with different sections of the text and at the end write a topic sentence to precede the summary sentence(s).

\*Rehearsal Strategies – rehearsal is used when verbatim recall of information is needed; use visual aids such as flash cards, underlining and note taking to help students to commit information to memory.

\*Graphic Organizers – graphic representations of key concepts.

\*Comprehension Strategies – prediction, self-questioning, determining importance, summarizing, etc.

\*Direct Reading-Thinking Activity (D.R.T.A.) – especially with exciting, narrative texts. Basically, the students make predictions and are encouraged to read to see if they are right, then go back over their predictions; students can vote on which is most likely to happen next.

### Scaffolding techniques consistently used, assisting and supporting student understanding

A scaffold is a platform to support workers. Teachers “scaffold” instruction when they provide substantial support in the earliest stages of teaching a new concept. There are 2 types of scaffolding:

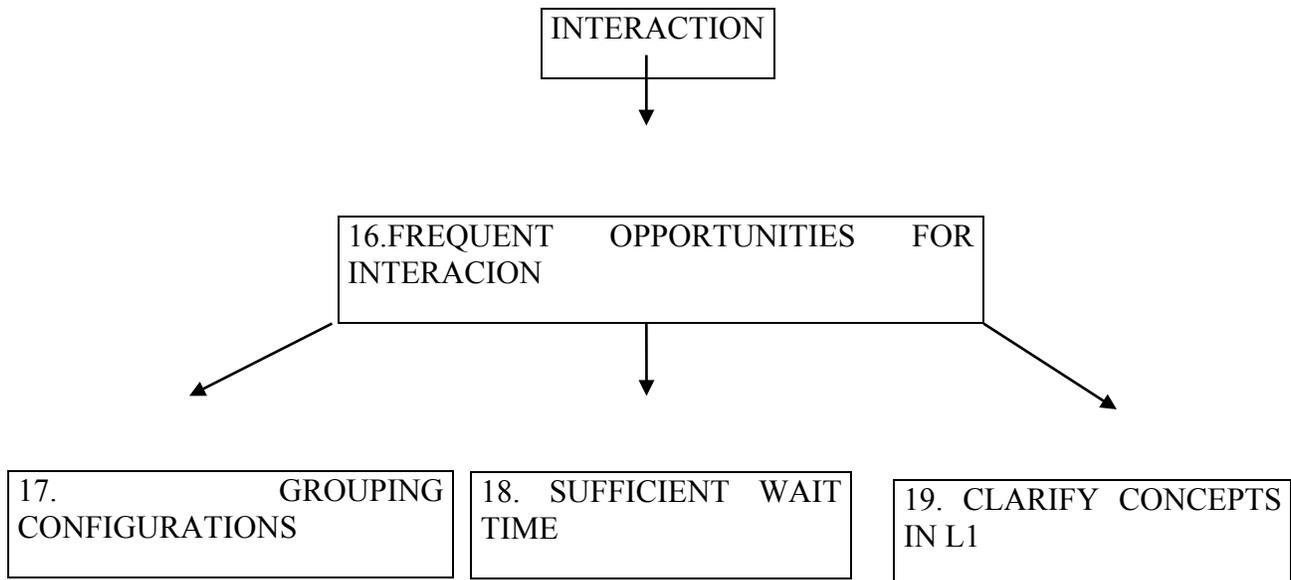
1. Verbal- Examples: paraphrasing; using “think-alouds” (teacher thinks out loud to show how to do something); reinforcing contextual definitions; providing correct pronunciation by repeating students’ correct responses; slowing speech, increasing pauses and speaking in short phrases.
2. Instructional. Examples: graphic organizers used as a pre-reading tool, etc.
3. Procedural- Examples: one-to-one teaching, small group instruction, partnering or grouping students effectively, plenty of opportunity to practice, etc.

### A variety of questions or tasks that promote higher-order thinking skills

Teachers should ask questions that promote critical thinking – based on Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: 1. Remember (a. recognizing; b. recalling); 2. Understand (a. interpreting; b. exemplifying; c. classifying; d. summarizing; d. inferring; f. comparing; g. explaining); 3. Apply (a. executing, b. implementing); 4. Analyse (a. differentiating; b. organizing; c. attributing); 5. Evaluate (a. checking; b. critiquing; 6. Create (a. generating, b. planning; c. producing).

This taxonomy is based on the principle that learning proceeds from concrete knowledge to abstract values. “Higher- order questions” should be planned before the lesson. We can teach students to recognize different levels of questions (QARs – Question-Answer-Relationships) – from literal questions whose answers can be easily found in the text, and simple yes/no questions, up to “inferential questions” which require thinking and searching or “reading between the lines”. This helps students to learn how to formulate their own questions – for example, it is important that they are able to write their own research questions before they use the Internet to find information. Further, it is a recognised good-reading practice for the reader to “question the author” in order to develop comprehension of the text.

## Component 5: Interaction



Teachers tend to dominate the linguistic aspects of lessons – generally there is too much “teacher talk”. We should create ample opportunities for students to practice the language that they are learning, especially the “academic language”. Allowing more interaction in class, pair work, group work, etc. stimulates the brain, increases motivation, provides for less confident students to participate, allows more processing time, and can increase attention levels.

### Frequent opportunities for interaction and discussion

This feature emphasises the importance of balancing linguistic turn-taking between teacher and students, and of encouraging students to elaborate their responses above yes/no or one-word answers – e.g. “Tell me more about...”, “Why is that important..?”, “How do you know...?”, “In other words...?” – i.e. extending the students’ responses and giving them time to express their thoughts. Effective SIOP teachers plan instruction so students have opportunities to work with one another on academic tasks. Students may interact in pairs, triads and small groups, literature circles, jigsaw reading, debates, science experiments, etc. Also: \*Using technology, students can interact with shared research files; planned “pal e-mail” exchanges with another class abroad, etc.; \*Students may interact by sharing their experience – e.g. they are numbered, asked to work on a task in small groups, and after a while the teacher asks any numbered student such as No. 4 change group” and take his/ her group’s work to another group and shares the information with that group, and so on; \*Start the class each day with students in pairs and have them tell each other the day’s lesson objectives; etc.

Grouping configurations support language and content objectives of the lesson

To maximize achievement, a balance is necessary between active and passive learning. Varying grouping configurations – from whole to small group, whole group to partners, small group to individual – provides opportunities to learn new information, discuss it, and process it. Mixed level groups are considered more successful than homogenous groups. Whole class groups are good for introducing new information/concepts, modelling processes and reviewing; flexible small groups encourage collaboration; partnering provides practice opportunities, scaffolding and assistance for classmates. Above all, groupings should be flexible – sometimes either heterogeneous or homogenous configurations according to the objective to be achieved.

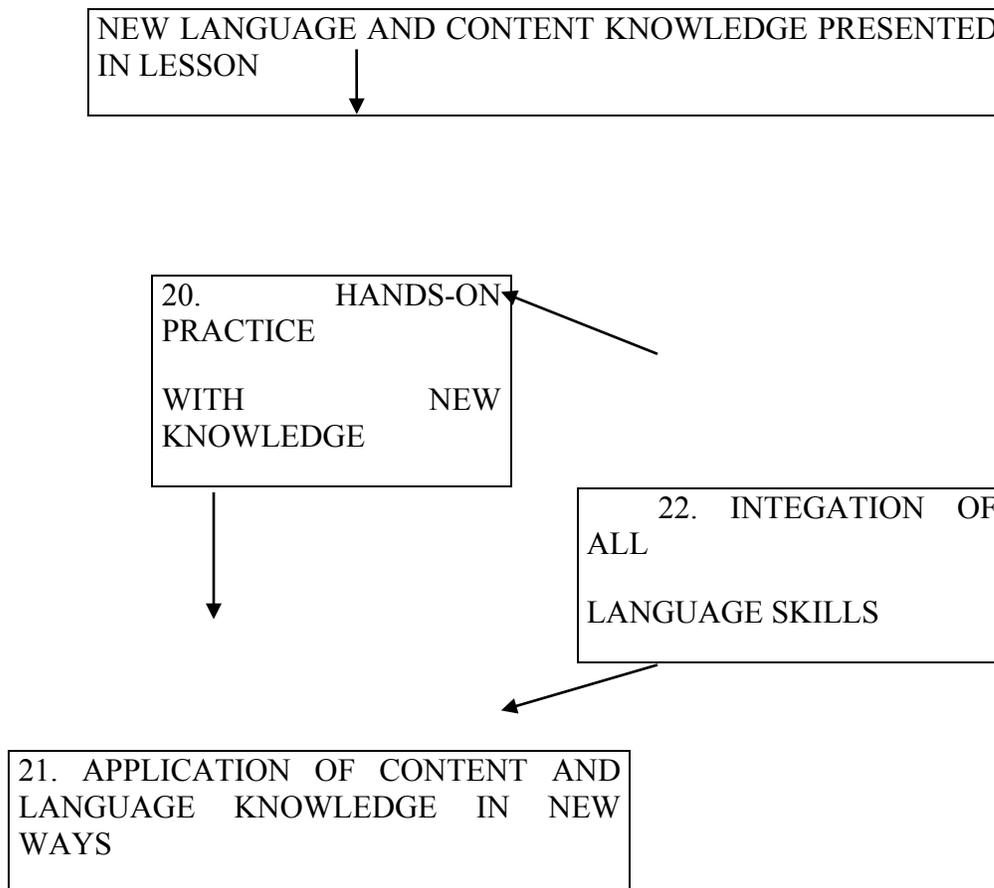
Sufficient wait time for student responses consistently provided

“Wait time” is the length of time between utterances during an interaction – i.e. the time that teachers wait for the students to respond before interrupting, answering a question themselves, or calling on someone else to participate. Effective SIOP teachers allow students to express their thoughts fully without interruption – ELLs may need extra time to process questions in English. Obviously, it is important to strike a balance between wait time and moving a lesson along.

Ample opportunity for students to clarify key concepts in L1( First or Native Language).

Students can be given the opportunity to have key concepts clarified in their own language – this must be done with great care, for the idea is that they become increasingly proficient in English and less dependent on L1.

## Component 6: Practice and Application



Teacher gives students a chance to practice the material; in the same lesson or in a subsequent one, the teacher plans tasks so that students can apply their new knowledge in different ways.

Hands-on material and/or manipulatives provided for students to practice using new content knowledge

“Guided practice” refers to the process of the teacher leading students through practice sessions prior to independent application (like helping someone to learn to ride a bike) – we should keep the following 4 elements in mind when we plan hands-on practice for students: 1. How much material should be practiced at one time? – a short, meaningful amount is better. 2. How long in time should a practice period be? – a short time, so that students exert intense effort. 3. How often should students practice? – new learning = “massed practice” (i.e. several practice periods scheduled close together); older learning = “distributed practice” (i.e. spacing practice periods farther and farther apart). 4. How will students know how well they have done? – give specific

knowledge of results (i.e. specific feedback).

See “99 Ideas and Activities for Teaching English Learners with the SIOP Model” (Vogt & Echevarria, 2008).

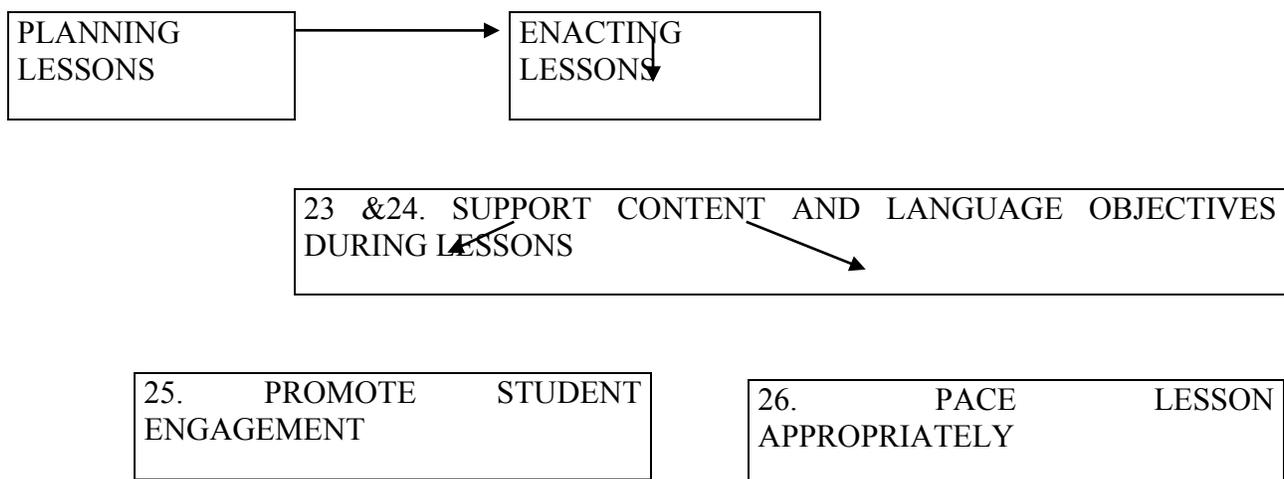
### Activities provided for students to apply content and language knowledge

The difference between knowing how something should be done and being able to do it is the “quantum leap” in learning. Teacher should provide opportunities to apply the new knowledge in meaningful ways – i.e. in order to make abstract concepts concrete. Application can occur in a number of ways: solving problems, graphic organizers, in cooperative learning groups, writing a journal, any other activity that allows students to practice knowledge in the classroom.

### Activities integrate all language skills

Reading, writing, listening and speaking are complex, cognitive processes that are interrelated and integrated and thus all four need to be practiced.

## **Component 7: Lesson Delivery**



The lesson delivery feature of the SIOP model reminds teachers to “stay on track” – to judge how well a lesson is delivered, how well lesson objectives are supported, to what extent students are engaged and how appropriate the pace of the lesson is as regards the students’ ability levels.

### Content and language objectives clearly supported by lesson delivery

As discussed in section 1, content and language objectives must be stated orally and displayed for students and teachers to see. They should be in “student-friendly” language and revisited throughout the lesson and at its conclusion so that teacher and students can evaluate the extent to

which lesson delivery them.

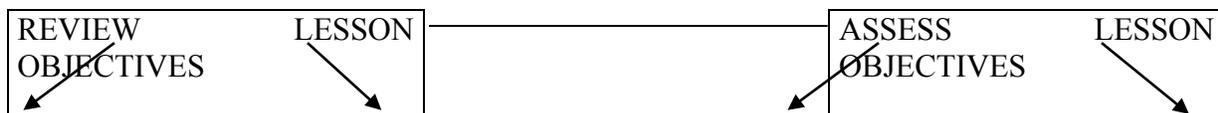
Students engaged approximately 90% to 100% of the lesson

This does not mean that the students have to be highly active all the time, but that they are following the lesson, responding to teacher direction and performing activities as expected. Student engagement is enhanced, for example, when the teacher incorporates a “Think-Pair-Share” technique during a class discussion – instead of asking questions to the whole class and asking 2 or 3 students to respond, the teacher asks everyone to think of an answer, then to tell it to a partner before calling on some students to share responses with the whole class. Another activity called “Chunk and Chew” encourages teachers to pause every 10 minutes of input to give students time to discuss and reflect.

Pacing of the lesson is appropriate to students’ ability levels

“Pacing” refers to the rate at which information is presented during a lesson. Pace depends on the nature of the lesson’s content as well as the level of the students’ background knowledge. It is difficult, especially with ELLs, to find a pace that does not present information too quickly, yet is brisk enough to maintain students’ interest. It requires practice and observation. Sometimes little routines can help with pacing – e.g. a basket by the door where students deposit homework when they either leave or enter the classroom, or a “materials manager” who distributes books or worksheets.

**Component 8: Review and Assessment**



27. KEY VOCABULARY

28. KEY CONTENT CONCEPTS

29. REGULAR FEEDBACK ON STUDENT OUTPUT

30. ASSESS STUDENT COMPREHENSION OF OBJECTIVES

Effective teachers use assessment findings to plan their lessons according to student needs and strengths, and to evaluate how effectively their lessons have been delivered. SIOP teachers also realize the importance of on-going and continuous assessment of a lesson’s objectives throughout the lesson.. It is especially important for ELLs to take time to highlight and review key information and explicitly indicate what students should focus on and learn. “Scenarios for

ESL Standards-Based Assessment” (TESOL, 2001) is an excellent source for classroom assessment ideas.

### Comprehensive review of key vocabulary

We can help develop academic language and key vocabulary by teaching and then reviewing terminology and concepts through ANALOGY – the process of relating newly learned words to other words with the same structure or pattern. Reviewing vocabulary also involves drawing students’ attention to tense, parts of speech and sentence structure. Repeating and reinforcing language patterns helps students to become familiar with English structures. Words and concepts may be reviewed through paraphrasing – i.e. contextualizing. Key vocabulary can also be reviewed more systematically – but remember that simple isolated word lists and copying dictionary definitions do not promote vocabulary and language development. The more exposure students have to new words, the more likely they are to remember and use them. For example, use Work Study Books, which are student-made personal notebooks that include frequently used words and concepts classified and presented in different ways.

### Comprehensive review of key content concepts

These should be reviewed during and at the end of lessons. Understanding is scaffolded when you stop and briefly summarize, with students’ help, a key concept point; or if predictions about forthcoming sections of a text are made, or hypotheses about an experiment are made. One favourite “wrap-up” technique of SIOP teachers is “Outcome Sentences” (which can be posted up in class): “I wonder.../I discovered.../I still want to know.../I learned.../I still don’t understand.../I still have a question about.../I will ask a friend about...”. Students take turns selecting and completing an outcome sentence orally or in writing – they can also confer with a partner. Other review techniques: Students summarizing with partners; writing in a journal; listing key points on the board. It is important to link the review to the content objectives. Students’ responses to review should guide your decisions about what to do next – e.g. summative evaluation, additional re-teaching/assessing.

### Regular feedback provided to students on their output

Periodic review of language, vocabulary, and content enables teachers to provide specific academic feedback to students that clarifies and corrects misconceptions and misunderstandings.

### Assessment of student comprehension and learning of all lesson objectives throughout the lesson

Review and assessment are seen as an on-going process, especially related to a lesson’s language and content objectives. “Assessment” is defined as “the gathering and synthesizing of information concerning the students’ learning”. “Evaluation” is defined as “making judgements about students’ learning”. The processes of assessment and evaluation can be viewed as a progression: first assessment, then evaluation. Assessment occurs throughout a lesson – to determine if students are understanding and applying content concepts. At the end of a lesson students’ progress is assessed to see if it is appropriate to move on or if it is necessary to review and re-teach. This type of assessment is Informal, Authentic, Multidimensional and includes

Multiple Indicators that reflect student learning, achievements and attitudes. Informal Assessment involves on-the-spot, on-going opportunities for determining the extent to which students are learning the content; it is done by teacher observation, anecdotal reports, teacher-to-student and student-to-teacher conversations, “quick-writes”, brainstorming, etc. Authentic Assessment is characterized by its application to real life: students are engaged in meaningful tasks in real-life contexts. It is usually multidimensional because teachers use different ways of determining students’ performance: written exercises, audiotapes, student/parent interviews, creative work, discussion, etc. These performances often involve Multiple Indicators – e.g. a student may indicate proficiency as regards an objective through a piece of writing, through activity in a group task, through insightful questions, etc. Periodic assessments before and during lessons lead to evaluation of a students’ demonstrated performance; assessments can be individual or group, written or oral. Group response is especially sensitive to the needs of ELLs – there is a variety of methods for eliciting group responses, for example: \*Thumbs up/thumbs down – in response to “do you agree/disagree?” or true/false questions; \*Number wheels (see SIOP p.173); \*Response boards - use small whiteboards on which students write their answers and hold them up; \*Number 1 to 3 for self-assessment – ask if they have met a particular target and indicate by holding up 1,2 or 3 fingers (1 = I didn’t meet the objective; 2 = I didn’t meet the objective, but I made progress towards meeting it; 3 = I fully met the objective) and, depending on the responses, the teacher can move on or decide to re-teach.

A general rule-of-thumb is to plan multiple assessments, because having the students perform a test on one day provides only limited information.

## Developing an Exceptional Board: Moving from a Working Board to an Exceptional Board

*Necva Ozgur*

### Abstract

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At this four-part presentation we will explore the lifecycle of boards. Most of the school boards start as a working board and they will evolve to a policy board and if they continue growing they would become an exceptional board. This transformation needs, awareness, continuous learning and assessment.

1. Lifecycle of Boards
2. Ten Responsibilities of Boards
3. Building Blocks of Exceptional Boards
4. Does your Board Measure up? Board Assessment Tools

### About the Author

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**Necva Ozgur** is the founder and Executive Director of MERIT and founding School Head of New Horizon School Pasadena, NHSP. Necva obtained an M.S. degree from the School of Pharmacy at the University of Istanbul and later, an M.A. degree in Human Development from Pacific Oaks College, where she wrote her thesis on *Strategies to Achieve Excellence in an Islamic School*.

After serving NHSP as principal and leading the school to earn Blue Ribbon recognition, she established MERIT, Muslim Educators' Resource, Information and Training Center. Necva provides consultation to Islamic schools on board training, principal coaching, accreditation, school establishment and evaluation. Necva was invited twice by the US State Department to travel to Saudi Arabia and Bahrain to provide workshops on parenting, volunteer management and leadership training.

Necva serves on the ISNA Education Forum and the CISNA board, is board chair of Bayan College, a trustee of Claremont-Lincoln University and chairs the Education Council of ICSC. Necva served as a trustee of NHSP, ICSC, the California Association of Independent Schools, the Council of Spiritual and Ethical Education and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Necva also chaired a committee to develop Islamic school standards for joint accreditation with AdvancED.

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Developing an Exceptional Board: Moving from a Working Board to an Exceptional Board

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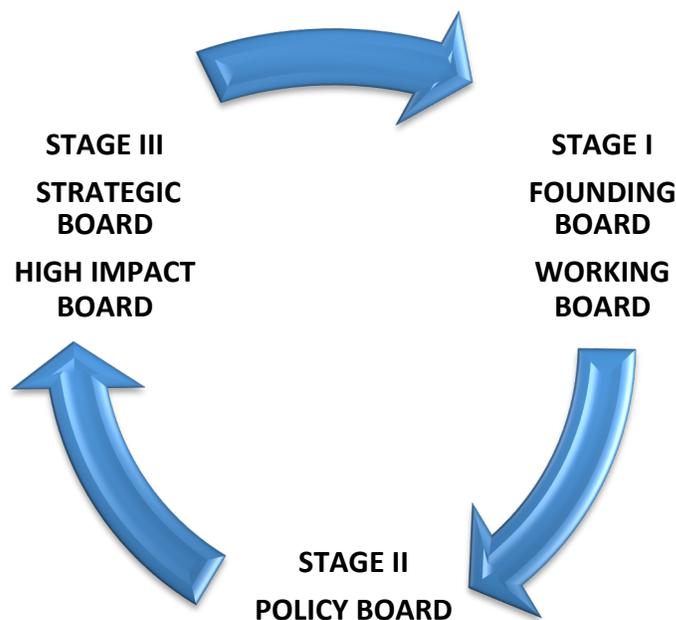
## Introduction

Most school boards start as a working board and will evolve to a strategic board and if they continue growing, they will become a high-impact board. This board development and transformation needs awareness, continuous learning and assessment; if it is done right, it gives the schools a gift of crucial leadership. In this four-part presentation, we will explore the lifecycle of boards. First, we will examine each stage of the boards and the characteristics of these different stages, then we will explore the basic responsibilities of the boards, and we will examine the building blocks to take the boards to higher levels. In the last part of this presentation, we will explore if our boards measure up and share board assessment tools.

- I. Lifecycle of Boards
- II. Ten Responsibilities of Boards
- III. Building Blocks of Exceptional Boards
- IV. Does your Board Measure Up? Board Assessment Tools

### I. Lifecycle of Boards

Building and maintaining an Islamic School is a complex, challenging task. It takes vision, planning and hard work to move the schools to a higher level. We can identify these three distinct stages of boards:



## **Characteristics of Each Stage:**

### **Stage I: Founding Board-Working Board**

Most of the boards are started as a Founding board or Working board; a few motivated, energetic visionary leaders get together and start a non-profit organization. In the beginning, these founders find the facility, buy the furniture, paint and landscape and they decide the school philosophy and programs. Sometimes they take the role of the principal and hire the staff and teachers and even teach. They recruit families and students, write newsletters, decide on the budget and write checks as needed. Basically, they do everything needed to make the school succeed. When the school opens and people trust the board and start bringing their children to the school, they feel pride and the exhilaration of success.

Very soon, they realize that running a school takes all their time, and most of the time they feel they are not qualified and the roles and responsibilities are not clear, which causes a great deal of tension and anxiety. That makes them realize the need to hire qualified staff. Hopefully, the board hires a strong principal. When the principal asserts her educational leadership and starts implementing her vision, the founding board sometimes is challenged and we find “founder syndrome” taking place. If it is not remedied, it is quite challenging for the professional staff. Here are some of the characteristics of founder syndrome:

- The founding board insists on their own ideas about the program
- Insist on hiring teachers and having certain teachers removed
- Insist that the principal carry out their views on curriculum, personnel, discipline and admission

As a result:

- Some important work doesn't get done, especially fundraising
- School is under-funded; low salaries, lean administration, inadequate financial aid
- Some employees are confused/demoralized (What is my job? What is the next surprise? Who is really in charge?)

### **Stage II: Policy Board**

When the founding board matures and realizes that they have a capable, professional principal, they start letting go of the operations and delegate their authority to the principal. That is an important stage not only for the board but also for the school's growth. The founding board realizes that to be able to empower the principal but also keep their vision alive, they need to create policies. If the founding board successfully evolves to the next stage, the board becomes a “policy board” that writes policies to give guidelines to the principal and govern the organization with policies. At this stage, the board realizes their roles and responsibilities as a governing body and delegates management to the principal and monitors and evaluates effectively. Policy boards are generally indicative of maturing boards.

### **Stage III: High-Impact Board-Strategic Board**

Once boards start learning their roles and responsibilities, they also want to take their board to the highest level in governance. Now it is time for the board to evolve to a new stage, which is the high-impact board. Usually at this stage, there is a professional and effective principal managing the school, the policies and procedures in place, there are prominent people on the board, responsible for planning, strategizing and raising funds for the organization. The board becomes a “high-impact board” by continuously developing and improving board governance so that they offer high-impact services to the community

We develop the following building blocks to move the boards from founding boards to exceptional boards:

1. Get the right people on the board
2. Prepare them for success
3. Involve & motivate them
4. Have an effective board structure
5. Have an effective committee structure
6. Collaborative partnership between the principal and the board
7. Meeting management
8. Commitment to conflict resolution and problem solving
9. Commitment to continuous improvement
10. Ensure resources and funds
11. Board culture
12. Team building
13. Ethos of transparency
14. Strategic thinking
15. Succession planning

## II. TEN RESPONSIBILITIES OF BOARDS

1. **Determine Mission & Purpose:** The board, with the partnership of the Principal, creates, articulates, and guards the mission, vision and philosophy of the organization that is shared by the community. The board is the ultimate guardian of this mission. It is the Principal's responsibility to ensure that the mission of the organization is relevant in every aspect of the organization and decisions are made considering the mission.
2. **Select, Support & Evaluate The Principal:** The board hires, supports, nurtures, supervises and evaluates the Principal. The Principal is the only employee of the board.
3. **Board Management:** The board is responsible for ensuring that the organization operates within its adopted bylaws. The board should establish committees and be sure that all members are actively involved in appropriate committee assignments.
4. **Ensure Financial Oversight & Stability:** The board is responsible for the financial stability of the organization by overseeing the budget, and participating actively in fund-raising.
5. **Ensure Effective Planning:** The board will lead the school to a systematic, formal strategic planning process, and is responsible for developing an annual plan based on the strategic plan and setting goals and action plans.
6. **Develop Policies:** The board adopts, evaluates and updates policies consistent with the law of the land, Islamic principles and ideologies, mission and strategic goals of the school.
7. **Ensure Legal Compliance & Ethical Integrity:** The board ensures that the school and the board both operate in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The board adopts, maintains and reviews bylaws that conform to legal requirements.
8. **Enhance School's Public Standing Through Advocacy & PR:** The board serves as the school's key advocate and secures the community's support for the school's mission, vision and long-term direction.

9. **Monitor & Strengthen Programs:** The board is responsible for monitoring the programs and services to ensure that the school offers quality services as promised in the mission statement. They set, measure and reach their goals.
10. **Ensure Accountability:** The board annually evaluates the Principal, the board as whole, individual board members and their committees.

### III. FIFTEEN BUILDING BLOCKS OF EXCEPTIONAL BOARDS

1. **Get the right people on the board:** Exceptional boards establish criteria for selecting board members; they identify their board's needs and recruit new board members according to those needs and set criteria.
2. **Prepare them for success: orient & educate:** Exceptional boards will provide ongoing education to the board by starting the year with a board orientation, and planning for a board retreat to focus on issues that are not covered at board meetings.
3. **Involve & motivate them:** Exceptional boards engage all their board members. Discover their interests and availabilities. Involve them in committees or task forces.
4. **Effective board structure:** Exceptional boards maintain a strong board by following its bylaws, building necessary committees and establishing policies to run the board in a professional manner.
5. **Effective committee structure:** Exceptional boards establish committee structure to accomplish the board's strategic goals.
6. **Board & principal partnership:** Exceptional boards govern in constructive partnership with the principal recognizing that the effectiveness of the board and principal are interdependent.
7. **Meeting management:** Exceptional boards plan for and conduct efficient board meetings.
8. **Commitment to conflict resolution:** Exceptional boards learn how to resolve conflicts and solve problems because conflict is part of their lives.
9. **Commitment to continuous improvement:** Exceptional boards will be built with careful planning, diligence, and continuous improvement and periodic evaluation.
10. **Ensure resources and successful fundraising:** Exceptional boards oversee the budget of the school and assume ultimate responsibility for the integrity of its finances, and guide the board to secure funds for the school by overseeing fundraising efforts.
11. **Board culture:** Exceptional boards create a culture of mutual respect, trust, open, honest communication and constructive debate that leads to shared decision-making.
12. **Team building:** Exceptional boards build trust among members. They trust one another on a fundamental, emotional level, and are comfortable being vulnerable with each other about their weaknesses, mistakes, fears, and behaviors. They speak with one voice.
13. **Ethos of transparency:** Exceptional boards promote an ethos of transparency by ensuring that constituencies have access to appropriate and accurate information

- regarding finances, operations and results.
14. **Strategic thinking:** Exceptional boards focus their time and attention on strategic issues. They develop their annual operational plan based on their strategic plan to reach their goals.
  15. **Succession planning:** Exceptional boards proactively plan, set the stage for a smooth transition and ensure that the school is always ready for leadership change.



## IV. DOES YOUR BOARD MEASURE UP?

### BOARD ASSESSMENT TOOLS

BOARD EVALUATION TOOL #1						
TEN BASIC RESPONSIBILITIES OF NONPROFIT BOARDS						
		5	4	3	2	1
		VERY GOOD	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	VERY POOR
1	<b>Determine mission &amp; purpose:</b> The board creates, articulates, and guards the mission, vision and philosophy of the school.					
2	<b>Select &amp; evaluate the principal:</b> The board hires, supports, nurtures, supervises and evaluates the principal.					
3	<b>Board management:</b> The board structures itself to fulfill essential governance duties through committee structure and policies and procedures.					
4	<b>Ensure financial oversight &amp; stability:</b> The board is responsible for the financial stability of the organization by overseeing the budget, and participating actively in fundraising.					
5	<b>Ensure effective planning:</b> The board leads the school to a systematic, formal strategic planning process and is responsible for setting goals and priorities based on a rational analysis of strengths, weaknesses and opportunities.					
6	<b>Develop policies:</b> The board adopts, evaluates and updates policies consistent with the law of the land, Islamic principles and ideologies, mission and strategic goals of the school.					

7	<b>Ensure legal compliance &amp; ethical integrity:</b> The board ensures that the school and the board both operate in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.					
8	<b>Enhance school's public standing through advocacy &amp; PR:</b> The board serves as the school's key advocate and secures the community's support for the school's mission, vision and the long-term direction.					
9	<b>Monitor &amp; strengthen programs &amp; services:</b> The board is accountable for monitoring programs and services to ensure that the school offers quality services as promised in the mission statement. They set, measure and reach the goals.					
10	<b>Ensure accountability:</b> The board annually evaluates their principal, the board as whole, individual board members and their committees.					

<b>BOARD EVALUATION TOOL #2 FIFTEEN BUILDING BLOCKS OF EXCEPTIONAL BOARDS</b>						
		5 VERY GOOD	4 GOOD	3 FAIR	2 POOR	1 VERY POOR
1	<b>Get the right people on the board:</b> Exceptional boards establish criteria for selecting board members; they identify their board's needs and recruit new board members according to those needs and set criteria.					
2	<b>Prepare them for success: orient &amp; educate:</b> Exceptional boards provide ongoing education to the board by starting the year with board orientation, planning for a board retreat to focus on issues that are not covered at board meetings.					
3	<b>Involve &amp; motivate them:</b> Exceptional boards engage all their board members, discover their interests and availabilities and involve them in committees or task forces.					
4	<b>Effective board structure:</b> Exceptional boards maintain a strong board by following its bylaws, building necessary committees and establishing policies to run the board in a professional manner.					
5	<b>Effective committee structure:</b> Exceptional boards establish a committee structure to accomplish the board's strategic goals.					
6	<b>Board &amp; principal partnership:</b> Exceptional boards govern in constructive partnership with the principal recognizing that the effectiveness of the board and principal are interdependent.					

7	<b>Meeting management:</b> Exceptional boards plan for and conduct efficient board meetings.					
8	<b>Commitment to conflict resolution:</b> Exceptional boards learn how to resolve conflicts and solve problems because conflict is part of our lives.					
9	<b>Commitment to continuous improvement:</b> Exceptional boards are built with careful planning, diligence, and continuous improvement and periodic evaluation.					
10	<b>Ensure resources and successful fundraising:</b> Exceptional boards oversee the budget of the school and assume ultimate responsibility for the integrity of its finances; they guide the work of the board to secure funds for the school by overseeing fundraising efforts.					
11	<b>Board culture:</b> Exceptional boards create a culture of mutual respect, trust, open, honest communication and constructive debate that leads to shared decision-making.					
12	<b>Team building:</b> Exceptional boards build trust among members. They trust one another on a fundamental, emotional level, and are comfortable being vulnerable with each other about their weaknesses, mistakes, fears, and behaviors. They speak with one voice.					
13	<b>Ethos of transparency:</b> Exceptional boards promote an ethos of transparency by ensuring that constituencies have access to appropriate and accurate information regarding finances, operations and results.					
14	<b>Strategic thinking:</b> Exceptional boards focus their time and attention on strategic issues. They develop their annual operational plan based on their strategic plan to reach their goals.					
15	<b>Succession planning:</b> Exceptional boards proactively plan, set the stage for a smooth transition and ensure that the school is always ready for change of leadership.					

## Resources

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*All the information presented in this document is inspired by educators, non-profit leaders and colleagues. They are listed here, at the resources session. I am thankful to each one of them.*

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## The Daily Five: Fostering Literacy Independence in Elementary Grades

*Aiysha Sayeed & Fayi Abid*

### Abstract

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Have you ever had a hard time organizing and managing literacy centers? If you said “YES” to this question, I would like to introduce you to “The Daily Five” literacy centers by Gail Boushy and Joan Moser. Students work independently according to their abilities, the teacher works with smaller groups and differentiate.

### Meet the Authors

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**Aiysha Sayeed** holds a bachelor's degree in International Relations and Teaching from Oglethorpe University and a Masters in Leadership and Administration from Capella University. She is a native of Atlanta, Georgia and is has been in the education field for over ten years. Her experience ranges from substituting, teaching, administration to curriculum director. At present, she is delighted to be teaching at Alfalah Academy as First Grade teacher. In the future, she has plans to grow with Alfalah Academy in a Leadership role.

**Fayi Abdi** holds a bachelor’s degree in Public Policy from Georgia State University and is currently pursuing a Masters in Elementary Education from West Governor University.

She is a native of Atlanta, Georgia and has been in public and private schools over ten years. Her experience ranges from substituting, teaching, and reading literacy. At present, she is committed to be teaching at Alfalah Academy as a First Grade teacher. In the future, she has plans to grow with Alfalah Academy as a Reading Specialist.

### The Daily Five: Fostering Literacy Independence in Elementary Grades

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As teachers we struggle daily with providing meaningful literacy blocks while managing students and their behavior. The two sisters who wrote the Daily Five struggled the same way and set out to look for answers, leading to them developing the Daily Five Program. Through their research they discovered that the way teachers structure the learning environment and the way students spend their time influences the level of reading proficiency the students have attained at the end of the academic year. (Boushey & Moser, 2006). The goal of the Daily Five is to change the atmosphere in classrooms and the role of teachers from “managing” students to creating routines and procedures that develop independent literacy behaviors to the point that they became ingrained habits.

The process of developing the Daily Five happened over time and repetition of ideas implemented throughout the year. The two sisters noticed that their teaching techniques where not effective in establishing better readers by the end of the year. They were not satisfied with the assessments and the amount of progress they were making. As teachers we can all attest to feeling the same way about our class and teaching techniques when it comes to literacy. Thus, the two sisters went on a journey to research and discover the different approaches and methods being used to teach and implement literacy in different countries by a variety of educators. The

final result was the establishment of the Daily Five in 2008, which they practiced, implemented and perfected over the years. Needless to say it was a work in progress then, which took many years of implementation and trial to become what it is today.

The two sisters realized that the traditional way of teaching students was not an effective way of learning. Research has shown that any individual learns 10% of the material if it is lectured to them, 40% if it is discussed with them, 80% if they practice the information being taught and 90% if they teach the information to someone else. As such, in the traditional method of teaching in most classrooms, the teacher is learning the most not the student, unfortunately. In keeping this concept in mind, the Daily Five encourages the students to practice and teach the information to themselves and each other through inquiries and active engagement.

The Daily Five consists of Five Literacy Centers; which are Read to Self, Read to Someone, Work on Writing, Work on Words and Listen to Reading. In preparation for the Five Literacy Centers, the teacher and the students have to know the foundational principles. Therefore, to launch the Daily Five the first objective is to create the environment and structure of the classroom. This is done by developing the foundational principles of the Daily Five which are: trusting students, providing choice, nurturing community, creating a sense of urgency, building stamina, and staying out of students' way once routines have been established. Before even mentioning the five centers of literacy, the teachers have to work on these foundational principles in their classrooms, which lead to the establishment of the Daily Five.

Trusting the student is the key element in building the structure of the Daily Five. After explicit instructions and teaching, the students should be left alone to manage their own learning since we have developed trust with them and taught them the skills needed to be successful. This results in a transfer of responsibility from the teacher to the student where the student is now managing their own behavior and learning without the teacher's supervision. For example, if the teacher has built the relationship of trust and respect with the student, they don't necessarily even need a substitute to watch the students when she is not there; since the students are engaged in the Daily Five and they are self-monitoring. The level of respect and trust between the student and the teacher is the guiding factor, which results in learning and acceptable behavior.

As teachers we believe the classroom is ours, we make the choices of how things will happen, when they will happen and who will do what. We forget that students are human beings also; they learn and enjoy things the same way adults and teachers do. As such we need to first engrave the thought in our heads that this is not my classroom but OUR classroom made up of the students and the teachers. Thus, anything that happens in the classroom should be a combined decision of both parties. However, this does not mean that the classroom does not have structure or routines. The teacher does provide structure and routines while providing choice to the students as to which routines they want to follow and do first, then second and last. It has been researched that Purpose + Choice = Motivation. If the students know the purpose of what they are doing rather than being told what to do, they are more likely to be interested in doing it since they know the outcome. For example, if the teacher tells them not to kick the ball high during recess it might not mean anything to them but if they learn and see that kicking the ball high can result in hitting a classmate on the face and hurting them then they realize the importance of the rule for being safe. So just telling the students what to do is not as effective as modeling and showing them then giving them the choice to do the right thing.

With choice comes the concept of community because the students are involved in the building and designing of the classroom, the routines, the rules and the structures. This leads to a sense of community because while going through this process the teachers and students learn about each other, who they are, what they like and what the expectations are. Since everything is built on an understanding by all the participants; it develops a sense of ownership and holds accountable all members for their actions and learning. An example of having a strong community is if one student is off task the teacher doesn't have to remind that student, the other students respectfully and quietly redirect the misguided student back on task. As such the teacher is not managing behavior anymore; the students are self-correcting each other and providing support to each other.

In the process of building community you have to create a sense of urgency with the students about their learning. They have to know WHY they are reading, writing or listening. How is it relevant to them? Once the students understand the importance of these tasks, they take pride and ownership in doing these activities because they know the end result and they have an attainable goal in mind that they are striving for. They become the drivers of their own education. If the students understand the purpose then any distraction during their learning bothers them and they tackle the obstacle and solve it so they can continue on with their learning.

Finally the last two fundamental principles have to do with practicing the Daily Five. Just like any game you are learning, the players have to practice and practice to perfect the skill. Taking the same concept the students have to practice on the centers and build stamina of working in the centers for a certain period of time. Just like we don't expect untrained players to run a 100 yard dash within 60 seconds without practice we can't expect students to read for thirty minutes at length without practice since reading and writing is an acquired skill. As such we start by building stamina. We work on stamina as a group working on one center at a time and building from 3 minutes all the way up to 30 minutes. The progress of each class will vary according to the students. Some classes may take a week to master the skill and stamina and some classes may take a couple of weeks to achieve the same task. There are no set rules or guidelines; here, the key thing to remember is that each child and classroom is different in its abilities and environment. We must work with the group that we have to get them to their highest potential. Lastly, when we have built this environment and culture of trust, community, urgency, choice and stamina then we as teachers have the hardest part to let go of the students, stay out of their way and trust that they will do what you as a class has practiced, modeled and taught.

After building the fundamental elements, you start by incorporating the main concepts and routines to set up the structure of daily five. You have to teach a variety of lessons on certain important components of Daily Five which have to be taught in order and repeated throughout the year. These are establishing a gathering place, selecting good fit books, making anchor charts, setting up a book box, procedures of practice and repetition, and procedure of check in/out. These are basically mini lessons that the teacher will teach and build with the students at the start of the year to give structure and routine to the Daily Five. However, these routines have to be reinforced throughout the year just like any other rules and procedures we implement in the class room because we have to remember that after all we are working with children and they need constant reminders of expected behavior just like any adult would.

Finally, comes implementation of the Five Literacy Centers which are Read to Self, Read to Someone, Work on Writing, Work on Words and Listen to Reading. Implementing these

centers becomes pretty smooth if you have set up your structure and fundamental principles discussed above. At this point, you reference your mini lessons of I Pick books, anchor charts, book box and then just model, model and model the expectations and behavior for each center. So for read to self the teacher models, then students model, then the whole class models how to do read to self. After modeling you go over what went right and what we can work on. We never point out who did what wrong; instead, we highlight the positives and we look for things we can improve on. We make signals and signs to show positive and negative assessments during the check in and check out process. This procedure of modeling is repeated day in and day out till the students master the expected behavior and the stamina required for that center, then the class moves on to the next center. After the students have mastered all five centers as a class then you run all five centers simultaneously and let the students chose which center they will do first, which second and so forth. Remember, when you launch all five centers together you probably will run into hurdles and obstacles of management and behavior so you will need to go back and do the mini lessons on trust, urgency, commitment and expectations again and again until the students have learned how to do all five centers simultaneously. The training of all Five Centers can take anywhere from 6 weeks to whatever your class needs are. Typically, it is supposed to be 6-8 weeks but remember each class, student, and teacher is different so you need to work on your pace and what is needed for your students to be successful in mastering the Daily Five.

This is the biggest hurdle that we as teachers ran into when implementing the Daily Five. We did not understand that we have to teach the principles, fundamentals and structures of the Daily Five before teaching the centers. We just jumped into the centers since we were given the program in mid-September and we really did not have any prep time to work on it or understand it. Secondly, we rushed through the modeling process because we felt like we had to get everything done by 6-8 weeks thus not being able to implement it properly and not getting the desired results we wanted. We were still monitoring and managing far too much.

We took a step back during the winter break, did some webinars, discussions and an in depth study of the book all of which we wished we had done before school began. After doing the research on our part we came to the conclusion that we started out the Daily Five entirely wrong and we needed to go back to re implement and build it in our classrooms. This is easier said than done because it is easy to teach new habits but it is harder to erase old habits and then teach new ones. This is exactly what we had to do, we went back and re modeled everything to our students starting from building trust all the way to picking the right books and making book boxes. Even though it was hard work and very frustrating at times we see now that going in order and giving importance to the fundamental principles and structures really does help with operating and running the Daily Five blocks smoother. The biggest difference that was observed was that we were not managing the students that much anymore and we were not redirecting the students; they were self-correcting. Honestly, it was a very satisfying to be able to witness our class going through the rotations of the Daily Five and being able to see some of the elements of what the two sisters have been discussing and teaching.

By no means have we perfected this process. Just like the two sisters said that this is a work in progress our Daily Five Literacy Centers are a work in progress in our classes. After almost completing the first year, we have identified what we did wrong and what we did right, we have identified some of the hurdles, obstacles, and challenges that we need to work on solving over the summer. Honestly, the Daily Five will bring different challenges and scenarios

for different schools, classrooms, and teachers because each teacher and classroom is different. Some teachers may be able to understand and implement it quickly while others like us may take a couple of years to master and perfect it. However, you implement the Daily Five in your own unique way the purpose and focus of the Daily Five stays the same: to foster literacy independence in our students so they are able to build their reading and writing skills to their highest potential.

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## Basing the Language Arts Curriculum on an Islamic Worldview

*Freda Shamma*

### Abstract

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In order to distinguish an Islamic worldview from a secular, western worldview, it is useful to see how Muslims transferred their loyalty to the west. Exactly what is wrong with the secular worldview and how does it differ from an Islamic worldview? After acknowledging the difference, how can our Islamic schools begin to make the necessary changes to most benefit our students? The subject of language arts will be looked at as an example of what can be done. *Treasury of Muslim Literature* will be introduced as a possible textbook based on an Islamic worldview.

### About the Author

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**Dr. Freda Shamma** has been working on K-12 curriculum since she became Muslim in 1969. This work has taken her to 3 continents and resulted in substantial work on an international Islamic curriculum. She is the author of two books: *Ayat Jamilah: Beautiful Signs* (along with Sarah Conover) and the newly released *Treasury of Muslim Literature, 750-1250 CE*. Her articles have appeared in several books, and she has spoken at many conferences. She is also a book editor for non-Muslim authors who want to be sure their Islamic content is accurate.

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## Basing the Language Arts Curriculum on an Islamic Worldview

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### Historical Background of academic education among Muslims

**In 1013** (one thousand years ago) Muslim civilization was at its cultural height. It provided an excellent education which enabled Muslims to be linguistic masters of their language; intrepid, qualified searchers of reliable hadiths; physicians who found cures for multiple illnesses; historians who researched and recorded history; geographers who studied and traveled to analyze the geography of the known world; mathematicians to revolutionize everything in mathematics from the role of zero to infinity.

Children began their studies with Qur'an and Islamic sciences. This directed their thinking into an Islamic mold, an Islamic worldview. Religion was not divorced from life; it provided the springboard to study every aspect of life from an Islamic perspective. Among the important foundational ideas that the Islamic point-of-view provided were:

Allah is the One and Only God, who:

Created the world and all its creatures, including mankind as one unified whole.

Created a set of natural laws which all creation follows. Created mankind according to His natural laws, plus one addition. He gave him a mind which has freedom to choose right or wrong.

As a special favor for us He sent down multiple prophets and guidance to help us chose the good and right.

Islam is a religiously based way of life. The material and spiritual are not dichotomous modes of experience, but a continuum and an integrated whole in which all aspects of life –person and social, economic and political, artistic and intellectual, spiritual and sexual, creative or otherwise – are not only interrelated but are also sustained by faith and endowed with religious meaning and ethical significance.<sup>27</sup>

Pertinent to our topic, part of this guidance was the hikma that we are created to worship Allah and to be a force for good.

After receiving this education these students of long ago understood that it is Allah's world, that mankind is limited in understanding and reasoning, and that unless he and she depend on Allah they will fail in the ultimate analysis. They felt that they should use their knowledge for the good of Allah's creation.

Europe at this time was in its Dark Ages, bereft of universities, hospitals, books for the common man, libraries, and even sanitation.

**By 1900** Europe had experienced its renaissance and industrial revolution. Its wealth and luxury now appealed to wealthy Muslims, especially urban dwellers.. Muslim governments began to borrow money from western bankers in order to buy western luxury items. Self-inflicted problems such as this caused decline in Muslim government, culture and education.

How did Europe rise so far so fast? Ironically it was partially because they adopted the knowledge of the Muslim world. However the Church was most powerful during the Dark Ages so scientists, inventors and writers had to carefully cut out all references to Islam. Objecting to the heavy hand of the Church, many also turned away from all religion.

The supremacy of Allah because the supremacy of human beings. Secular humanism led effortlessly to individualism, materialism, and capitalism. If humans are supreme then there can be no absolute values. Homosexuality could be a vice for thousands of years, but a virtue in 2013 because some humans wanted it that way.

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<sup>27</sup> Abdul Rahim, Muddathir, *The Human Rights Tradition in Islam*. Praeger, Westport, Ct., 2005, pg xvi.

**World War I** ended the unity of the Muslim realm. The World of Islam was broken up into small pieces with European overlords. This led to a ‘systematic process of political, economic and intellectual subjugation by Western imperialism. In order to produce a suitable workforce needed to implement the vision and policies of the colonialists, basic changes were made to the local educational systems.’<sup>28</sup>

In order to have subservient and obedient workers, the new educational system promoted passive acceptance of whatever the teachers said. Memorization without critical or creative thinking skills helped produce secretaries and accountants who did as they were told.

The language for economic and political success was the European language of the colonizer. The knowledge for success was knowledge of the colonizer’s history, culture and achievements

Perhaps the most damaging change was a total absence of the conquered peoples’ religion, language, culture and contributions to civilization. Knowledge was divided into distinct subject matter with nothing to connect one branch of knowledge to another.

By the end of the 1900’s ‘educated’ Muslims were convinced of the superiority of everything western. Many of them migrated to North America, in part so their children could receive this ‘best’ education.

Even the madrasa fell under the spell of the colonizers. They taught the facts of the religion, but did not encourage critical thinking or application to real life situations. Religion became one of the distinct subjects with no connection to any others. When Al Azhar University in Cairo added ‘academic’ subjects to its curriculum, it did not train its religious studies students in history or science so that the subjects could be taught from an Islamic perspective. Instead it used the same ‘educated’ teachers who came out of the western secular schooling.

**Now it is 2013** and our ‘Islamic schools’ obediently follow the western educational system. Realizing that something is wrong with this system, we put the band aid of an Islamic class at the end of the day. In most schools the students do not even get this one period of day for Islamic education. Instead this one period is shared with Arabic language and Qur’an memorization. So for about 30 hours a week the students receive a western education along with 1-2 hours a week of religious education. If we want to change the focus of a secular subject, our idea usually is to add bits and pieces of Islam to the best secular text. (Thereby leaving the secular worldview in place).

Although the majority of our students attending Islamic schools do well academically, too many do not practice an Islamic lifestyle out of school. Children need a consistent value system on which to base their life. If the majority of their time is spent studying a western world view, then that is what will become their worldview.

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<sup>28</sup> Ahmed, Anis, “Islamization of Knowledge: A Futurist Perspective”, in *Islam and Knowledge*, ed. Imtiaz Yusef, pg. 113.

### **What is wrong with western curriculum?**

Not everything is wrong with western curriculum, but it is false to say that western material is culture or value free so there is no problem with our children studying it. Everything needs to be examined by a critical Muslim eye. Even our practicing, educated Muslim scholars fail to see the western slant of their education. At one overseas conference on English, a Muslim said that “English literature is morally neutral so why shouldn’t we teach Shakespeare?”<sup>29</sup>

Studies show that children learn best what is closest to their culture and religion.<sup>30</sup> So a social studies curriculum which spends 11 ½ years of its 12 years on western history (even World History is mostly western), is not going to meet the needs of children who have a Muslim eastern or African background. Textbooks which attribute everything to ‘mother nature’ or coincidence or human faculties of senses and mind, are diametrically opposed to the knowledge of Allah and His laws of nature.

Reading textbooks which include acceptance of unislamic ideas like disrespect of absolute values, disrespect of families, approval of mixed gender relationship and so on, are clearly not reflecting value free material that is harmless to our children’s thinking and behavior. In short, our Muslim North American students need academic excellence based on a consistent Islamic world view and both western and Islamic cultural literacy.

### **What can be done in Language Arts?**

Of primary importance, we must understand our own worldview. Converts must be aware that without doubt we have a western worldview. Everything we learned from birth until conversion was based on the idea that our mind is capable of absolute reasoning and understanding. “It seems to me,” “in my opinion” are the way we explain Qur’anic ayats to our satisfaction. We feel free to interpret Islamic ideology according to our own reasoning. “I found one hadith where the Prophet, peace be upon him, said an old woman could lead her ignorant male servant in prayer. My reasoning therefore is that it is Islamically acceptable for any knowledgeable woman to lead any number of knowledgeable men in the Friday prayer.”

People born into Muslim families and/or in Muslim populated countries need to be aware that a cultural connection to Islam does not mean they have not been severely affected by their secular education. When I asked a group of Muslim historians where and when Prophet Ibrahim might have lived, all but one immediately cited western sources. It was only the historian who had never attended a secular university who first mentioned ayat in Qur’an that might shed some light, before he mentioned other western sources.

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<sup>29</sup> Conference on Teaching English at the University Level, in Kuala Lumpur, 1997, attended by the author.

<sup>30</sup> Applebee, Arthur. *Literature and US. History*. Report No. 17-HL-01, Oct., 1987, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, pg 3.

We must understand our own world view so we can identify the unIslamic elements in our schools. Why do we have each subject completely separate from the other? Why is language arts, dealing as it does with the skills of reading and writing, not connected to religion and social studies and science where critical reading and writing skills are needed? How many of our teachers have an Islamic worldview so what they teach is based on Islam? Can we expect non Muslim teachers to base everything on Islam? We must understand an Islamic world view so we can identify the unIslamic elements in the secular books we are using to teach reading skills.

Look at the themes of the textbooks – do they stress the individual, self-interest, doing what a person enjoys regardless of whether it is of benefit to Allah’s creation? Do they encourage students to use reading skills for other subjects?

Look at the selections being used to teach reading skills. Here are two examples. The selections are interesting for the western child, well- written and appropriate reading levels. Are they suitable for Muslims as well?

*George and Martha: A Picnic* (a picture book)

One Saturday morning George wanted to sleep late. “I love sleeping late,” said George. But Martha had other ideas. She wanted to go on a picnic. “Here she comes!” said George.

Martha did her best to get George out of bed. “Picnic time!” sang Martha. But George didn’t budge. Martha played a tune on her saxophone. George put little balls of cotton in his ears and pulled up the cover.

Martha had a clever idea. (She puts the bed on roller skates) “This is such hard work,” she said, huffing and puffing. “But I’m not going to help,” said George. “I’m getting tired,” said Martha.

George had fun on the picnic. “I’m so glad we came,” said George. But Martha wasn’t listening. She had fallen asleep.

What do you think? Is there anything unIslamic in the fact that Martha goes into a boy’s room; that there is no parent present to prevent her from doing so, that she forces her friend to do something he does not want to do? Did you notice that Martha and George are best friends of a different gender (although at this age boys and girls generally do not like to play together)?

The second example is from a middle school reading textbook: Glencoe Literature: The Reader’s Choice. Course 2:

Theme One: What I am, what I want to be: (includes the following seven consecutive selections)

<http://www.theisla.org>1. ‘Strong Men Weep’ – an essay about how sad it was that a famous baseball player (Lou Gehrig) who had played for a number of years, and was well paid for it, had to retire from baseball because of a serious illness.

2. “Wait until Next Year” – a memoir about the interaction between a boy and his father which consisted totally of talking about baseball.
3. “The Wonder Years” TV script – boyfriend-girlfriend awkward moments
4. “Broken Chain” – short story about a teen age boy who agonizes about what to wear in order to fit in, and is embarrassed by some boys claiming he likes a certain girl.
5. “Barrio Boy” – a pseudo autobiography about a Mexican boy who starts first grade not understanding any English.
6. “Fish Cheeks” –an autobiographical account which begins with “I fell in love with the minister’s son ...when I turned 14.”
7. “Rosa Parks” – This is the only acceptable piece for Muslim students. It is culturally important for all Americans to understand the civil rights movement and the people involved.

The purpose of these selections is to teach reading skills, not values or character building. Due to California law they reflect some culturally diverse characters – one Chinese, one Mexican, one black, but don’t reflect any Muslim culture.

There is nothing special about these selections in terms of teaching reading skills. If anything they are less than desirable when trying to teach critical reading skills. Instead substitute more appropriate material.

### **Substitute better material**

For the middle school let’s compare the Gencoe selections with equivalent selections from: *Treasury of Muslim Literature Age: The Golden years: 750-1250 C.E.* ed. Freda Shamma. The *Treasury* is an anthology of Muslim writers who lived a thousand years ago before the Islamic educational system came under the sway of western imperialism. Most of the authors began their education with Qur’an and Islamic sciences and then went on to produce material that educated as well as entertained, that broaden the geographical, historical and cultural understandings of the general populations, that made great strides in the development of many sciences and branches of medicine. These selections reflect the ethnic diversity of Muslims. They are similar genres of writing as the western text, but contain wisdom to guide the readers to think along Islamic lines rather than western.

- 1 ‘Strong Men Weep’ – an essay about a white American

Substitute: “Superiority of Blacks to Whites – an essay, by Al Jahiz, the son of black slaves who lived in what is now Iraq. He was known as the foremost writer of prose.

- 2 “Wait until Next Year” – a memoir

Substitute: “Observation on the Crusades”- a memoir *The Book of Reflections* by Usama Ibn Munqedh, who lived in what is now Palestine.

3. “The Wonder Years” TV script – boyfriend-girlfriend awkward moments

Substitute: Movie script from “Prince among Slaves” – about a West African prince who maintained his religion and his dignity even though he was forced into slavery in America (a UPF production, not in the Treasury)

4 “Broken Chain” – short story about a teen age boy who agonizes about what to wear in order to fit in, and is embarrassed by some boys claiming he likes a certain girl.

Substitute: “What the Birds Know” – short story from Khlila wa Dimna about an old Muslim killed on his way to hajj, who calls on the birds above to witness to Allah for justice, by a Persian (Iranian).

5 “Barrio Boy” – a pseudo autobiography about a Mexican boy who starts first grade not understanding any English.

Substitute: “Autobiography of Ibn Sina” – about the famous polymath Ibn Sina from Afghanistan.

6 “Fish Cheeks” – an autobiographical account of a Chinese American which begins with “I fell in love with the minister’s son ...when I turned 14.”

Substitute: *Interpreting the Self* – the autobiography of al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi, Islamic scholar and Sufi, from Afghanistan.

The *Treasury of Muslim Literature* is designed as an integrative text, including religious subjects as well as historical and geographical beside the usual ‘literary’ subjects found in western anthologies. The middle school teacher can use individual selections, or plan to teach the anthology in one year, or over 3 years. Lesson plans are available.

According to the FADEL Integrated Curriculum (which still needs a great deal of work before it is usable) the Language Arts classes should include literature from the west as well as from Muslim countries. This Treasury includes only the works of Muslims due to the amount of material that was produced in the Golden Age. While this is the only integrated Muslim literature text, it can be used as the sole textbook one year, with western literature taught in other years. But when more books are available, it would be best to include some from both cultures in every year. However the western material should be chosen to reflect western classics.

In conclusion, for the short term, read each selection from a critical Muslim eye before using it in class. Refer to Appendix 1 of this paper for a partial list of problems found in non Muslim texts. Substitute selections written by Muslims or by non Muslims which do not include unislamic ideas ( See Appendix 2). Follow the lesson plans given in the teacher’s guide but change the

vocabulary words to reflect the new selection. Or better yet, change the lesson plans to reflect some Islamic standards (See Appendix 3)

What are really needed are Muslim authored textbooks.

1. Collect appropriate stories and non fiction from different subjects that can be placed in a Muslim authored text for a particular reading level.
2. Use this material in your classroom and add your lesson plans to your text.
3. Contribute your stories/selections to a joint project, perhaps under the auspices of the Islamic Schools League or CISNA. Inshaa Allah together we can begin to steer our schools toward a more Islamic worldview.

## Appendix: 1 What is wrong with American reading texts?

Several years ago I went through several series of reading texts, from first grade through twelfth. I found the following unislamic ideas repeated in every grade, in every book.

1. Non importance of God There is no mention of God in any of the textbooks. It is the individual him/herself. It is man alone who conquers the elements. There is however no problem in mentioning false gods. Greek and Roman mythology, Norse gods, African gods, Eskimo gods on totem poles are all acceptable as multi cultural elements. Only the God of Jews, Christians and Muslims is missing.

2. Importance of the individual From the story contents it appears that the basic unit of society is the individual. Stating in the introduction to the selection of stories that the value is courage or adaptability, the story generally centers about a youth who is by accident or design on his/her own in the wilderness. Inevitably the heroine is able to function well without the aid of God or family or society..

3. Non importance of family. Positive family and/or sibling interaction is generally missing. In one first grade textbook, for example, which contains 22 stories, only five mention family or any member of the family in a positive manner.

This is not to suggest that the family has to be featured or even present in each story, but when the family is consistently downgraded, then it becomes a problem for Muslims.

4. Importance of freedom Along with the concept of the individual as the basis of society is the concept that 'freedom' is a main goal. The individual must be free to choose his/her own way. Neither the school nor the parents should attempt to direct the student into any direction, neither religious, nor moral, nor economic. There should be nothing, like responsibility for example, to limit one's freedoms.

5. Importance of male-female interaction From the earliest grades, and included in almost every year's reading material is the idea that boys and girls should be best friends and/ or romantic pairs. There wasn't even one story suggesting that males and females might be happier or better off if they didn't mix socially.

6. Importance of dogs A dog is better than parents or siblings. Muslims however are advised to use dogs only for hunting or protection and never as house pets.

7. Art for art's sake One of the freedoms featured in some stories is that of choosing one's occupation according to what one feel's like doing, regardless of its possible social benefit or harm.. There is never a story which suggests that a student should think of what he/she could do as a profession that would help society.

8. Other cultures are more important As cultural diversity becomes more important, textbooks are hurrying to include stories from different cultures – stories from every group of immigrants or minorities in this country EXCEPT Muslims.

9. Other religions are more important. Muslim holidays are never mentioned.

10. North America is better than anyplace else. Stories which take place in America are in clean, technologically advanced, western garbed environments. Stories which take place in Africa, Asia or the Middle East are either non-existent or reflect “quaint” villages, jungles or fairy tale lands.

11. Witches and magic are real and supreme Stories with magic have always been enjoyed in Muslim cultures, but there is always a sense, either bluntly stated or clearly implied, that Allah is firmly in charge and even magic is not out of his domain. However, today’s stories contain no reference to a higher being. Magic reigns supreme..

Another problem with magic in the stories for today’s children is that too often the witch and/or magic is found in normal life. This juxtaposition of reality and fiction can too easily confuse a child.

12. Acceptance of lying as long as you can get away with it.

13. God and religious beliefs have nothing to do with non-fiction One textbook has an article featuring the benefits of interest. Science articles never acknowledge the role that God plays.

Any one of the above mentioned stories is harmless, but when the overall message is that a person is an independent unit who does not need Allah or anyone else, then the message becomes an active force against the concepts of tawheed, morality and decency that you are trying to teach in the Religion class.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Shamma, Freda, "The Curriculum Challenge for Islamic Schools in America," *Muslims and Islamization in North America. Problems and Prospects*, ed Amber Haque, Amana Pub, Baltimore,

#### Appendix 2: Sources of better material:

[www.theisla.org](http://www.theisla.org) has a booklist of better books (mostly by non Muslims) for library and classroom use..

Muslim websites like [www.islamicbookstore.com](http://www.islamicbookstore.com), [www.noorart.com](http://www.noorart.com) and [www.theisla.org](http://www.theisla.org) have stories written by Muslims.

*Ayat Jamilah: Beautiful Signs*, by Sarah Conover and Freda Crane (Shamma) is full of short stories that can be used in the lower grades.

*Treasury of Muslim Literature: The Golden Years: 750-1250 CE* by Freda Shamma is an anthology of selections that can be used in the upper grades.

[www.muslimlit.com](http://www.muslimlit.com) is a new site that will, inshaa Allah, contain lesson plans for the *Treasury*, and recommendations of books written by Muslims.

#### Appendix 3: Islamic standards that should be added to the Common Core Standards

1. Extend knowledge of genres including newspaper articles, Qur'an, essays and articles by Muslim authors, biography, novels and poetry by Muslim authors from various areas of the Muslim realm.
2. Investigate and demonstrate understanding of the cultural foundations for the depiction of themes, issues and actions in literature and other texts.
3. Apply higher-level comprehension skills to information obtained by reading a variety of texts, including literal and implied meaning, inference, deduction, comparison, fact or opinion, summarizing, extracting main ideas. Develop an Islamic response that includes reference to Qur'an and hadith.
4. Explore and reflect on universal Islamic themes and substantive issues, including coming of age, rights and responsibilities, group and individual roles, conflict and cooperation, creativity and resourcefulness, gossip.
5. Develop awareness of Muslim ummah through diverse texts, analyzing themes and central ideas in relation to their own lives and the lives of other Muslims.
6. Integrate into other subjects such as Islamic Studies, history..

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## Effective Supervision and Practical Evaluation of Teachers

*Leila Shatara*

### Abstract

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The presentation on supervision and evaluation will begin with a brief introduction of the history of education evaluation systems, specifically the Hunter Model and the Danielson Model and how these models and decades of research eventually led to the research by Robert Marzano in *Effective Supervision: Supporting the Art and Science of Teaching*. As the title displays, the purpose of teacher supervision and evaluation is to enhance teacher effectiveness, which in turn impacts student achievement. The most valuable aspect of the evaluation tool is the practical feedback provided for the teacher based on specific elements within specific domains.

### About the Author

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**Leila Shatara**, M. Ed. is the current principal of the Garden of the Sahaba Academy in Boca Raton, Florida and has served as an administrator for 6 years. She holds teaching certifications in high school science, elementary education and library and media specialist; with endorsements for ESOL and reading for Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. She has also been an adjunct instructor in the College of Education at Florida Atlantic University for 5 years (Department of Curriculum, Culture, and Educational Inquiry). She taught elementary, middle and high school for ten years in public school before moving to Islamic Education.

## Effective Supervision and Practical Evaluation of Teachers

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### Statement of the Problem:

#### **How can teacher evaluations be utilized to impact student achievement?**

Teacher evaluations must be utilized as a tool to assess what happens in the classroom. Supervision of the teacher/classroom entails evaluating the instructional process. Teachers are provided with feedback following each evaluation and that feedback is used to initiate the process of growth and development that can directly impact student achievement. *In Effective Supervision: Supporting the Art and Science of Teaching*, Dr. Robert J. Marzano, Tony Frontier, and David Livingston; take decades of research and use it to formulate a causal tool for evaluation that can impact student achievement in a new and powerful way. Supervision and evaluation of teachers is no longer an administrator sitting in the back of the room with a form that is the beginning and the end of the evaluation. “We are entering a new era of teacher evaluations. The expectation is that all teachers can increase their expertise from year to year and thereby produce gains in student achievement, with a powerful cumulative effect,” Dr. Robert Marzano.

The new causal tool that is being used across the country by thousands of schools has shown to be an effective methodology for implementing change in classroom teaching and teacher effectiveness. With emphasis on teacher evaluations and student achievement, the only way to increase student achievement is to teach teachers how to teach by using research-based methodologies and practices. The purpose of teacher evaluations should be to provide feedback and follow up training.

### **Review of Literature:**

*“Effective Supervision: Supporting the Art and Science of Teaching”* outlines how and why this model should be used to help teachers become more effective by enhancing their skills in the classroom and can be modified to meet the needs of Islamic schools based on their mission and vision. The overview on supervision and evaluation will begin with a brief introduction of the history of education evaluation systems, specifically the Hunter Model and the Danielson Model and then will lead to the research by Robert Marzano in *Effective Supervision: Supporting the Art and Science of Teaching*. As the title displays, the purpose of teacher supervision and evaluation is to enhance teacher effectiveness, which in turn impacts student achievement.

Madeline Hunter’s work had great impact on teacher supervision and the most popular aspect was the seven step framework for a lesson. Research following the Hunter Model expanded and developed a more comprehensive examination of what and how things occur in the classroom. Charlotte Danielson’s Framework of Teaching focuses on four domains: Planning and Preparation, the Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities (Marzano, 2011, p.12-20). These models and decades of research are included in *Effective Supervision* and outline a new proposed model that is now being implemented around the country.

### **Madeline Hunter’s Model**

Teachers must be experts at designing effective instruction and that occurs through practice and feedback. Madeline Hunter in her outline of “Planning for Effective Instruction” gives a framework for planning to the classroom teacher that impacts Direct Instruction (DI). Hunter focuses on what the teacher can do to design an effective lesson by following the framework. However, it is the teacher who decides if all seven are necessary or some can be removed for each particular lesson. The framework is as follows:

1. **Learning Objective:** Teacher selects an objective at an appropriate level of difficulty and complexity, as determined through the task analysis, diagnostic testing, and/or congruence with Bloom’s taxonomy.
2. **Anticipatory Set:** Motivate instruction by focusing the learning task, its importance, or the prior knowledge/experience of the learners.
3. **State the lesson objective to the students.**
4. **Input:** Identify and teach main concepts and skills, emphasizing clear explanations, frequent use of examples, and or diagrams, and invite active student participation.

5. **Check for Understanding:** by observing and interpreting student reactions (active interest, boredom) and by frequent formative evaluations with immediate feedback. Adjust instruction as needed and re teach if necessary.
6. **Provide guided practice** following instruction by having students answer questions, discuss with one another, demonstrate skills, or solve problems. Give immediate feedback and re teach if necessary.
7. **Assign Independent study:** to solidify skills and knowledge when students have demonstrated understanding.

(Hunter, 1994, p. 87-95) The process outlined by Hunter is incorporated in the lessons and allows students opportunities of learning, understanding, and practice based on an explicit objective that is understood by both the teacher and student. These aspects of lesson design can be seen in the Marzano model as well in Domain 1 (Planning and Preparation) and Domain 3 (Instruction). Recent research reiterates the importance of the instruction being deliberate and explicit, as Hunter had formulated in her 1994 work.

According to a recent policy paper by Learning Sciences Marzano Center; *“Deliberate Practice for Deliberate Growth: Teacher Evaluation Systems for Continuous Instructional Improvement”*: “Deliberate practice, as Ericsson defines it, must include specific, focused, and actionable feedback. Without the feedback loop, practice loses its deliberate quality. Ericsson, Krampe and Tesche-Romer (1993) noted that to “assure effective learning, subjects ideally should be given explicit instructions about the best method and be supervised by a teacher to allow individualized diagnosis of errors, informative feedback, and remedial part training” (p.367). Continuous improvement with deliberate practice will produce expertise over time.” (Marzano and Toth, 2013, p.8) In order for teachers to become experts through practicing a pedagogical skill, they must do the following: break down the specific skills that are required, focus on improving those skills in daily practice; receive immediate feedback from an expert or coach, continually practice based on the feedback. (Marzano and Toth, 2013, p.8) Through this process of focused skills, repeated practice, and feedback, teachers can develop automaticity, which will allow them to move from focusing on the strategies being implemented, and rather focus on its effectiveness on student achievement.

### **Charlotte Danielson’s Model**

Charlotte Danielson’s current framework for evaluation has grown from her work that began in 1996. She created a framework for teaching and through many years of research studies, The Danielson Group now provides many states around the country with the tool to evaluate teachers and support learning. In 2009, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation chose the Danielson evaluation tool as part of a massive research project, Measures of Effective Teaching, and from that research the findings have helped develop a better understanding of what is needed from the teacher evaluation tools. The 2013 model incorporates concepts of the Common Core standards. (<https://www.teachscape.com/frameworkforteaching/research>)

The Framework for Teaching: Evaluation Instrument (2013) by Charlotte Danielson is constructed based on the following domains and subsections:

<p><b>Domain 1: Planning and Preparation</b>  1a Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy  1b Demonstrating Knowledge of Students  1c Setting Instructional Outcomes  1d Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources  1e Designing Coherent Instruction  1f Designing Student Assessments</p>	<p><b>Domain 2: Classroom Environment</b>  2a Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport  2b Establishing a Culture for Learning  2c Managing Classroom Procedures  2d Managing Student Behavior  2e Organizing Physical Space</p>
<p><b>Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities</b>  4a Reflecting on Teaching  4b Maintaining Accurate Records  4c Communicating with Families  4d Participating in a Professional Community  4e Growing and Developing Professionally  4f Showing Professionalism</p>	<p><b>Domain 3: Instruction</b>  3a Communicating With Students  3b Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques  3c Engaging Students in Learning  3d Using Assessment in Instruction  3e Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness</p>

(<http://www.danielsongroup.org/article.aspx?page=frameworkforteaching>)

Review of the research shows that the areas with the most direct impact on student achievement are what occurs in the classroom; instruction, strategies, and environment. The Danielson model has 76 elements and evaluated teachers as unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, and distinguished. Marzano uses the terms Innovating, Applying, Developing, Beginning, and Not Using. The domains in both the Danielson and Marzano models are very similar but organized differently with some variations. Because of the similarities, the focus of this paper's discussion will be based on the Marzano model as it will illustrate the value and necessity of each of the sub components he lists and how to specifically identify how the elements are being implemented.

### **Methods and Practical Implementation:**

#### **Marzano Art of Science and Teaching**

##### **Teacher Evaluation Model**

Marzano proposes a model that supports the development of teacher expertise. Like the Danielson Model, the Marzano model also has four domains: (1) Classroom Strategies and Behaviors, (2) Planning and Preparing, (3) Reflecting on Teaching, (4) Collegiality and Professionalism. The most valuable aspect of the evaluation tool is that it provides practical feedback for the teacher. The tool can be modified to meet the needs of specific schools. In the case of Islamic schools, several areas can be modified and others added into the domains to align with the mission and vision based on Islamic principles.

All of the domains are important and must be evaluated and implemented properly. Of the 60 elements in the model, 41 are in Domain 1, 8 elements in Domain 2, 5 elements in Domain 3, and 6 elements in Domain 4. Domain 1 is the area that most directly impacts student

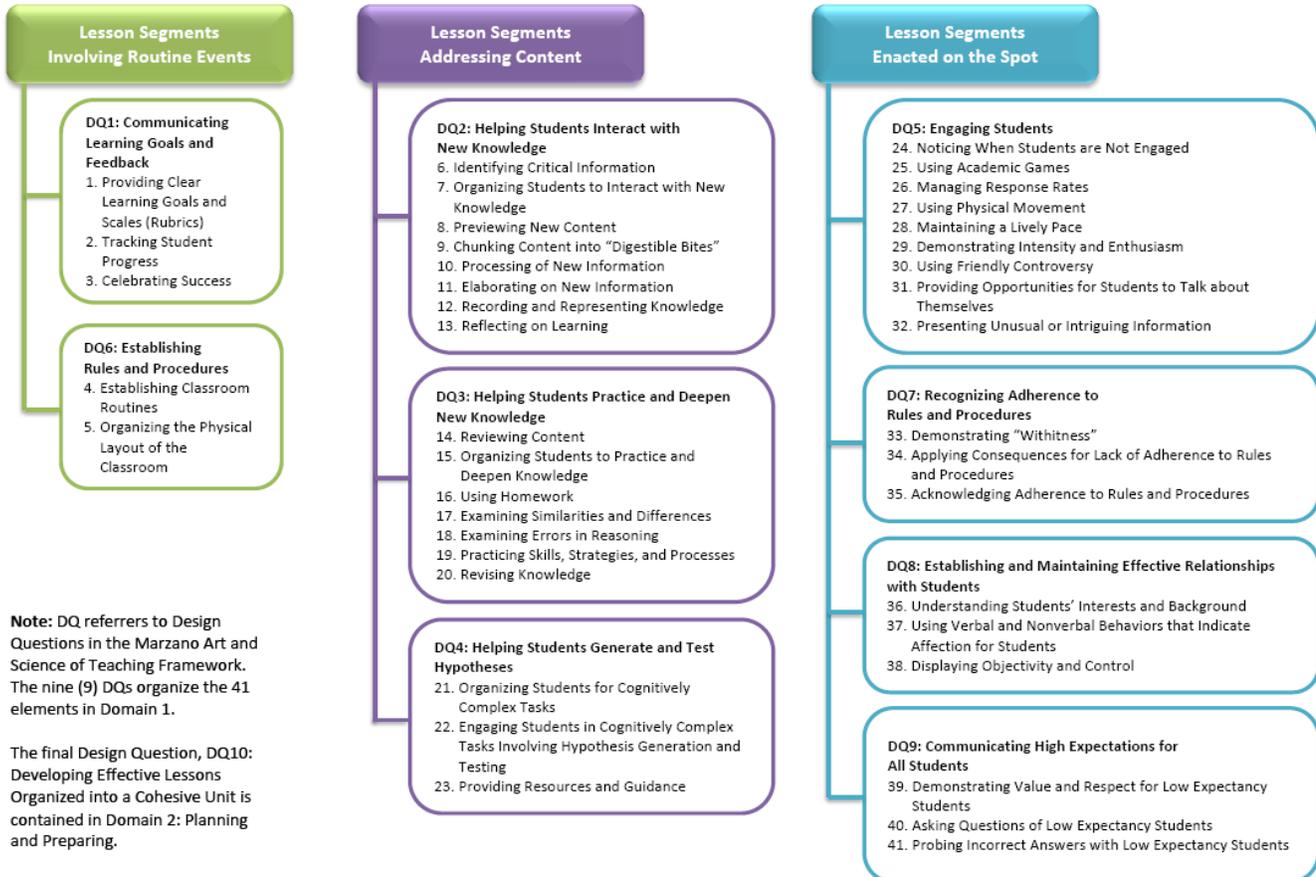
achievement and is the area of focus and therefore entails the majority of the elements. The first domain is categorized into lesson segments: routine segments, content segments, and segments enacted on the spot. Routine segments are aspects that happen every day and are expected by the teacher and of the student. Content segments include new content, practicing the content, and applying and understanding the content. Segments enacted on the spot are aspects that might not be routine but are a necessity when they are encountered. (Marzano, 2011, p.29-50). For example, Design Question 1: Communicating Learning Goals and Providing Feedback should be a routine event that entails providing clear learning goals and scales (rubrics), tracking student progress, and celebrating success.

When supervisors do an evaluation they are looking for specific behaviors. The Marzano model lists specific student and teacher behavior that must be observed and then that is scored using the following: Innovating (4), Applying (3), Developing (2), Beginning (1), and Not Using (0). The data collected is substantial in that it can be used to make changes in teacher behavior. It allows supervisors to gather data per teacher and for the school as a whole. The supervisor would perform an evaluation for an element and then provide the feedback to the teacher and give specific behaviors that were missing. Teachers can then be trained on how to modify or change their instruction to meet the highest standards possible. The supervisor can also gather data and look for patterns school wide and provide school wide professional development. This requires many walk-throughs in classrooms for observations in order to do initial evaluations, then re-evaluate after feedback and training was provided.

**Marzano Art and Science of Teaching Teacher Evaluation Model**  
**Learning Map**

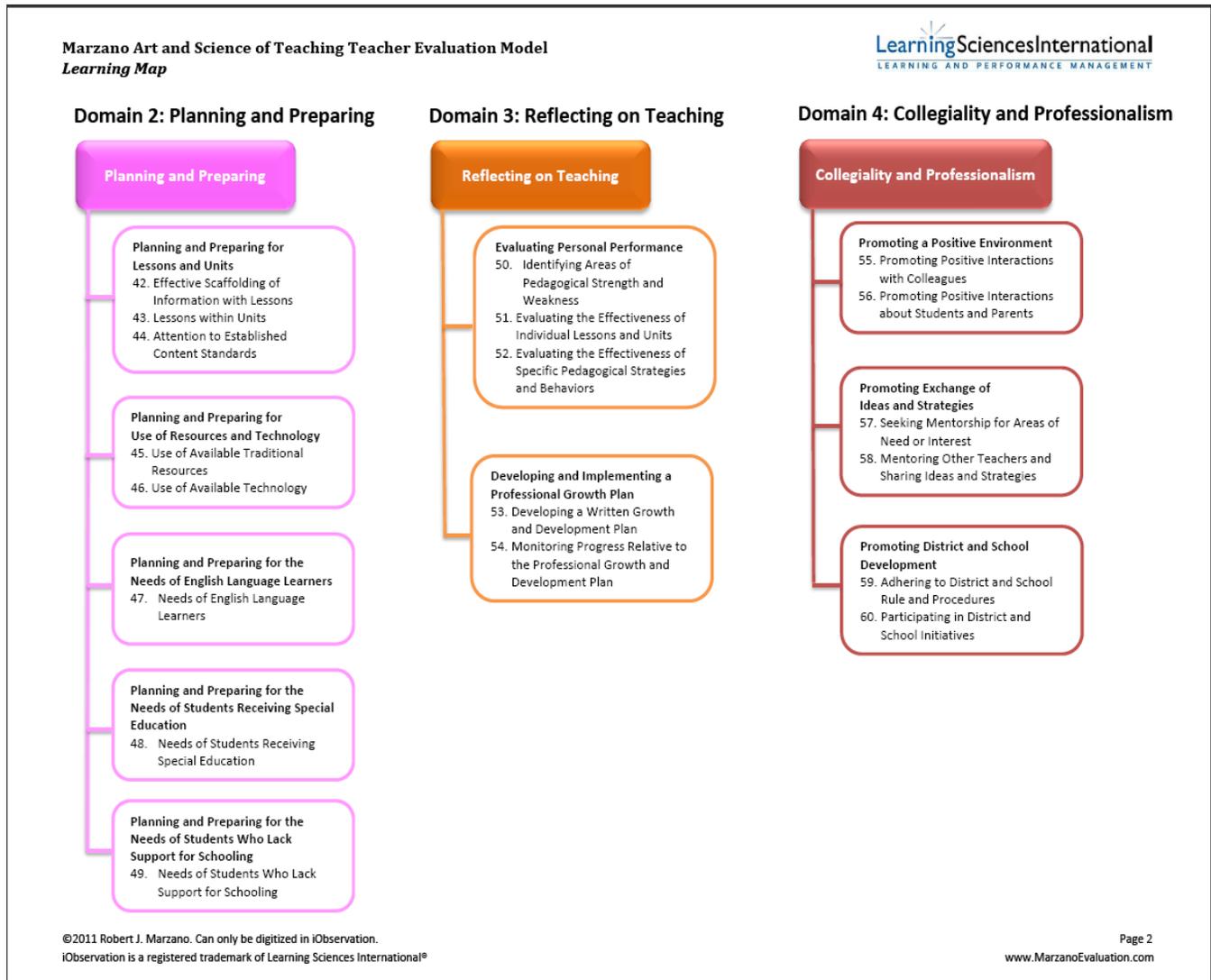


**Domain 1: Classroom Strategies and Behaviors**



**Note:** DQ referrers to Design Questions in the Marzano Art and Science of Teaching Framework. The nine (9) DQs organize the 41 elements in Domain 1.

The final Design Question, DQ10: Developing Effective Lessons Organized into a Cohesive Unit is contained in Domain 2: Planning and Preparing.



## Design Question 1: What will I do to establish and communicate learning goals, tracking progress, and celebrate success?

### Element 1- Providing Clear Learning Goals and Scales

Observation Scale- Classroom Walk Through (CWT) Pages 9-24 in the Marzano Handbook.

**4.0- (Innovating)** In addition to scoring a 3.0, the teacher adapts and creates strategies for unique student needs and situations.

**3.0- (Applying)** Teacher provides a clearly stated learning goal accompanied by a scale (rubric). The teacher monitors the students understanding of the learning goal and the levels of performance.

**2.0- (Developing)** Teacher provides a learning goal accompanied by a scale describing the levels of performance.

**1.0- (Beginning)** Teacher uses the strategy incorrectly or with missing parts, does not monitor student performance.

**0.0- (Not Using)** No understanding of the strategy or did not use the strategy when it was called for. No evidence.

### **Teacher Evidence**

- The learning goal is posted
- The learning goal is a clear statement of knowledge not an activity
- The teacher refers to the goal throughout the lesson
- The teacher has a scale that relates to the learning goal
- By establishing clear learning goals, teacher provides effective feedback
- Teacher provides students with a copy of the learning goals for the unit, chapter or weekly and daily assignments to show how it relates to the assigned work
- Teacher refers to the copy of the learning goals throughout the lessons

### **Student Evidence**

- When asked, students can explain the learning goal
- When asked, the students can explain how the current assignment relates to the learning goal
- When asked, the students can explain the meaning of the levels of performance articulated in the scale
- Students can establish and/or identify their own learning goal(s)
- Students refer to their own learning goal(s) to monitor their own performance
- Students establish their own learning goals that extend their knowledge beyond the teacher provided learning goal(s)

(Marzano, 2011, p. 111).

Marzano outlines a “system in which teachers consistently receive multiple forms of feedback (such as the sample for Design Question 1 above) that are used as the basis for growth in specific skills within specific domains of teacher competence” (Marzano, 2011, p. 103). Through using this model school leaders can provide feedback and professional development based on areas of need for each teacher and help them develop their skills. The focus is on the feedback and how

the teacher applies it in the classroom; **explicit practice based on feedback**. The evaluation model becomes a tool for development to enhance teacher effectiveness.

Schools would begin with school wide trainings in order for teachers to understand the model and its components and what decades of research have proven about the use of this type of model. The Marzano Center has also developed an application (iObservation) that allows the data to be collected and analyzed electronically to enhance the use of the model. This would streamline the process and allow schools, supervisors, and teachers to use data to drive their instructional behaviors. For the details of the Marzano Evaluation model, review *The Art and Science of Teaching* as well as the Marzano Center website.

Islamic schools can choose to utilize the complete program from the Marzano center or create their own tool based on the domains and sub categories or elements outlined by Danielson and/or Marzano. This would also allow Islamic schools to add or modify some elements to meet the mission and vision of their particular school. A sample Islamic school evaluation tool along with the point system that is used to gather data by simply using an excel sheet; can be shared by contacting the author of this paper. Teacher evaluation (or walk throughs) data and analysis will allow supervisors to readily assess areas of need for individual teachers as well as the school.

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