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REALITY CHECK— Refocusing on Mission & Vision

PRESENTATIONS



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Re-newing Our Islamic Schools Back to the Mission of “Earning Allah's Pleasure” and Developing a Mission-based Science Curriculum

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Introduction

As Islamic Schools in North America continue to flourish through the establishment of new schools and through the rapid development of existing ones, many institutions may find themselves drifting away from their mission for which they were first established. As Islam teaches us to continuously renew and re-orient our purpose, Islamic Schools too must stop and refocus. The mission of many Islamic schools is stated using various phrases at different institutions, yet ultimately may be summarized in simple words “to seek the pleasure of Allah SWT”. This quest to earn the pleasure of the Divine should form the foundation of every aspect of Islamic schools. How staff are carefully selected, curriculum, initiatives and protocols developed, the whole school environment is setup, must be deeply rooted in this noble mission. In summary, Islamic schools must create a holistic environment that reflects an Islamic ideology (Gilani-Williams, F. (n.d.)). Many times, Islamic schools find themselves simply becoming a public school with a different dress code, and a few different electives, namely Quranic and Islamic studies. This situation is questionable as public schools and Islamic schools, although may have many factors in common, have a completely different ultimate mission. As Islamic schools, we must ensure that our focus for education is a holistic one based on the desire to remain steadfast in the worship of the Creator. “The process of becoming educated is not a forward motion toward things unknown, rather it is a search for knowledge that will bring an individual back toward their fitra (natural state of purity)... It is a process of recognizing the magnanimity of the Creator– of His Oneness (Tawheed). All forms of knowledge that bring an individual closer to that state of understanding are considered educative.” (Memon, 2006)

Why should an Islamic School's mission be to “seek the pleasure of Allah”?

Before discussing how to re-orient our schools back to this fundamental mission, it is worthwhile to mention why Islamic Schools have chosen or should choose an ultimate mission to “seek the pleasure of Allah”. Through very simple deductive reasoning one can summarize the purpose of any school as being the training ground to prepare children, and now with more years of schooling, young adults, for life with its related challenges. This first point is important to clarify as a school must not be simply an institute to train individuals to follow instructions and take examinations where they can correctly solve a math problem, correct grammar on a sentence, or recall dates of historical events. School, must also be an institute to prepare individuals for being

productive in society, helpful to their neighbors, and most importantly and broadly summarized as individuals who succeed in their life test for which they have been created. For Muslims, this life test or reason for life is very clearly stated in the Holy Quran as individuals who fulfill Uboodiyah to Allah (Quran, 51:56). This term, Uboodiyah, can be defined to be inclusive of the following ideas: lovingly surrendering to Allah, Connecting to Allah, and Pleasing Allah. Therefore, deductively, since school is intended to prepare one for life, and the purpose of life is to seek the pleasure of Allah, Islamic schools must be institutions that prepare Muslims to do just that. This goal must supersede any other goal when a conflict of goals arises. Additionally, all other goals must be developed and carried out ultimately to achieve this over-arching goal. Although this mission may be agreeable to Muslims across Islamic schools of North America, keeping this front and center of all school functions and most importantly in the hearts of all the stakeholders is what will bring this mission to life. Committing to a school, which prioritizes obedience to Allah without compromise is critical if this goal is to be actualized.

The secondary question, after establishing what the over-arching mission of Islamic schools should be, is how can this mission be accomplished? In order for a mission to be brought to life, a commitment must be made by all stakeholders involved. "The schools that have been most successful ... have benefited from a clarity of purpose that is grounded in a shared set of core values" (Bamburg, 1994) Values are defined as the behaviors, beliefs, and actions that a school finds important. Parents, students and staff must all understand and share in those values and share responsibility in implementing them.

The shared values by Islamic schools will be reflected in their mission and vision, however that does not imply that all Islamic schools will be identical or that they need to be in order to fulfill their mission. Therefore, when exploring how to achieve this mission, the authors cannot possibly discuss all possibilities and means available for this mission to become a reality. However, this paper intends to outline some essential factors that schools should adopt to achieve the mission.

How to achieve this mission?

A. Choosing Staff

The hearts of the drivers of the school (teachers and administration) demonstrates the heart of a

school:. “The single most important thing you can do to ensure the success of your organization is to hire the best people you can find to do its work.” (Community Tool Box, 2015) Therefore, “who the staff is,” at a deeper level than credentials on a resume, is going to dictate the level of success of the school in “seeking Allah’s pleasure.” It is well established that the one who does not possess something will not be able to transfer it to others. Staff that does not “possess” the mission of the school, i.e. accept and actively struggle to accomplish the mission within their lives, will fail in transferring this mission in any real sense to students.

Thus, it is of utmost importance, when choosing school staff, to choose individuals who have demonstrated belief in the mission, which can be practically witnessed not only in their prior teaching or administrative positions but within their day to day lives. A teacher in an Islamic school serves as a role model responsible not only for the mind but for the soul of the student (Baloch & Afendi, 1980). Therefore, for example, it is insufficient for a math teacher to simply be talented at teaching math. He or she needs to also serve as a role model who is struggling to achieve the mission of the school in their life even after school hours. Parents should want their children not only to solve math problems as their math teacher does, but to live, also in a similar manner. School leaders must properly weigh the level of commitment to this mission in prospective staff and administration even if it means sacrificing on other preferable credentials since the best candidate, if lacks the orientation for which the school is established, will ultimately deter the school from the mission. Any Islamic school leader can probably testify how difficult it is to find these individuals who will bring the mission to life. However, with a sincere intention to finding these individuals, lack of compromise on the essentialness of the mission, and most importantly with a lot of supplication, Allah does send these shining stars.

B. Constant Re-iteration of the Mission

One of the reasons the mission becomes a school slogan as opposed to an actualized reality is due to the lack of re-iteration of that mission at all school levels and through the school year and even the school day. All staff and administration meetings as well as meetings with individual or with a group of parents should ultimately begin with a reminder of the purpose. Just taking the time to verbally state the mission is in itself a means to re-orient back to the mission. Additionally, a few moments may be taken occasionally to discuss what the mission means on the ground and how the school can work harder to achieve this mission. In communication with

students through the day, the purpose should be re-stated and sometimes discussed. For example, several times a week, during homeroom or assembly the students should be reminded: “Why they are here in school?”. Even a student in KG can respond with the answer “*I am here to make Allah happy*”. Even at this stage the student will have a preliminary grasp of what this means since they have a grasp of what it means to “make someone happy”. Using simple terminology such as this or for example saying “talk to Allah” instead of “make dua or make supplication” is likely more effective with students especially at a younger age. At the Islamic school of Miami, the idea of “Making Allah Happy” is a consistently re-iterated mission throughout the school. Students will then be reminded of what this means through examples. Making Allah happy is accomplished through respecting and obeying teachers and parents, focusing in salah, being neat and organized, giving your best effort at understanding your science lesson so you can use this information to benefit others and because performing well will make your parents happy, and so on. Connecting these objectives, which most schools strive to achieve regardless of their mission, to the noble mission of making Allah happy, will make accomplishing them much more achievable InshAllah.

Another example where the purpose should be re-iterated in school is throughout the day in various subjects through learning moments. The teacher may remind the students or ask them to figure out why they are learning about a given topic and the students should be able to ultimately link the lesson to making Allah happy. If this is not possible, more training is required for the students or the curriculum itself may need re-visiting. With this constant, sometimes seemingly tedious re-iteration of the purpose, the hearts of the administration, teachers, parents, and students is less likely to loose focus within the day to day details of school affairs. For indeed, Allah has reminded us that the believer is in need of frequent reminders when He said “ Yet go on reminding, for verily, such a reminder will profit the believers” (Q. 51:55).

C. Dua as the most powerful means to achieve the Mission

Perhaps the single most important and effective means to achieving the mission is the means of “Dua” or supplication. The Prophet (pbuh) stressing the critical nature of this means stated, “Dua is itself the Ibadah (Worship)” (Sunan Abi Dawud, 1479). School leaders, administration, teachers, parents and students must admit to the fact that they cannot reach the mission of making Allah happy themselves. The recognition of the inability to take any action, let alone

achieving such a lofty mission, is an essential article of faith of Muslims and the beginning of hard work and success. With this recognition of one's inability one recognizes that all ability is by Allah alone. Although this may be something recognized and believed by Muslims, truly internalizing and experientially living this belief is a life long pursuit. Unfortunately, even in Islamic schools, Dua has become a formality, as opposed to a sincere recognition of inability on the part of the Creation and the full un-shared ability of the Creator. A regular, sincere, diet of dua for the success of the school is critical to achieve the school mission. As with the re-iteration of the purpose stated earlier, this dua should be regular in meetings and through out the school day. Ideally staff should also make dua for the achievement of the mission of the school, not only within the school, but in times of solitude where sincerity is likely to be more present.

In addition to the specific dua for the achievement of the mission, dua is also a means to the achievement of the mission in another sense. Given that dua is one of the, if not the, fundamental acts of worship in Islam, simply being in dua is a means to make Allah happy. Therefore, dua should become a culture within Islamic schools until the students themselves are making dua not only for the lofty goal of Making Allah happy but even the most mundane matters. Students should become regular in dua for success on exams, for the safe return of missing students, for the affairs of individuals in stress in their community, etc. When a student complains of pain or anxiety, they should firstly be reminded to ask Allah for relief before taking additional measures. This again, as alluded to earlier, will only become a reality if staff are chosen which also live dua throughout and beyond the school day.

D. A focus on Akhlaq and Tarbiyah

Another essential component in an Islamic school's quest to reach its mission, which is often not prioritized, is a focus on Akhlaq (the inner reality of the student) and Tarbiyah (Islamic Upbringing). "Both educators and non-educators would agree that the absence of nurturing students toward good character, or what Freire would call a universal human ethic, has had a tremendous affect on society" (Memon, 2006). Often times, the academic race in science, language arts, social studies, and math shifts the school's focus away from assessing and actively building positive akhlaq. Although part of the school's mission in earning the pleasure of Allah is to develop a level of mastery in students in certain aspects of these subjects, the reality is that on the Day of Judgement students will not ultimately be asked about their level of proficiency in

these subjects. The student will be asked about and “graded” based on their inner reality, which manifests itself through various actions. How strong was their commitment to salah, what were their feelings and subsequent actions towards their parents and elders, were they people of humility or arrogance, and so on. Thus, if akhlaq are relegated to a second or a third position within the school dynamics, it is believed that a dis-service has been done to students as they would not be prepared for life and therefore the school would have not achieved its mission. Akhlaq brought about through a focus on tarbiyah and not simply the transfer of knowledge must be front and center in all school matters. The failure of a student in mastering a topic after a sincere effort to learn the topic and thus failing an academic exam cannot be equivalent or even remotely comparable to a student cheating on that exam. The first failure is one relating to knowledge mastery and the other relating to akhlaq.

A focus on akhlaq may be accomplished through several practical initiatives and approaches, some of which are mentioned here. Firstly, staff must be constantly reminded (as with the overall mission) to focus on and to keep a vigilant eye on the student's akhlaq and to engage in tarbiyah to rectify any negative akhlaq. Akhlaq is an internal reality ultimately only perceivable to the Divine, however actions manifested are indications of a person's akhlaq. Subsequently, various means may be employed to monitor, record, and communicate student Akhlaq. Schools may opt to develop an “Akhlaq card” as is used at the Islamic School of Miami, which can be viewed by the student, teachers, and parents. School wide “Akhlaq themes” may be used also to improve as a whole in chosen akhlaq such as organization, kindness, and respect. The progress of each student within the theme may be monitored and rewarded accordingly. As mentioned previously, this of course requires staff who themselves possess or struggling to possess these Akhlaq and hence again the importance of choosing appropriate teachers and administrators.

Secondly, the grading system of schools needs to demonstrate the school's focus on Akhlaq. If the grading system is skewed in the direction of academic mastery grades, naturally this is what students and parents will focus on. An Akhlaq grade may be assigned for each class and an overall Akhlaq grade assigned for non-subject related activities such as salah, lunch, assembly, etc. This should be the first and most important grade the student receives and the student should ultimately be rewarded or punished based on this category. This focus must be consistently stressed to the students and their parents. The second grading category, in order of importance,

should be student effort, as students have varying abilities and begin at various starting points and therefore by focusing on effort one is also assessing progress of the student based on their abilities and their starting point as opposed to simply comparing them to other students, potentially creating an unfair situation. The third grading category should be the academic grade. The academic grade is used to demonstrate the level of mastery of learning objectives. This final grading category should be used to assess the student's level in reference to the objectives of the curriculum; however the "success" of the student must stem from the mission of the school and therefore should be based strictly on akhlaq and effort.

E. Mission based learning of Academic sciences: Science as an example

In Islamic schools, sometimes subjects are termed "secular sciences" as if Islam and the overall mission of the school are distinct from these other subjects. "There is no distinction, as Imam al-Ghazzali notes, between knowledge that is considered secular or that which is considered religious" (Memon, 2006; Nofal, 1993). Schools find themselves teaching Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, and Math in a way that is completely disconnected from Allah and the noble mission of the school. What exacerbates the situation more is that staff find themselves focusing on these "secular" subjects over the "Islamic" subjects to achieve accreditation goals, satisfy parents demands, and achieve high standardized test scores; thus basically developing a secular school. Although some institutions may be satisfied with striving to reach the goal of making Allah happy through dress code, Islamic studies, and Quran class alone, many would aim to achieve the mission in a more real sense. A more appropriate approach would be to realize that at an Islamic school there should be no room for "secular subjects". Everything must connect back to the mission of seeking Allah's pleasure. All useful knowledge in reality is that which increases ones awareness and knowledge of Allah. Learning in itself is a means to coming closer to Allah, by appreciating creation and the knowledge bestowed upon the creation. As noted by (Rauf, 1988), "An essential prerequisite is that religious and secular subjects should be made an indivisible whole. The compartmentalization of religious and secular education, based on a factitious division of life into spiritual and temporal, is not sanctioned by Islam".

One of the easier subjects that can be used as a means to this mission is the study of science, which we will define as the study of the physical world Allah has created. It is quite surprising that many Islamic schools across North America and across the Muslim world rely on secularist

theory for their study of the world in the field of science. Islamic schools find themselves with no alternative to science books and curricula, which are void of even the mention of a Creator. However, for Islamic schools seeking the goal of Knowing and Pleasing Allah, this is quite far from what they aim to achieve. Science is one of the most direct of the four core academic subjects in schools that should lead to a reflection on the Greatness, Perfection, and Mercy of the Divine. Thus it is quite disheartening that Islamic schools are, for the most part, missing this opportunity. Although it is beneficial for a student to understand the life cycle of a plant and the process of photosynthesis, unless all of this orients the students attention to the Maker of this incredible system, the main purpose of the creation of that plant and the student's understanding of it has been missed.

Islamic schools need to re-orient their science curricula to achieve the mission for which they were established. “The Qur’an promotes the pursuit of knowledge within a framework of values: it is these values which should be the focus of our attention and which should shape our scientific activity. Only by turning these values into a living reality can we truly be honest to the Qur’an and fulfill our obligations towards it.” Sardar, Z., n.d).

Presented here are proposed objectives, of such a curriculum, which a team of scholars including the authors, have developed. These objectives will InshAllah form the basis of science programs at Islamic schools and mission-based science textbooks as well as other resources in the near future.

Over-arching goals: The mission-based science program should firstly aim to achieve specific over-arching goals. However, prior to the discussion of these specific goals, one goal that should be stated is the need for students to understand the laws that Allah created in this world, as this will be critical in the actualization of the remainder of the over-arching goals. Beyond this goal, the first specific goal should be to develop a sense of respect in students for the physical world (Iqbal, 2011). Without a sense of awe and wonder for the awesomeness of Allah's physical world, the remainder of the goals of the program will be difficult to achieve. Secondly, all aspects of the physical world studied in this mission-based science program, should ultimately point the student back to Allah and hence the reality of Tawheed, or the active affirmation of the Oneness of Allah in terms of His Names, Attributes and Lordship. Studying wind currents, for example, should be done in the context of this creature being a Mercy from Allah, a

manifestation of His infinite power, with recognition that this Mercy and Power is incomparable to the mercy or power endowed to any other one of His creation, i.e. He is One in these attributes. Thirdly, the human response to Allah's Oneness in His Names, Attributes, and Lordship is one of *Uboodiyah*, ultimate freedom through complete surrender to Allah. Three main relevant components may be listed within Uboodiyah and that is *Purification of the self*, *Service to fellow man*, and becoming a *Trustee of the environment*. In other words, in order to be one that fulfills Uboodiyah within the context of science and beyond, one must work on excellence in each of these categories. For the sake of brevity, examples will be given to illustrate what is intended from each of these categories.

When a student learns about the strength of a leafcutter ant, which is able to carry 50 times its own weight (Coles, 2012), in addition to wondering how Allah's creation is inexplicable by man and leaves us in amazement, it should lead the student to the essential Islamic characteristic of humility. This is an example of how the study of the physical world should lead one to purification of one's self from ill traits such as arrogance. Additionally, students should learn about severe weather, not only for their own preparation if they encounter these conditions but to learn how to appropriately help others in this situation, hence the concept of Service to fellow man. Through the study of aspects of water, soil and air, the student should be driven to the reality that he/she is a Trustee of this environment, which he must learn not to betray. Thus, lessons within this mission-based science curriculum must be designed to achieve these essential Uboodiyah components.

Methodological goals: There are also specific methodological goals that are essential in the achievement of the over-arching goals mentioned above. Firstly within the curriculum, students must *Love to learn*. Without this essential passion, the grand goals mentioned earlier become a very arduous if not nearly impossible task to achieve. Secondly, a sense of becoming a *Seeker of knowledge* who is curious, critical and able to learn independently is also vital for the program to succeed. Thirdly, within this Islamic study of science, the student must be taught that the human being has *Potential and limits*. The student has grand potential through the faculties of perception Allah has gifted him/her with to explore and understand the world, yet one is also limited in his/her abilities by design and thus this creates ambitious yet humble scientists. Finally, the science program should focus on developing a *Depth of knowledge*. Quite often

students find themselves rapidly covering numerous topics, yet unable to recall most of what they supposedly learned within that school year. Focus on a careful selection of what matters most for the student at their specific age in achieving the mission and then consistent and regular review through various learning tools and approaches, will InshAllah develop this depth of knowledge.

Additional goals: Three additional goals are also key in achieving the mission-based science program ultimately designed to make Allah happy. The curriculum must prioritize Applicable knowledge and skills; knowledge that will be useful for them outside of the classroom. Teachers, often face the question from a student of why they are learning what they are learning? Unfortunately such an answer is not always available to the teacher. This effort spent in learning knowledge that is not as applicable or relevant to the student as other areas, not only is lost valuable time, but serves to undermine the student's and sometimes even teacher's motivation to learn. Secondly, within the science program, students should learn to appreciate and respect the scientific legacy of Muslims and non-Muslims of the past and present. Having the knowledge and subsequent respect of their works will be a means to advance the abilities of the student InshAllah. Finally, the student must learn to practice Ethical science. Not all scientific inquiry is Islamically ethical and often times obviously harmful. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) used to seek refuge from knowledge that was not beneficial (Jami` at-Tirmidhi 3482); therefore, the student should learn to recognize and hence practice beneficial and ethical science.

Once such a science curriculum is established, Islamic schools will no longer need to rely on secular materials to teach science and struggle to "Islamicize" what is being learned, for they will have a program that was developed from the ground up to help them achieve the noble mission for which they are teaching InshAllah. This mission-based science program is just one example of how Islamic schools should use academic sciences as a means to achieve the mission of seeking Allah's pleasure.

Appendix:

Allah's World KG Curriculum

Unit 1: Allah Made Me:

- a. Unit 1 Overall Learning Outcomes:
 - i. Student immediately able to recall that everything about him/her is made/gifted to him/her by Allah (Tawheed:Allah Made the world).
 - ii. Student recalls to thank Allah for each gift by verbally thanking Allah and through identifying and practicing rules for how to take care of these gifts. (Tazkiyah: Praise/Thanks)
 - iii. Student demonstrates awe for the human body Allah has made. (Develop Awe for Allah's World)
- b. Unit 1 Learning Topics:
 - i. Everything about me is a gift from Allah!
 - 1. Exercises to identify different things about me that Allah gave me.
 - a. Game-How many gifts of Allah can you find in yourself?
 - b. Coloring worksheets: gifts of Allah to me
 - 2. Learn through observation of one's own body fascinating facts (to develop awe) about each of these gifts. i.e. Allah makes our eye blink to keep it moist, Allah gave you 27 bones just in your hand so you can move in so many ways.
 - a. <http://www.sciencekids.co.nz/sciencefacts/humanbody.html>
 - b. <http://www.makemegenius.com/cool-facts/human-body--systems-biology-interesting-facts>
 - 3. Practice thanking Allah for each gift.
 - a. i.e. Recording an audio thank you note for one of my body parts to deliver to Allah or Spending time listing the gifts and thanking Allah aloud for each: He is hearing us!
 - 4. Examples of gifts of Allah to me:
 - a. Limbs: Legs to run and play, Hands to hug mom/hold my toys
 - b. Eyes, Mouth, Ears: See my friends and family, Taste my

- favorite food, Hear my favorite sounds.
- c. Gifts should be placed in context of this age level as seen above.
5. Student able to recall 10 gifts about their body from Allah, 1 fascinating fact about each gift, and student recalls to thank Allah for each gift.
- ii. I have to thank Allah for all these gifts by treating and using them well.
 1. Allah wants me to eat all that is good!
 - a. Watching what I eat: Good (healthy, halal) vs Bad (Unhealthy, haram) food to maintain this gift.
 - i. Define halal/haram for them as “What Allah says is ok for us vs not”
 - b. Listing examples of healthier foods options.
 - c. Showing effects of healthier vs less healthy foods: i.e. energy vs laziness, healthy vs sick, healthy teeth vs teeth consumed by sweets, etc.
 - d. Students able to recall principles of how to determine which foods are healthy and halal and which are not as well as a list of examples for both categories and being able to explain that by choosing good food this is how I thank Allah.
 2. Allah wants me to keep these gifts clean and safe!
 - a. How to use bathroom (Islamically/Hygienically), Frequent wudu/handwashing (spiritual and health benefits), Washing teeth/siwack, Sneezing and coughing (how and what to say), nail and hair trimming (how often/sunnah way to do so/never biting off nails)
 - b. Show effects of properly vs improperly doing these actions spiritually and physically.
 - i. Students recall, demonstrate, and are observed practicing steps for each of these categories.

3. Keeping Safe in the House, Masjid, Stores, Playground, Car, Street
 - i. Students recall, demonstrate, and are observed practicing 5 safety rules for each of these categories.

Unit 2: Allah made Plants and Animals

- a. Unit 2 Learning Outcomes:
 - i. Student immediately able to recall when a certain plant or animal is mentioned that it is made by Allah.
 - ii. Student able to recall that all plants and animals pray to Allah as well but in a different way which we cannot see.
 - iii. Student learns and therefore practices care for plants and animals since they are made by Allah and pray to Allah.
- b. Unit 2 Learning Topics:
 1. Allah made very amazing plants and animals: Choose most fascinating plants and animals to create awe/respect for Allah's world.
 2. Allah made very different animals/plants: big/small, different shape/form, different colors, fast/slow, how they move, what they eat, different offspring, etc.
 - a. Possibly show video/slide show, have them bring pictures they find
 - b. Follow up with a visit to the zoo, Nature Park.
 - c. Going outdoors part of the class time and choosing leaves or insects to bring back to class to demonstrate diversity of Allah's creation
 3. Let's look at how some of the plants and animals are the same and how they are different: Compare and contrast and organize differences
 - a. Possibly cut out different pictures of plants and animals and then exercise grouping them by similarities.

Unit 3: Allah made the Sun

- a. Unit 3 Learning Outcomes:
- b. Unit 3 Learning Topics
 - i. Allah made the sun as a:
 - ii. Mercy from Allah to warm us, help plants grow (have class plant and show difference when kept with or without sun), give us light: all from one creature (The sun)
 - iii. Awe and respect and thus gratitude to Allah
 - iv. What is Allah telling me about how generous and great He is.
 - v. K-PS3-1. Make observations to determine the effect of sunlight on Earth's surface.
 - vi. K-PS3-2. Use tools and materials to design and build a structure that will reduce the warming effect of sunlight on an area

Unit 4: Allah does not like us to waste anything in His World

- a. Unit 4 Learning Outcomes:
- b. Unit 4 Learning Topics
 - i. Do not waste: especially water, paper (writing/toilet paper), food, electricity, and even time (need to connect time to science concepts-plants need time to grow and if not watered on time may not survive)
 - ii. K-ESS3-3. Communicate solutions that will reduce the impact of humans on the land, water, air, and/or other living things in the local environment.

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Enhancing Human Development and the Appropriation of Islamic Material: Feeling, Doing, Speaking, and Inquiring Together

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Introduction

Thinking, inquiring, collaborating, and communicating lie at the heart of educating students for a changing world. These skills, in service of Islamic education, are imperative for Muslim learners specifically. This paper takes a sociocultural developmental perspective in exploring how teachers might teach and model these skills to enhance Muslim students' *appropriation* of Islamic practices and principles. Reciprocally, the teaching and learning of Islamic material holds potential in enhancing the multiple domains of human development, including cognitive, social-emotional, and spiritual. From a sociocultural perspective, learning leads development (Vygotsky, 1987) through participation in social practices whereby the student participates, assimilates, transforms, and re-contributes (Wells, 1999). Al-Sadan (1997) identified the importance of pedagogy when he said: "The issue of effectiveness in pedagogy is of vital importance...as the whole communication of faith ultimately depends on the way in which it is taught" (p. 39). Islamic material is already perfect. How we, as educators, engage students with this material determines whether or not they will appropriate it and whether or not it will expand their cognitive, social-emotional, and spiritual development. Toward these two goals, this paper examines two pedagogical approaches that could be used in Islamic Studies classrooms: affective activity and dialogic inquiry.

Affective participation refers to supportive and stimulating active learning approaches that privilege both emotion and cognition in the process of learning. It also highlights participation as a mechanism in that process. *Dialogic inquiry* refers to inquiring together in dialogue. Both work best in community. These two concepts are drawn from data collected through participant observation and active interviews in a qualitative study of Muslim educators' perspectives on human learning and development in a Sunni Muslim mosque school in Canada (Jamma Mosque School; Alkouatli, 2015) and contextualized within the sociocultural literature. I suggest that affective activity and dialogic inquiry are two catalytic ways in which educators can enhance students' learning, mastery, and appropriation of Islamic principles and practices, while stimulating total human development in the process. Further, these pedagogical approaches support two goals present in every Islamic classroom but which are particularly poignant in Islamic classrooms situated in non-Islamic cultures: goals of cultural *reproduction* and goals of cultural *renewal*. Reproduction, which Zine (2007) calls "resisting cultural assimilation and

engaging cultural survival” (p. 72), is a key objective of Islamic education in schools in Canada. In Western countries more generally, Ramadan (2004) elaborated:

At the heart of every family, in every organization, and in Western Muslim communities generally, the same concern and fear are expressed about passing on Islamic values to the children. How can the flame of faith, the light of the spiritual life, and faithfulness to the teachings of Islam be preserved in environments that no longer refer to God and in educational systems that have little to say about religion? (p. 126)

Here, Ramadan identifies the issue that Islamic principles and practices, by their very existence within prevailing non-Muslim cultures and educational systems, are threatened, which heralds the call for cultural reproduction. Yet, Ramadan (2004) also pointed out that this cultural reproduction may not be successful if the ways in which educators aim to reproduce culture actually turns students *away* from that culture. In critically claiming that Islamic education, to a large extent in non-Muslim contexts, has lost its way, Ramadan called for reconsideration of what is usually offered to young Muslims in the West:

[W]hat is called ‘education’ (which should be the passing on of knowledge and of knowing how to be) is in fact an ill-administered ‘instruction,’ simply a handing on of knowledge based on principles, rules, obligations, and prohibitions, often presented in a cold, rigid, and austere manner, without soul or humanity. Some young people know by heart long *surahs* (chapters) of the Qur’an and a dizzying number of verses and hadiths that have absolutely no impact on their daily behavior; on the contrary, inevitably, they have taken on the outward form but have no contact with the base. (pp. 127-128)

Here, Ramadan suggested that Islamic educational institutions are actually failing at cultural *reproduction*, let alone the more challenging and creative educational goal of cultural *renewal*, which he also addressed as a crucial task in Islamic educational institutions. The Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, said that Islam will undergo continual renewal. Ramadan (2013) explained, “This renewal is only in the way that the religion is understood, implemented, and lived in different times and places rather than in the actual sources, principles, and fundamentals” (Ramadan, 2013, p. 106). Educating children in the Islamic system of principles and practices aims to ensure that the children master and appropriate the system in

order to contribute to its reproduction. This is necessarily a renewal as they express and live the Islamic system in a new generation and sociocultural context.

Nowhere are the demands of cultural reproduction and cultural renewal so clearly illustrated as in an Islamic school embedded in a non-Muslim community. The Jamma Mosque School, where this study took place, stood the intersection between cultures, between worldviews—Islamic and secular—and its teachers were charged with the task of mediating the two. In this paper, I provide excerpts from data gathered through observations in the classroom of an exemplary educator called Amira to illustrate the pedagogical approaches of affective participation and dialogic inquiry, which may be particularly generative in helping students make meaning of Islamic material.

What we *feel, do, say, and ask* in Islamic studies classrooms shape the ways in which we think, make meaning of, and appropriate Islamic material. The two pedagogical approaches presented here hold potential to draw human development forward and each has a key role to play in both the cultural reproduction and cultural renewal that is imperative in Islamic education.

1. Affective Participation: Feeling and Doing Together

We know that students learn more when they are happy. Vygotsky went even further in suggesting, “Affect is the alpha and the omega, the first and last link, the prologue and epilogue of all mental development” (1998, p.227). We also know that students are more likely to emulate a teacher who is warm and approachable. In these ways, emotion is the engine behind cognition. Creating a safe and happy environment in which to learn is the very first step in enhancing students’ experiences of Islamic material. It starts with creating a *community*, defined as a group of people bound by mutual interests and where both participation and benefit are shared (Cam, 1995; Dewey, 1938). Key in cultivating a generative learning community is the construct of *intersubjectivity*, or shared focus of attention among teachers and all students that includes both affective and cognitive involvement in communication (Göncü, Abel, & Boshans, 2010). Just as a mother and a baby develop shared communication based upon mutual care and attention, a teacher with her students is attentive and responsive. The teacher listens and honors the students’ perspectives and knowledge flows in multiple directions. To be optimally educative, the interactions that take place within the community draw from emotion as well as cognition and

must include challenge as well as consensus (Mercer & Littleton, 2007). The teacher solicits reasons behind students' claims and facilitates the critique of ideas, rather than individuals.

The learning activities that happen within communities have the potential to draw development forward (Vygotsky, 1987): external social processes become internal through participation in mature cultural forms of behavior. In other words, what we do becomes what we think. Children's ongoing participation in the Islamic acts of worship, like congregational prayer, for example, is a process of internalization. This internalization can be understood in terms of two aspects: mastery and appropriation. Mastery involves learning how to do something with expertise. An example would be mastery of the recitation of the Quran. But, in addition to mastery, internalization can also be understood on a deeper level, in terms of *appropriation*, or the process of making something one's own (Wertsch, 1998). An example would be enhanced intimacy with the Quran such that the words and concepts become part of one's identity, one's cognitive structure—whether mastery in recitation had been attained or not. Mastery and appropriation are sometimes intertwined and sometimes distinct. One might master a range of Prophetic dua (supplication), but never appropriate the words and meanings into themselves. Or, one might have not yet mastered Arabic, but have appropriated the language into their sense of self.

This refinement in understanding internalization as mastery and appropriation is important in the field of Islamic education, where mastery may be sufficient for some practices and principles, but others, ideally, must be appropriated in order to be applied authentically in daily life (Alkouatli, 2015). The implications of mastery and appropriation are crucial: by participating in the Islamic principles and practices, children may come to internalize them. But the transformation of psychological functions from the social to the individual plane is not a simple matter of participation. The *ways* in which children participate, and the affective and cognitive *context* surrounding participation, determine how generative that participation will be. The role of emotion, of affect, clearly plays a role in the process of appropriation. Further, internalization is most effective when it happens at the outer edge of a child's ability, called the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 2011). This is the zone beyond that of independent ability, in which the child can act only with the interaction with a more experienced other. Learning activities are most effective when they happen in this sensitive zone, and they drive development forward (Vygotsky, 2011).

The following data excerpt is an example of affective participation whereby Amira, the teacher, worked with a group of four girls, aged 8 to 10 years, on memorization of the Quran (Alkouatli, 2015). Amira called her pedagogical practice “Stages” and it involved grouping girls who working on the same verses of the Quran together. Instruction was differentiated and aimed at the outer edge of each girl’s ability. Each group worked on memorizing for two minutes, during which time Amira went around the room correcting and assisting. Then the girls presented what they had memorized:

Amira drew a table on the whiteboard. Along the top row of the table, she wrote in Arabic the chapters (surahs) of the Quran that each girl in the class was working on. Lima was working alone; Bayan was working alone. Dalia and Sahar were working together. On the left hand column of the table, Amira wrote: Round 1, 2, 3. Then she said, “We’re going to do three rounds, ok?” and she started her timer for two minutes. The girls began reciting to themselves.

First, Amira went over to Lima and listened to her reciting Surah Naziat. Lima’s recitation was fluid. Amira offered little corrections along the way. When Lima finished, Amira said, “Ok, you went up to āyah 13, so you can now work on 14 and 15.”

Amira went over to Bayan: “Let’s go!”

Bayan was reciting Surah Al Alaq. Amira counted how many ayas Bayan had done—13. Meanwhile, Sahar and Dalia were working as a team on Surah Al Bayyinah. Amira went over to them.

Amira: Ladies, how are you?

Sahar: Not good.

Amira: You are so *amazingly* good!

Sahar: I know [she smiles].

This is an example of intersubjectivity and how Amira built rapport with the girls using humor, affection, and encouragement.

Sahar and Dalia started reading together—they were not reciting because they hadn’t memorized it; they were actually reading the Arabic text. Amira showed them with her mouth how to pronounce the difficult words. While Amira was with Sahar and Dalia, the other two girls were reciting quietly to themselves at different tables. Amira returned to

Lima, listened to her reciting, then stopped her to give a bit of meaning: “What is Wadi al-Muqaddasi Tuwa? Read the English!” Lima read it from the textbook and Amira expanded upon the meaning: “Yes, it’s the valley where Musa, *‘alayhi al salām* (upon him be peace), met Allāh, *subḥānahū wa ta ‘ālā* (above, beyond and exalted). Good job! Sixteen ayas!”

Next, Amira went on to Bayan, who was very focused on her recitation. Soon, Amira and Bayan were on the floor together, in prostration, side by side. When they got up, the other girls asked them what they were doing.

Amira: This sign here [pointing to a mark in the text of the Quran] means you have to do *sajdah* (prostration).

Sahar: What is *sajdah*?

Amira: Beautiful question. Remember *sajdah* in prayer? So what do you do when you see this sign? You say *Allāh akbar* (God is most great) and you go into *sujūd* (prostration) and you do three, “*Subḥāna rabbi al ‘ālā* (above and beyond is my lord).” It’s called *sajdah al tilawa*. Say it!

Children: *Sajdah al tilawa*!

Amira: Who did this? The Prophet did it.

Sahar and Dalia stumbled through their surah. Amira gave them some pronunciation instruction. Then she said, “You guys need to do the first three ayas in under two minutes or no break for you. I know you can do it.”

She went back to Lima and got down on her knees, leaning her arms on the desk, face-to-face with the child. She listened as Lima finished. Lima went to write how many ayas she did on the whiteboard.

Sahar and Dalia looked at each other and smiled. Sahar said to Dalia, “I think we can do it.” Lima finished writing on the whiteboard and went over to help them.

They were all quiet listening to Bayan. Bayan got to the part where they do *sajdah at-tilawa*. Amira and Bayan bowed down in prostration.

Amira: Ok, Bayan, go on break.

Meanwhile, Sahar and Dalia were worrying together: “I hope we can do it!”

Amira went over to them.

Sahar: We did it like *ten times*!

They started and stumbled through it. Amira gave corrections. Lima was there, watching; she started leaping in circles around them. The girls finished.

Dalia: See? Less than two minutes!

Amira: How do you feel?

Sahar: Great! Now we can have our break!

Amira: There is no regret. Once you have done your best, then you let it go. (FN, Amira, PO 5, 3/8/15)

In this data excerpt, Amira was engaging the students in memorizing the Quran using a range of pedagogical elements for pronunciation, memorization, and interpretation that seemed to be meaningful and engaging for the children. Her Stages method employed individual and group work, reading, reciting, and even physical actions. It involved the whiteboard, a visual aid tracking the girl's progress, and a timer. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it featured Amira's own engaged participation in facilitating the process and working each girl at the very edge of her ability, in the zone of proximal development. She made Stages cognitively stimulating by keeping it moving at a fast pace—only two minutes per segment—and exploring pertinent meanings in English along the way. As well as differentiating the instruction, Amira modeled correct pronunciation and ways of approaching mastery of the Quran.

Amira's attentive intersubjectivity with each student, and her participation, is significant in this excerpt. Amira going into prostration alongside Bayan, foreheads on the ground together, is an example of how Amira was an active participant in the learning activity. Through encouraging, loving, and participating, Amira made memorization of the Quran, and attempts towards understanding its meanings, an affectively-positive experience (Alkouatli, 2015). Finally, Amira nurtured the girls' support for each other. When one girl was finished, she went to encourage the others. This contributed to the construction of community in the classroom.

These qualities of community, the sharing of emotion and cognition in active engagement, and in an environment of both support and challenge, contribute to the qualities of teaching and learning that happen within. This community itself becomes the site and source of a student's human development through both actions and words.

2. Dialogic Inquiry: Inquiring Together to Inquire Alone

Recognition of the constructive nature of learning, over the past 40 or so years, has led to increasing interest in dialogic inquiry, specifically, as an approach to teaching and learning (Wells, 1999). Classroom talk is a form of intermental activity between and among students and teacher (Wertsch, 1998). It holds potential as both a source for the development of thinking, inquiring, collaborating, and communicating skills and a site for their mastery and appropriation (Mercer & Littleton, 2007). Vygotsky (1994) highlighted that communication between people using language, or social speech, is a primary tool for developing individual thinking:

Originally, for a child, speech represents a means of communication between people, it manifests itself as a social function, in its social role. But gradually a child learns how to use speech to serve himself, his internal processes. Now speech becomes not just a means of communication with other people, but also a means for the child's own inner thinking processes. (p. 353)

In this way, speech plays a key role in the development of thinking and the words we share with others become our inner thoughts. Vygotsky's description illustrates the internalization of social speech as inner speech, or verbal thinking (Vadeboncoeur, Alkoutli & Amini, 2015).

Inquiry is a specific type of social speech composed of questions that inspire curiosity and the desire to understand. Wells (1999) described inquiry as a stance toward experiences and ideas as "a willingness to wonder, to ask questions, and to seek to understand by collaborating with others in the attempt to make answers to them" (p. 121). Cam (1995) referred to inquiry as a social practice that students internalize:

If we want children to question themselves, they should first learn to question one another. If they are to reason with themselves, they must first learn to reason with one another. If they are to think of how things stand from the other's point of view, they should first learn to inquire of the other. In sum, if we want children to learn how to think for themselves, we should engage them in thinking together. (p. 17).

Here, Cam (1995) described, step by step, how thinking and inquiring together enhances thinking and inquiring alone. Lipman (2003) suggested that when the process of inquiry is internalized by the participants, "they come to think in *moves* that resemble its *procedures*. They come to think

as the process thinks” (emphasis in original, p. 21). In this way, the teacher models inquiry as a way of thinking, learning, and being; as a process that becomes internalized by individual students.

One final point is that inquiry involves cultivating with students a sense of wonder, awe, and puzzlement (Wells, 1999). Inquiry is as much about “being open to wondering and puzzlement and trying to construct and text explanations of the phenomena that evoked these feelings as it is about mastering any particular body of information although, of course, the two facets of inquiry are ultimately interdependent” (Wells, 1999b, p. 10). The study of the Quran, from this perspective, would become a journey, led by the teacher, of wonder, awe, and puzzlement of its exalted content.

In Islamic educational contexts, inquiry is not only important given the imperatives of the contemporary, plural, knowledge-based worlds within which Muslim children are growing up, it important for at least two other reasons. First, the goal of Islamic educational institutions, and that of many Muslim parents, is to help Muslim children appropriate to apply the Islamic system of principles and practices. If social speech through dialogue is a source of our inner, individual thoughts (Vygotsky, 1994), inquiry is the doorway to dialogue (Lipman, 2003). Inquiry, and the use of questions, is “more narrowly a quest for truth, more broadly a quest for meaning” (Lipman, 2003, p. 95). Inquiry, then, may be a key way in which educators can help children make meaning of Islamic material and *appropriate* it as their own.

Second, there is historical precedent for the use of inquiry. Traces of inquiry are present in both the Quran and the Sunnah of Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. The Quran contains myriad questions posed to the reader—prompting inquiry as reflection and inquiry as reason—such as: “In this way God makes clear unto you His messages, so that you might reflect (Quran, 2:219¹). At least 23 times in the Quran, the words “use your reason” appear, often in question form, in verses such as: “Do you bid other people to be pious, the while you forget your own selves—and yet you recite the divine writ? Will you not, then, use your reason?” (Quran, 2:44).

Questioning was a pedagogy used in the earliest days of Islamic education. Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as the first Muslim educator, worked with each of his

companions, taking into consideration their individual characteristics, asking questions and soliciting opinions, encouraging them to develop their critical faculties (Ramadan, 2007). “Both by asking questions and by formulating paradoxical or seemingly contradictory statements, the Prophet stimulated his Companions’ critical sense and their ability to go beyond mere blind obedience or mechanical, mind-destroying imitation” (p. 103). Traditions of Islamic education that developed after the death of Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, included a teacher’s ability to use questioning effectively, which was deemed important because “questions are the tools of communicating between the two agents [teacher and student] in the teaching and learning process” (Sha’ban, 1997, as quoted in Rufai, 2010, p. 202). Thus, inquiry in Islamic education is both a contemporary imperative and an Islamic one.

The following data excerpt is an example of dialogic inquiry in the Jamma Mosque School classroom. Here, Amira was leading the students through memorizing *Ayat al Kursi*, the Throne Verse. After they had recited the verse several times, Amira offered a question, as a lead in to dialogue, based upon a line in the verse that says God never gets tired and does not sleep:

1. Amira: “Does *Allah* (God) need to sleep?”
2. Students (chorus): No!
3. Amira: Does Allah need to take a nap?
4. Girls (chorus): No!
5. Amira: That is what Allah is saying here [in *Ayat al Kursi*]. That is what Allah said—
6. Bayan: But He can if He wants to.
7. Amira: Yes, exactly. But He doesn’t need to.
8. Dalal: But then he can’t see what we are doing—
9. Amira: —OH! *Excellent!*—
10. Dalal: —He can’t see what we are doing: Good or bad!
11. Amira to the class: Did you get it? Dalal said, if Allah is going to take a little nap or sleep, He won’t be able to watch us. And He is watching us all the time!
12. Iman: Maybe He sees us when He sleeps.
13. Amira: You know what? Allah can do whatever He wants.
14. Sahar: He sees eeeverythiiiiing!
15. Amira: Allah doesn’t need to nap because He is different than us, he is awake on everything. And we have to sleep. Why do we have to sleep?

16. Sahar: So that we can have a good day—
17. Dalal: No!
18. Amira: Yes it is. And you know what? We cannot live without sleeping. It's a weakness. We have to sleep.
19. Iman: It's something we have to do.
20. Amira: If we don't sleep, what's going to happen to our body?
21. Sahar: We could die.
22. Amira: We couldn't do our chores, our homework. We could not do anything—
23. Dalal: Then you would be bad. And then you won't even know how to talk—
24. [The girls laugh]
25. Dalal: Because you are not going to learn.
26. Bayan: When you're sleeping—
27. Amira: I like *so much* your ideas, *tamammun* (perfect). Raise your hand up and wait for your turn. *Nam* (yes), Sahar.
28. Sahar: When you are sleeping you are half dead.
29. Amira: Ummm hmmm.
30. Dalal: No, when you're sleeping, you're—
31. Amira taps the desk: Everyone stop talking [at the same time].
32. Cala: If you have a baby, it's hard to sleep. It's hard for me to sleep with my baby sister.
33. Amira: *Habibiti* (dear). May Allah make it easy for you.
34. Dalal: If we don't sleep our brain cannot work because we need to sleep to give our brain a break.
35. Sahar: 24 hours.
36. Amira: Ok, did you hear what did Dalal said now? She said something extremely important. About sleeping and the brain... *Nam*, Sahar.
37. Sahar: I have a question, can I say it?
38. Amira: Yes, sure!
39. Sahar: Actually two. Can you die from not sleeping?
40. Iman: Yes, you can, that's true.

41. Amira: You cannot focus. It's a witness of the human body. So that's why Allah does not have any witnesses—He's perfect. That is why he does not need any sleep.
42. Iman: Because he's perfect.
43. Sahar: Can your dreams come true?
44. Amira: Only Allah knows, *habibiti*.
45. Iman: I don't think that you can learn while you are sleeping...
46. Everyone laughs.
47. Sahar: You learn from your dreams
48. Amira: Sometimes a dream is a message from Allah, subhana tala, and we learn from this message.
- (FN, Amira PO4, 12/14/14)

This data excerpt provides examples of several important points regarding the use of dialogic inquiry in the classroom. The first was the warm, dialogic climate that Amira created by responding sensitively and intersubjectively to the girls. The teacher was not the only one speaking. Amira spoke, but also listened and created an environment where the children felt free to speak and share their connections to the subject matter. She encouraged their contributions and accepted answers, whether they were technically correct or not, without evaluation. In line 27, she encouraged: "I like *so much* your ideas, *tamammun*." In line 8, Dalal offered the suggestion that God doesn't sleep because then He wouldn't see what we are doing; Amira accepted her suggestion with the words, "OH! *Excellent!*" here, even though the answer wasn't technically correct. Amira encouraged her contribution. In line 32, when Cala said, "If you have a baby, it's hard to sleep. It's hard for me to sleep with my baby sister," Amira turned to her and said warmly: "*Habibiti* (dear). May Allah make it easy for you." Amira was not only responding intersubjectively to Cala's difficulty, she also offered a dua, seizing a chance to model the function of dua in immediate context.

Modeling inquiry, as an approach to learning, is a social practice that, when shared with the students, can be internalized (Cam, 1995). In this excerpt, significant is the way in which Amira modeled the posing of questions and encouraged the students to pose questions themselves. Further, Amira's responses to the questions posed acted as points of departure for new questions

and dialogue, illustrating that the teacher's follow up holds the most promise for expansion or restriction of learning in the classroom (Wells, 1999).

Inquiry is a reciprocal investigation into making meaning of lived experiences. Where Lipman (2003) described the reciprocal way in which a teacher translates a society's experience to the students and the students' experience to a society, Amira here engaged in a form of this reciprocity: mediating both her interpretations of the Islamic system within the prevailing cultural context, and welcoming the students questions drawn from their own interpretations of Islam embedded in their own lived experiences. This is another place where inquiry plays a key role. The students come to the teacher with questions generated in lived experience in attempts to make sense of both the Islamic system and its embedded cultural context.

But the talk in this excerpt stopped short of the most generative type, called *exploratory talk* by Mercer and Littleton (2007), as can be seen in lines 15–17. When Amira asked, “Why do we have to sleep?” Sahar responded: “So that we can have a good day—.” Dalal interrupted: “No!” When Dalal issued this challenge to Sahar's idea—“No!”—Amira did not ask Dalal to provide any reasons behind the challenge. The purpose of this particular dialogue was to make meaning of Ayat al Kursi, as a cultural tool itself in the Islamic system. But there is no reason why Amira could not *simultaneously* work with the students towards more exploratory talk, which, as Mercer and Littleton (2007) pointed out, sharpens the use of cultural tools valued in Western, as well as other, cultures, including accountability, clarity, constructive criticism, and awareness of and “receptiveness to well-argued proposals” (p. 66). The Jamma Mosque was situated in a Canadian cultural context that values such cultural tools; there is evidence to suggest that they are also valued within an Islamic worldview also (Ramadan, 2013). Amira in particular, and Muslim educators in general, could use these cultural tools in ways that would not detract but enhance the teaching and learning of Islamic material.

Conclusion

Tying affective participation and dialogic inquiry together—acknowledging the importance of feeling, doing, speaking, and inquiring—we start to get a sense of how a teacher might enhance students' participation in the practices of worship, imbued with Islamic principles, leading to their *appropriation*. But the process of learning and development doesn't end at appropriation.

The end result is actually transformed individual use of knowledge itself, contributing to cultural renewal. Wells (1999) described the learning process as a triple transformation:

First there is the transformation of the learner—a modification of his or her own mental processes, that changes the ways in which he or she perceives, interprets and represents the world; second there is a transformation of the artifact itself, as its use is assimilated and reconstructed by the learner on the basis of the learner's existing knowledge; finally, in using the artifact to mediate further action, there is a transformation of the situation in which the learner acts which, to a greater or lesser degree, brings about change in the social practice and in the way in which the artifact is understood and used by other members of the culture.” (Wells, 1999, p. 137)

This triple transformation is particularly pertinent to consider in the context of Islamic education, where educators are ultimately aiming at the reproduction of Islamic culture in successive generations and where students apply their learning in lived experience and contribute to cultural renewal. By enhancing the affective and cognitive value of what we feel, do, say, and inquire with students in the exploration of Islamic material, we are not only enhancing their human development and facilitating their appropriation of the material itself, we are encouraging students' contributions to culture and the renewal of Islamic principles and practices in the current age.

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Improving Student Reading in Arabic

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1. The Importance of Reading

Reading is critical for language development. Not only does it contribute to the growth of other language skills, but it also contributes to the improvement in other academic areas. As such, the teaching of reading in Arabic language programs needs to be done systematically and guided by research findings on reading development in general and Arabic reading in particular.

Many Arabic programs focus on developing their student fluency and decoding skills at the expense of reading comprehension, failing to realize that fluency and comprehension are both important and deficiency in one area leads to deficiency in the other.

2. The Act of Reading in Arabic

The act of reading in Arabic is more demanding than it is in other languages because of:

- a) The mismatch between the spoken and written varieties of Arabic. This is especially true with heritage speakers of Arabic, whose knowledge of spoken Arabic could negatively impact their processing skills during the act of reading. Non-heritage Arabic language learners who are simultaneously learning spoken and written Arabic could also be confused by the distance between the two varieties.
- b) The absence of short vowels in Arabic print materials presents a challenge particularly for readers of Arabic at the beginning level. The absence of short vowels could lead to ambiguity, which also could lead to inaccuracy in word recognition, which could in turn lead to comprehension breakdown. Teachers of Arabic are expected to help their students develop strategies to cope with the absence of short vowels by relying on the context and through eye regression for self-correction.

3. Developing Reading Skills in Arabic

Direct instruction is not enough to bolster children's reading comprehension. It needs to be done through independent reading as well. In order to get the best out of student reading and motivate students to read, the selection and provision of children books need to follow certain criteria in terms of text format, language and content. The provision of carefully-selected children books in terms of language, content and genres could enhance reading comprehension, contribute to reading enjoyment, and put the reader on the road to continuous improvement in reading.

4. Using Authentic Materials

The use of authentic materials, as opposed to edited and teacher-developed materials, is important in order to prepare language learners to deal with reading materials they may encounter in their daily lives. The question is how to make such materials, which is normally designed for native speakers, accessible to Arabic language learners.

Language learners could be taught strategies to cope with authentic materials and maximize their comprehension. Thus, enabling learners to get the most out of what they read does not depend on the readability level of the text as much as it does on the task assigned to the learner. Therefore, being able to design age- and stage- appropriate tasks allows the reader to access authentic materials, thus bolstering their confidence and reading abilities.

5. Evaluating Reading Comprehension?

Providing clear prompts and instructions to measure the level of student comprehension is important to ensure reliability of the results. This is so because the language of instruction could play a critical role in whether or not the learner is able to complete the task asked of them. The types of questions, including true/false and multiple choice questions as well as open-ended questions, could also determine if and to what extent the reader is able to demonstrate his/her comprehension of the reading materials.

Sparkling the Sunnah with Charger Pride: PBIS at Islamic Foundation School

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Saadia Shariff is the Assistant Principal of Elementary at Islamic Foundation School. After obtaining her Bachelor's Degree from University of Chicago, she went on to pursue a Masters in Education from Stanford University. She began her career teaching Middle School Mathematics in California and quickly moved on to becoming an Administrator at College Prep School of America. While there, she was promoted to Assistant Principal leading the school through a difficult and lengthy accreditation process. Ms. Shariff came to IFS four years ago to serve as Elementary Assistant Principal where she has focused her attention on curriculum design and development.

Presenting Problem

Islamic Foundation School is located in Villa Park, Illinois. It serves students from grades PS-12th with over 650 students. The administration is led by the principal and two assistant principals. The Elementary Assistant Principal focuses on grades PS-5th. The Middle/High School Assistant Principal focuses on 6th-12th grade. 73% of students are South Asian, 21.5% are Caucasian (Arab and Eastern European), 3.1% are African or African American, and 2.2 % are Multiracial. One-third of our students qualify for the Illinois free school lunch program.

The discipline policy varied from one grade level to the next. The idea was to address the needs and development of the students when assigning responsibilities and consequences. Prior to the 2014-2015 academic year, behavior regulation and discipline policy were largely based on the individual classroom management plans. Each homeroom teacher created a discipline system within the classroom. Some teachers chose to deal with all behavior infractions within the classroom regardless of the enormity of the situations. Others referred all cases to the administration to handle. It was emphasized that the elective teachers follow the homeroom discipline policy, yet this seldom happened. Each individual teacher decided how and when the discipline policy was applied.

Lack of uniformity in discipline led to unfortunate problems. There were some classrooms that, regardless of how grave the situation was, teachers internally dealt with the problem, not wanting to get the student in trouble. It was only when the problem had reached to the limits that the teacher was unable to cope that the administration was called in for assistance. In some situations, by the time the administration was informed of the situation, it was too late to rectify. In other cases, discipline measures were being used that were too harsh based on the age and development of the child. Frequent use of time-outs, standing outside of the classroom and other such punitive measures were being used to discipline the child. This led to humiliation of the student and increased destructive behavior or hyper activity. A simple scenario can elaborate the above point. In one classroom, Ali (pseudonym) misbehaved during the homeroom teacher's class time. Homeroom teacher, understanding the developmental level of the child, decides to discuss with the child and give him time to reflect in the quiet reading corner for a brief period of time. After which, he is whole-heartedly included in class. Ali misbehaved again in another class taught by an elective teacher. This same child is taken outside of the classroom and told to

sit in the hallway for the remainder of the class period. The child is then confused to why the same action in the same classroom would cause such different reactions from a teacher. These types of discrepancies were common and contributed to the decrease of morale amongst students and staff.

Some students sought negative attention as a means of stimulation. When constant misbehavior was present, they would be referred to the school social worker for assessment and support. The social worker may attribute the negative attention seeking to underlying concerns in the students' home-life. She would recommend acknowledging the negative behavior as little as possible and using positive reinforcement and structured feedback. However against the recommendations, the negative behavior was overly-recognized and students were punished severely, making the underlying concerns worse.

When the administration met during the summer of the 2013-2014 academic year, there was one primary goal in mind; finding an alternative to the current individual teacher based behavior system which focused on negative behavior. The school needed a behavior model that would emphasize positive behavior and create alternatives to time-outs, referrals, and excluding students from the class. Our school required a model that would encourage self-motivation and an intrinsic desire to behave properly with individual and collective responsibility in mind.

The principal and assistant principals spent the summer researching different behavior models that have been used nationally and have brought positive behavioral changes among students. We desired a model that could be used uniformly across the school, encourage positive behavior, and would be aligned to the values of Islam and the life of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) was a model that is utilized nationally with schools reporting increased success amongst students and improved positive school culture and climate. IFS felt that it would take the core components of PBIS and integrate the core elements of the Islamic tradition to create a unique system that was aligned with the school's faith commitments.

The administration team appointed the school social worker, (whose background is Psychology and Islamic Studies) to lead the efforts to create the culturally and religiously competent model. During the first year, administration largely left the program to the school social worker without providing the needed structure and executive support. After realizing that

PBIS required the entire school team to be on board, administration mandated a committee. The school leadership decided that they also had to be proactive in their support and collaboration. Team members were appointed that reflected teachers from all different grade levels throughout the school. The role of the Islamic studies teacher was also important as we wanted to emphasize how the system was in sync with our religious beliefs.

Literature Review

The first conceptualization of PBIS began in the 1980's when school systems realized they needed preventative programming for students with behavior disorders, (Berler, Gross, & Drabman, 1983). Research also shifted towards finding effective methods of measuring positive social, emotional, and academic outcomes through data collection, (Sugai & Horner 2002).

In 1997, the *Individuals with Disabilities Act* funded a national center dedicated to developing positive behavioral interventions and supports. The center first focused on aiding schools in implementing evidence based practices for students with behavioral disorders and then branched out to the student body as a whole, (Morgan & Jenson, 1998).

Currently the center has evolved into a National Technical Center and has helped over 20,000 schools add PBIS to their programming through technical assistance and professional development opportunities. The center is run by the Department of Education office. The organization also has a website that offers a variety of evidence based models that may be used for a plethora of behavioral problems in the school setting, (Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2013).

PBIS is defined as an approach used to enhance implementation of evidence based practices to support academic achievement and social competence while preventing problem behavior in all students, (Sugai et al., 2000). PBIS is a Response to Intervention (RTI) model. It consists of three tiers and many modes of intervention. (Sugai & Horner, 2009). Tier I of the model consists of a school-wide approach to increase positive outcomes for all students. Tier II involves 15% of the student body whom are identified as at-risk or needing extra support. Tier III involves 5% of students who are not responding to level two interventions and require additional links to resources, (Sugai & Horner, 2009).

PBIS focuses on three main modes of intervention: behavior shaping mechanisms, character education, and clear expectations. The approach utilizes data collection to measure

whether certain programs are successful. The data is then analyzed and the program is modified based on the analysis. (Eber, Sugai, Smith, & Scott, 2002).

When deciding what types of interventions to use organizers must consider the culture of their school and student body. A culturally competent school takes into account the culture of its' students and staff, the school as a whole, and keeps in mind to create policy, teaching methods, and programming, (Carter-Black, 2006). Learning is made relevant and meaningful to students when their own cultural context is taken into account, (Lewis & Garisson, 1996). Culturally competent teaching has been found to improve a student's self worth, need for success, and cultural pride by using culturally-relevant material and encouraging discussion and actions that honor their cultural and linguistic heritage, (Cartledge & Milburn, 1996).

Group interventions may be beneficial to students who come from collectivist cultures where the need of many is valued over the individual. Within that context, involving families of the students to participate may also be helpful, (Canino & Spurlock, 2000). When programming incorporates cultural stories and oral traditions it aides students to take ownership of the activities and gives them a sense of ownership and responsibility in their schools, (Baumann, 1992).

Unfortunately no scientific journal articles or research was found on the use of PBIS programming in Islamic Schools. Furthermore after conducting a google search and studying some Islamic School's websites, it can be inferred that a handful of Islamic schools have began to implement the approach. However, no Islamically relevant PBIS curriculum was available or published when this review was written.

In order to develop our own curriculum which incorporates Islamic Psychology, we heavily utilized "*Purification of the Soul*" by Maulana Wahiuddin Khan. This book lists many diseases of the heart and their cures taken from the Quran and Prophetic Teachings.

Methods

This section seeks to describe how Islamic Foundation School used the PBIS approach to meet our needs.

Level I: a school-wide effort to increase positive school culture and the occurrence of expected behavior by involving all school stakeholders. Every student is active in implementation at this stage. Level one is outlined in detail below.

Level II: constitutes approximately 15% of the whole student body. These students may be having behavior or emotional difficulties which somehow affect their performance academically. These students are referred by parents, teachers, or through the students themselves to the Student Services Team. Islamic Foundation's team consists of a clinical social worker, academic counselor, and a special education coordinator. The social worker uses the evidence based curriculum "Zones of Regulation" for students with behavior and social-emotional concerns.

Level III: describes approximately 5% of students. These students have already utilized Level Two supports with little to no improvement using evidence based practices or are too severe to attempt interventions by the Student Services Team. These students are referred to the local public school district to seek services through an IEP or receive accommodation through a 504 plan.

Development of PBIS at Islamic Foundation School

The first challenge of our Level One program was creating Islamically relevant interventions. Unfortunately published curricula specifically for character education in Islamic schools are scarce as discussed in the review section of this paper.

Therefore, our team researched the Islamic science of *tazkiya* (purification of the heart) to collect character qualities which have strong roots within the Islamic tradition. We then devised a comprehensive list of "Vice and Virtues of the month" to focus on during the school year. We also developed our own curriculum which combined stories from the Quran and Prophetic teachings with child psychology.

Another aspect was adding in Islamic guidelines into our PBIS expectation posters, ie: eat with your right hand, say the bathroom prayer, etc. Using our school mascot, "the Charger" to boost school pride and morale, we modified our behavior shaping mechanism the "Charger Check," to include slogans like "Spark the Sunnah!"

During the first year of implementation our PBIS program experienced a soft start. We executed the program at all grade levels, K thru 12. During this year our Islamic Character Education was developed from scratch. We also created an advisory panel of teachers to help with the development of the project. We measured success by feedback surveys from staff and rate of referrals, comparing the 2013-2014 school year to the 2014-2015 school year. The

surveys indicated that more buy in from administration and all staff members was integral in creating lasting positive change. After receiving feedback from students, staff, and parents the team made necessary changes for the 2015-2016 school year which emphasized a cohesive uniform effort from administration, all staff, and parents, etc.

In the second year of implementation, the project was scaled down to the elementary school with further plans to perfect the project. Administration played a key role in the execution of the project and mandated all staff to participate. The advisory panel became a fully functioning committee with representation from each grade level. Selected teachers were sent to professional development courses on PBIS and instructed to train staff on the intervention models. The behavior shaping mechanism, “Charger Checks” were redesigned to decrease instant gratification, increase an intrinsic drive for achievement, and recognize positive behavior.

Description of Culminating Project

Traditionally Level One of a PBIS program consists of three types of interventions: Clear Expectations, Character Education, and Behavior Shaping Mechanisms.

1). Clear Expectations: the primary way to promote positive behavior at school is to define and model how we wish students to behave.

Posters: Around our school we display large and colorful posters that list the expected behaviors in a specific school setting, ie: bathroom, prayer hall, cafeteria, and hallway. Along with these posters we have added smaller pictures which illustrate the rules. The pictures portray actual children from the Elementary school so the students feel more invested in the PBIS process. The teachers in each grade are given the posters and pictures in a packet that they may periodically revisit with their own classrooms.

Video: Students and staff created a short video outlining and modeling all expected behaviors in specific settings as well as the “wrong way” to do things. The video is meant to be comical and easy to remember so that guidelines are accessible to our young students. Staff may review the video with students at any time through a link on YouTube.

2) Behavior Shaping Mechanisms: the secondary way to promote positive behavior and school climate is through a token system to increase the expected behaviors through rewards.

Charger Checks: Each staff member is given a booklet of “Charger Checks.” The word CHARGERS is used as an acronym to define qualities that deserve merit and recognition.

The staff is able to clearly define these qualities by referencing an expectation matrix that examines each letter's quality and how it should be exhibited in different school settings, ie: bathroom, hallway, cafeteria, prayer hall, etc. The Charger Check System promotes positive school culture and general good will by also helping staff to look for positive actions in their students and recognize them.

Once a student has displayed a positive behavior a staff member may reward them with a Charger Check. Each booklet contains a carbon copy of the checks so that the staff may keep track of who was awarded and when. The student will then place their copy of the check in a large bucket displayed in the front office. Every Friday, the Principal draws five names from the bucket and let the students pick from a collection of trinket toys.

If the administration or classroom teacher is trying to stress and reinforce a specific behavior, ie: walking on the right side of the hallway, they would give many charger checks to various students on a certain day for that specific behavior without informing students.

Homeroom teachers keep track of each student's Charger Checks with a quarterly chart. Once a student has received a Charger Check for each letter in "CHARGERS" they are eligible to attend a special lunch provided by the administration and hosted by the principal at the end of each quarter.

The Marble System: All staff will also switch to the marble system to promote management and evaluate cooperation at the classroom level. This is to promote a cohesive and uniform measure for all grade levels. Each classroom will start with an empty jar and add marbles to promote good group behavior. When the jar is full, the class gets a treat of some sort.

3) Character Education: Vice and Virtue of the Month

Each month the entire school focuses on specific qualities that have a strong source in Islamic Character Building (Tazkiyah) through:

- Monthly themed assemblies hosted by each class section
- A Monthly Letter Home for parents on the specific characteristics and family activities that can be done at home.
- Monthly Khutbah dedicated to the topic
- Bimonthly social-emotional lessons
- Teacher's Reminders
- Monthly Islamic Studies Teacher's Lessons

- A Bulletin Board (changed once a month) showcasing the students' work towards specific behaviors and characteristics
- Elementary wide on-going projects hosted by the respective class section

Vice and Virtues of the Month for School Year

August: Building Character is a process, the nafs vs. the heart

September: Respect/ Sins of the Tongue (Bullying)

October: Patience/Trust in Allah

November: Gratefulness/Envy

December: Sharing/ Selfishness

January: Responsibility/Moderation

February: Humility/ Vanity

March: Honesty/ Lying

April: Empathy/Tolerance

May: Building a Community/ Social Justice

June: Brotherhood/Friendship

Measurement of Success

In order to continuously gauge the accessibility, sustainability, and viability of the program the PBIS committee meets once a month to discuss the program highlights, successes, and needs for improvement. The PBIS team also uses surveys given to staff, students, and teachers once a semester to garner feedback for better results. The program's success is measured by rate of referrals and is compared on a month by month basis.

The Future of PBIS at IFS

The success of implementing PBIS will be measured constantly through out the 2015-2016 school year by the measures described earlier. The team will then reflect upon what changes are needed to improve the program. The school social worker is trained in Zones of Regulation, an evidence based behavior modification program that is also a component of Level II interventions at our school. Administration has future plans to have the school social worker train the entire elementary faculty in using Zones with all of their students.

IFS will also work on creating home-school connections so the lessons learned in school can be reinforced at home. The school social worker provides a Character Program newsletter to all elementary parents but we would like to add in updates on PBIS programming by the administration, newsletters by the homeroom teacher, and Islamic Studies' teacher. This way PBIS is encouraged to be discussed in the home setting as well.

As we perfect the PBIS model in the elementary level, IFS will extend the program to the middle school and high school as well, modifying according to their specific developmental needs. The culminating goal of inculcating PBIS in the children from a young age is to promote a system of behavior that encourages civic responsibility among children so that they may grow up to become responsible, respectful, Muslim American Citizens.

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Connecting the Mission, Annual Plan, and Operation of Islamic Schools

Maher Budeir

Maher Budeir is a partner in Balanced Leadership Institute (BLI), a consulting firm specializing in supporting Muslim nonprofit organizations (including schools and Mosques) throughout the US. Maher has worked with organization across the US on matters of planning, leadership, governance, financial management, and organizational development. Maher served in the nonprofit world for over 20 years. He is a founding member of several nonprofits including schools, mosques, and other organizations. Maher served in different roles including, director, executive director, revenue director, Board member and Board Chair. Most recently he served on a Board of a thriving Atlanta area school for ten years including seven years as Board Chair.

Involving the community – Planning Process Matters.

The fact is most institutions are stuck in a cycle of being reactive and having to “put out fires” to solve immediate issues. Whether it is managing or acquiring resources (funding, facilities, or workforce), dealing with regulation, responding to parents, or recruiting the right person to do a certain job. Our school principals and in most cases Board members are constantly reacting to events and situations that require their attention daily. This makes it very difficult to think strategically while one has so much to deal with right now. This is why it is essential for a group to specialize and focus on strategic planning while another group manages the daily operations of a school. Traditionally the Board of Trustees or Board Directors has the ownership of the strategic plan, while the administration is responsible for implementation of the plan and for the daily operation of the school.

Even though the workload is divided among school Administration and Board, the two must work together to ensure that daily operations are connected to strategic goals, and that the strategy is driving decision-making and priorities at all levels.

The Board owning the Strategic Plan does not mean they develop it in a vacuum. All stakeholders must be involved in the process at some point. The teachers, the administration and office staff, the parents, and the students should all provide input to the analysis and development of the plan. Surveys, focus groups, and general town hall meetings can be useful tools to incorporate comments and brainstorm together as a community. Data should be collected about the community strengths and resources, needs, challenges, and opportunities. All layers of the organization should have a way to express their ideas in the process of establishing strategic goals. Then the Board has the responsibility to sort all the data and feedback and assemble specific strategic goals. It does not have to be a huge list of goals; 2 or 3 big goals are plenty. Once the community agrees on strategic goals, specific strategies can be developed that become the foundation for annual plans. Working in full partnership with the Administration, the Board can develop annual objectives which constitute the annual operational plan for the school. Many institutions may have a strategic plan but they fail to connect it annual

operational plans. This step of turning strategies into annual objectives is critical and must be repeated every year to maintain connectivity to the strategy.

At the end of the day, planning is not about just a document, the process of planning is even more important. It is during the process that the leaders discover what is important to the school community and what is hindering the staff from excelling. It is during the planning process that you discover the gems in your school community it may be a parent with high level of expertise in a certain field that can help the school, or it may be a creative idea the students or the staff will come up with when thinking how to manage challenges. If the planning process is carried out thoroughly and with a wide circle of stakeholders you will find that the process itself is so valuable, maybe more valuable than the plan produced.

From Mission to annual Plan

The classic steps of developing a strategic plan are:

1. Review and revisit the Mission statement if necessary. Some call it statement of purpose. Regardless of what we call this process, it is essential, from time to time, to step back and reflect on what the school is doing, what is the purpose of the organization, and what is the unique mission that it can serve. Everything else you do in the planning process should flow from the mission.
2. Understand the environment: through analyzing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This should be a group exercise to involve people who view the school from different lenses and are aware of what is happening in the larger community. After all what happens in the larger community impacts and impacts your school. Even national and international events have an impact on our institutions.
3. Develop goals: Not too many 2-3 big strategic goals the school would like to accomplish over the next three years. This is the part where it is important to building consensus among as many stakeholders as possible. The Goals should connect to the Mission of the school. In some cases schools may develop one strategic goal to address each of the different elements of the organization. For

example: one goal to focus on learning, one goal to focus on human resources and funding, and one to focus on community.

4. Create a list of strategies: Ask yourself, how can we accomplish the goals? Strategies can be programs, initiatives, or events that help the school reach the big goals. This exercise must have a wide participation of experienced teachers and committed parents work together and come up with a list of robust strategies. The Board and administration should participate and use their experience to make sure the strategies are realistic and are relevant to the goals and mission.
5. Create Annual Objectives: Once the school has a set of strategies the Annual planning can start by deciding which how much of each strategy will the school accomplish this year. These objectives should be specific to the year, and should be measurable and realistic.
6. Develop Metrics: The last element that is needed to have a useful plan is a set of performance metrics for each objective.

Normally, in any organization Annual Planning should be conducted at least three months before a year starts. In a case of a school, because of the summer break planning should start in February-March of the previous school year. The annual planning process should include a quick review of steps 1 through 4 above. Then a review of the previous year accomplishments, and finally steps 5 and 6 above can be done to develop the core of the annual plan.

How do we connect everyday decisions to strategy?

A school strategic plan does not have to be a large 100 page document. It must be simple and direct. It should articulate and Goals, strategies and objectives briefly. A strategic plan does not have to have details about how to accomplish every single objectives. The “how” should be left to the administration to insert into the annual plan to keep the process nimble.

A good practice is to have a summary of the goals. Strategies and objectives brief enough to fit on one page or one poster so it can be handy and even display. The last thing we want to do is to make the plan so complicated and detailed that it takes a long

time to read through it. The more easy, accessible and convenient we make it the more likely for it to be used. Big plans that fill a 3 ring binder are often found on shelves collecting dust. Rather, you want your plan to be handy enough to bring up and point to frequently. It needs to be familiar to many stakeholders and available on the schools website.

Another tool that we find to be useful in our decision making is what we call the “strategic screen”. These are a set of questions designed to be asked at decision points. They can be used when there is a proposal for a new program or new initiative. These commonly include questions like: does this support our mission? Is it connected to one of the strategic goals? Is it sustainable? is it consistent with the school culture? A set of these questions that is most relevant to the school can be developed and agreed to by the planning team. Then they can be used by all decision makers in the school when having to make a decision about any proposed program, idea, or initiative. The screen serves as a quick tool for decision making and keeps the strategic priorities directly connected of how decisions are made. Operational matters become more and more aligned with the strategy. Another benefit to the strategic screen is that decision makers will have a simple way to make choices and stay focused on strategic priorities without anyone accusing them of making random decisions or choices.

In summary planning is essential to lift the Islamic school community out of being reactive. Strategic planning should involve a broad set of stakeholders. Strategic goals can be reviewed annually to make sure they are still relevant and to keep the plan connected to operations. Annual operational planning should start early and should stem out of the strategies set in the strategic plan. Lastly, measures is the most important of all. We must be able to measure progress to allow us to celebrate success as well as tweak the plans moving forward.

A Holistic Approach to Leadership in an Islamic School

Tasneema Ghazi

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Being the leader of an Islamic school can be a challenging role. It requires embracing a holistic leadership mindset that can bring out the “better leader within.” In today’s demanding global environment, leaders who have a deep sense of self-awareness and strong managerial practices thrive in challenging leadership roles.

Due to time constraints I shall limit this presentation to the discussion of two important school leader or principal roles:

1. A school leader must be one who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
2. A school leader must be one who promotes the success of all students by ensuring the effective management of administration, operations and resources in order to provide a safe and effective learning environment.

Across the United States and Canada, Islamic schools (both full-time and supplementary) are a gift for our communities. In fact the growth of the Islamic schools movement is a unique testimony to the commitment the North American Muslim community has towards the education and tarbiyyah of our children. School principals are leaders who are responsible to facilitate the development and articulate the implementation of the shared vision of the school community and the parents.

One important quality a successful school leader must have is the ability to engage parents and community in order to “create shared responsibility for the success of students and school.” This means promoting two-way conversations between parent/community and the school administration, where both sides are listening and communicating with each other.

A successful leader must engage the community in meaningful ownership for the mission and activities of the school.

In order to engage community members and parents in achieving the vision and the goals of the school, the school leader must keep both of these parties informed. It may be about student performance, school finances and any other matter. A principal has to be

committed to community engagement. School newsletters, bulletins, meetings and parent support groups are good ways to keep parents and the school community informed and engaged in various activities and projects of the school.

Importance of Shared Decision Making

Parents and community members need to be engaged in the essential decision making process of the school. A good model to implement is “site based councils”, where councils are formed by parents, community members and teachers. The principal instills a leadership capacity into the members of these councils and gives them a chance to be full participants in decisions about school policy, budget, programs and instructional improvements.

A successful Leader encourages parents’ involvement in the school and in their children’s learning

Alhamdulillah, the Muslim community in North America is by and large highly educated, professional and talented. Therefore, the community needs to be invited to get involved in their children’s educational activities. Children can learn about the diversity of American Muslim culture and experience the blessings of Islam and Islamic traditions.

School leadership needs to assess educational needs of the school’s parent population and provide information and training where needed. A place (perhaps called “Parents Resource Room”) on the school grounds should ideally be in place where parents can meet and work together. This will give them a sense of belonging and it will allow them the opportunity to connect with each other, along with staff and faculty. In this place parents will have a chance to share their interests and hobbies, books & videos etc.

In order to make sure our children achieve highest academic standards and assimilate Islamic moral values, our parents need to develop a clear understanding of these standards. This can be achieved by organizing special workshops for parents, back-to-school nights, newsletters, emails etc. which focus on academic and moral standards of each class.

Make sure that parents and children are connected to health and social services in the community so that all physical, emotional and social needs of the children are met.

A caring and successful leader makes sure that all of the basic needs of every child are met in order for effective learning to take place. Due to tight budgets, Islamic schools will often need to find innovative ways to hire professional service providers who can work with children and families. It might be important to note that many public schools offer special services for children of private schools who live in the same school district free of charge.

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

According to recent Gallup Poll on the public's attitude towards the public schools: "Both parents of school-age children and other members of the public see education as a major national issue, and believe that parent involvement is a major factor in improving public schools." (Rose and Gallup 2001)

In their long-term research on parents involvement and children's academic achievements, Anne Henderson and Nancy Berla found that, "the research has become overwhelmingly clear; parents involvement—and that means all kinds of parents---improves student achievement." They concluded:

- Educators hold higher expectations of children when parents collaborate with teachers.
- In programs that are designed to involve parents in full partnerships, disadvantaged students' achievement not only improve, but can reach levels that are standards for middle-class children.
- Schools that work well with families have higher teacher morale and higher ratings of teachers by parents.
- A school's practices in informing and involving parents are stronger determinants of whether inner-city parents will be involved with their children's lives.

Thus we can conclude that community and family involvement and engagement is essential in promoting school's vision and mission.

The second important role of a principal is as “an instructional leader who promotes success of all students by ensuring the management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient and effective learning environment.”

According to ISSLC’s standards every successful school administrator needs to focus on the following three matters:

- Knowledge
- Disposition
- Performance

Knowledge of:

- Learning goals of an Islamic school in a pluralistic society.
- Methods and ways of developing and implementing a successful strategic plan.
- A clear understanding of “systems theory”.
- Tools of data collection, ability to analyze the data and implement strategic plan in the light of the analyzed data.
- Successful and effective skills of communication.
- Strategies to build consensus and agreements.”
- Successful practices in school administration, curriculum issues and staff professional development and management.
- Financial management and a balanced budget

Disposition

An Islamic school leader believes in Islamic values, and is committed to:

- The message of the Qur’an to “Read”, and the ability and right of all to learn and be educated.
- To provide opportunities for students and faculty to build strong Iman and always follow Islamic values of honesty and justice.
- A school vision of high moral and academic standards for all students, teachers and the community.
- Continuous improvement in school’s academic, sports and extra-curricular programs.

- Academic, intellectual, physical and moral development of every child to the highest standards.
- Encouraging and inviting all parents and community members to get involved in school activities and programs.
- The continuous evaluation of his or her own performance and the performance of his or her faculty and staff.
- The high standards of professional development for himself/herself and for the faculty members.

Performance

The role of the leader of an Islamic school is to ensure that the school under his or her leadership is providing the highest moral, ethical Islamic standards for children, teachers, staff, parents and community members. He or she is the torchbearer of those standards, implementing them in belief and action every day.

The leader should put an efficient and responsible system together to ensure that:

- The financial systems of the schools are well managed and all records are up to date.
- The buildings and grounds are safe, clean, attractive and conducive to learning.
- The school's curriculum embraces the highest standards and is implemented by the teachers professionally.
- The Islamic Studies and Arabic language programs are given enough attention and time and children's progress in these subjects is carefully monitored.
- The school's mission and vision are communicated to the students, teachers and the community.
- Teachers are given time and opportunities for professional development.
- Core Islamic beliefs and values are continuously followed as model by the principal, teachers and staff.
- Hard and soft data is used to make decisions about finances, curriculum issues and management of the school systems and services.
- The school library and resource center is highly equipped with resources for students and teachers.

- Ample and organized opportunities are provided for children to participate in extra-curricular and sports activities.
- The school's administrator, teachers, parents and children are engaged with local public schools, library and other institutions in the community.

Alhamdulillah, we have seen a tremendous growth in the numbers of full-time Islamic schools in North America during the last twenty five years. We need to work hard to train more school leaders professionally, Insha'Allah.

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Seven Characteristics of High Impact Islamic School Boards - Lexington Universal Academy as an example

Khaled Ghoneim and Rania El- Sioufi

Khaled Ghoneim currently is the Chairman of the Board of Lexington Universal Academy (LUA), the first full-time Islamic school in the state of KY. He is one of the co-founders of the school and has witnessed its evolution for the past 12 years. In past terms, he served as the school's treasurer as well as the Vice Chairman. He is an IT professional who has been heading the school's technology committee since inception (2003). He is a father of six. The eldest 2 graduated from LUA and are currently attending High School while the other 4 children are still at LUA. He is a big advocate and proponent of Islamic Education in the US.

Rania El-Sioufi currently serves as the Principal of Lexington Universal Academy. As a product of a diverse educational background that included Islamic education, Rania has a strong appreciation for the role Islamic Schools play in Muslim-American communities. She set out to earn her Educational Leadership license as well as a M.Ed. in Educational Leadership with the goal of supporting that role and working with a team to bring Islamic education to the next level of excellence. Her experiences in the middle school, high school, and college levels with both national and international programs have provided her with a well-rounded perspective of Islamic school leadership. Her husband and five children have been the pillars of support on her journey.

1. Diverse but United team

The composition of an Islamic School board is generally determined by elections. Therefore, establishing a thorough election procedure is crucial. An important element to consider is to ensure that diverse elements of the community have accessibility to membership. Indeed, it is important that diversity is not just allowed, but encouraged. Jim Collin's recommends, "Get the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus, and the right people in the right seats." When considering the composition of an Islamic school board, the ideal configuration of "the right people" means that the different elements from the community are represented: races, generations and genders. Additionally, the Principal, and possibly the Islamic Director if the Principal cannot represent that role, should be a non-voting member of the Board.

Once a board is assembled, the one essential commonality must be strong shared Islamic beliefs and values. Alignment to the cause, vision, and mission is the next step in creating a successful board. Transferring that into productive decision making can be accomplished by adhering to the concept of consensus (*shura*) rather than democratic voting. Voting is based on the concept of sides, a winning and losing side where individuals can feel detached from the final decision. The process of consensus has four steps: agreeing to the problem, discussion, arriving at consensus, and ownership. Once the problem has been agreed upon, it should be discussed until consensus is reached. Unanimity is achieved when the full group consents to a decision. "Giving consent does not necessarily mean that the proposal being considered is one's first choice. Group members can vote their consent to a proposal because they choose to cooperate with the direction of the group, rather than insist on their personal preference." (Hartnett). Thus, *shura* is achieved and individuals own the decision.

Regardless of Board composition, a system must be in place to set the standard. Bylaws must be explicit and include articles on membership, elections, budget, and decision making. Two of the main purposes of the bylaws are to set boundaries and expectations. For example, bylaws should specify the requirement of quorum when

decisions are made. In addition, a minimum of two members should be present to hold any meeting where the members represent the Board and the meeting must be communicated beforehand and open to the rest of the board.

Another way to establish a united Board is to make use of individual expertise and interest while keeping everyone informed about all matters. Certain responsibilities such as finance are traditionally the responsibility of the treasurer; this can be duplicated in matters such as maintenance, academics, fundraising, technology and marketing. This model increases ownership and participation from members and utilizes their unique abilities. The branch-responsible team members have important communication requirements so as to keep the entire Board united.

2. Define direction and overall decision making based on strategic planning

Strategic planning is the school's process of defining its strategy and direction. It defines the decision making process on allocating resources and prioritizing work. It also guides the implementation of goals by determining actions to achieve those goals.

At Lexington Universal Academy, the school board, in conjunction with other stakeholders, embarked on a multiple two-year strategic plans at the beginning of each elected term.

Strategic planning retreats are focused on identifying external and internal components that impact the school by conducting SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis discussion.

- a. External component – opportunities and threats (target community or service area, resources; competitors. This is normally done via small number of informal interviews with parents of current students and other community members)

- b. Internal component – strengths and weaknesses (evaluate performance in terms of inputs – financial and human; processes -operating methods; output – results or outcomes).

In preparation for the strategic planning retreat, an environmental (data collection via short survey, interviews and objective data) will be done. Board and other stakeholders are asked to identify strategic issues from the environmental scan performed. And ultimately, strategies will be prioritized in terms of importance, timing and feasibility and that can be done at the retreat.

During the strategic planning retreat, participants are to review the school's vision and mission statements; Develop a shared vision – where LUA wants to be in next 2 to 5 years (in light of LUA's current vision). Develop a series of goals considering the desired status of LUA in specific number of future years. Goals are developed which are the breakdown of LUA's vision in a series of statements cover:

- a. Programs
- b. Resources (staff, finance, technology, facility)
- c. Status – academic standing
- d. Relationship with community

When agreeing upon key strategies to reach goals and address key issues identified through environmental scan, the following activities kept in mind; A. Value – will this contribute to meeting agreed upon goals; B. Appropriateness – is the strategy consistent with vision, mission, and operation; C. Feasibility – is it practical from financial and personnel resources aspects; D. Acceptability – is strategy acceptable to board, staff and stakeholders; E. Cost-benefits; F. Time

All the above thoughts, discoveries and goals will be consolidated into a strategic report which should ultimately be approved by the board.

Once report is approved, a specific work plan is prepared to begin implementation. The staff focuses on strategies and activities related to “program related goals” while the board focuses on “governance related goals”

It is very essential to build monitoring procedures to assess and evaluate the progress of implementation.

3. Establish strong communication channels with the school community

Communication with the school community has to be established on different levels: board-administration and board-faculty. On the administrative level, the education-responsible members of the Board can follow up the Academic Improvement Plane (AIP) and Islamic Studies, Arabic and Quran (ISAQ) Framework biweekly for a more detailed involvement and quicker decision making. Similar meetings can be held with other Board branches such as maintenance.

The Board also needs to have and strongly enforce a clear communication plan with regards to the faculty. Maintaining the established hierarchy for communication strengthens the school and lessens the misuse of personal relationships and the disregarding of protocols. This includes standard procedures with the goals of keeping a finger on the pulse of the school as well as maintaining a relationship with the staff. Meetings, tokens of appreciation, and an e-connect platform are ways accomplish these goals. At least three established meetings between the staff and Board should be set annually with more set for intervention when necessary. Random acts of appreciation should not be delegated to parent-teacher organizations. Sending flowers/plants, emails, and gifting employees during life events such as marriage and childbirth are some ideas that help forge a bond between Board members and school employees. It is recommended that these gifts come personally from the Board, not from the school. E-Connect is an online platform where teachers have access to handbooks and policies, can upload and access pictures and documents as well as log technical problems.

In addition to the standard communication, a faculty communication plan should have a clear procedure in place for escalating communication concerns to the Board. The Board should establish an “open door” policy within a formal procedure of at least two members, documenting and communicating to the rest of board. Additionally, a procedure for response to all such communications should be set in place. The steps should include: listening with no decisions, reaching out to administrators, investigating if necessary, following back to concerned parties, and reaching a conclusion.

Engaging the entire local community is now much easier with the advent of social media. Emails, Facebook, Linked-In, and Twitter are all means for a school to share its achievements. It is important to assign a responsible party and set regulations on their use. Weekly school newsletters to convey announcements and bi-annual progress reports are two methods of communication that LUA community members have come to rely on for short-term and long-term information respectively.

4. Macro-management

When considering the board’s management of the school, it is essential that it operates in broad terms and limit its involvement in the details of day to day operations. This is accomplished by aligning the administration to the school’s vision through strategic planning that is accountability driven. Accountability is determined by using data to provide a clear focus on curriculum and priorities; it results in spending less time on operational issues and more time focused on policies to improve student achievement.

At Lexington Universal Academy, both an Academic Improvement Plan (AIP) and an Islamic Studies, Arabic, and Qur’an (ISAQ) Framework are agreed upon each year. The AIP’s aligns the school’s academic targets to the overall vision. The targets are determined as a result of analysis of school’s standardized testing. Strategies are then suggested and finalized through teacher collaboration. A similar process is conducted for the ISAQ framework however, without the use the standardized testing analysis. This

model of macro-management keeps the staff consistently aligned to the school vision and mission regardless of staffing changes.

Regardless of the connection to day to day strategies that keep the staff on track, it is essential that the board avoids micromanagement. Under micromanagement, most workers become timid, limiting their development and growth. It also slows down the productivity of the school, because everything has to go through the Board.

5. Data driven- monitor data results and use it to drive continuous improvement

Macro-management is most effective when based on strategic plans like the AIP and ISAQ Framework model. The process of strategic planning begins with gathering data and analysis. Cultivating sources and modes of data is an essential first component identifying areas in need of improvement.

Strategic planning cannot be gathered from one source. Different stakeholders' feedback must also be sought for accurate targets to be established. Internal stakeholders such as administrators and teachers and external stakeholders such as parents and community members should all be data points.

Schools have an obligation to establish various modes of data accumulation. Academic planning targets are best formed as a result of summative (standardized) testing data analysis. However, other modes of data accumulation are evaluations, surveys, trends, and demographics.

6. Effectively engage & collaborate with schools' stakeholders

One of the most important responsibilities of the Board is to create opportunities for the engagement of the schools' stakeholders: students, faculty, parents, and community members. "The benefits of stakeholder engagement include improved information flows by tapping into local knowledge and having the opportunity to 'road-

test’ policy initiatives or proposals with stakeholders.” (Stakeholder Engagement Framework)

Student-Board collaboration can be accomplished through indirect means. Assigning responsibility of strategies identified in the AIP & ISAQ Framework is one such method of ensuring student engagement in the school’s strategic plan. Another method is to ensure that an annual target that is the responsibility of the student council or prefects (called the Ansars at LUA) is included in the strategic plan.

Parent engagement is one of the main focuses of most Islamic schools. Having a strong Volunteer Program increases parent communication and contributions. It is highly recommended that an administrative employee is tasked to be Volunteer Coordinator. Many volunteer websites are now available to easily announce the school’s volunteer needs. At LUA, standard weekly needs are identified separately from one-time opportunities. These are not only posted through the volunteer website, www.volunteerspot.com, but also announced by email weekly. Volunteer hours are required by all parents and tracked by parent sign-in at a dedicated terminal. Volunteers are also recognized quarterly and during the annual Fundraising Dinner. Parents who have not fulfilled their volunteer hours are contacted by mid-year to remind them of their obligations.

Another important opportunity for Parent Collaboration is the PTO. To truly empower parents in their child’s education, at LUA the PTO is an important component of the success triangle: Administration – Board – PTO. Thus, the PTO shares equal weight with regards to providing effective contributions to the school.

Staff collaboration happens on two levels: as members of the strategic planning process and as members of the school’s social environment. Teachers serve, under the guidance of administrators, as the analysis of school testing data and target and strategy determiners. On a social level, the Board should engage them in team-building activities

such as joint staff-board leadership training (low-ropes courses) and Team-Vitality programs that encourage and offer incentives for healthy habits.

Finally, it is important that the Muslim community be engaged in the local Islamic School. This can be accomplished through Alumni programs, MSA collaboration (such as tutoring programs), and their participation in strategic planning (such as building expansion and revisiting the Vision). Another method is to create opportunities for community members to participate in rather (than simply watch) school events such as Eid carnivals, Stem Night, Heritage Fairs, and Hajj Simulations. Hosting Islamic lectures and events are also effective engagement opportunities.

7. Direct projects and allocate resources based on prioritized needs and financial abilities

It is very important to identify the school's available resources and skill sets. Stakeholders bring various expertise and knowledge that the school can benefit from. As Islamic schools in general have the continuous financial challenges, creating fiscal year budgets and utilizing volunteers experts is essential.

It is also important to set priorities to ensure that resources are not too spread out, which would have the consequence of many objectives being pursued but of low or no impact.

LUA's projects and initiatives are executed by the school's stakeholders based on the following categories:

- a. Money: must determine the amount of money that will available to support education and the purposes to which money can be allocated.
- b. Human capital / resources: based on money available, which "stakeholders" can do the work? Can this work be done by an employee of the school or a volunteer?
- c. Time: multiple levels of constraints come with time. You have a determined time to accomplish the project but that might be impacted by the availability of your

resources (especially if it is a volunteer based) plus the amount of money available to do the work.

Considering the above categories, allocation of resources for projects are done utilizing the following budget types:

- a. Line-Item budget: this is LUA's official annual budget (LUA's fiscal year starts from 8/1 to 7/31 the following year). It is based on historical and actual expenditures from previous years. Those are expenditures that are a must and are prioritized accordingly on the top of the projects' list. Not much room to change. Examples; Staff salaries, utilities, building maintenance, etc...
- b. Program & Planning budget: Expenditures that are primarily based on programs that are set and focused on academics. It places emphasis on the goals of the Academic Improvement Plan (AIP). Examples, the purchasing of newer textbooks or hiring of a qualified teacher or upgrading of science lab. Utilized resources are board members for fundraising and policy setting along with staff for allocation and execution.
- c. Zero based budget: those are projects initiated throughout the year that have neither allocated budget nor available resources at the moment. The school become creative in allocating resources for such projects (both money and human capital). At LUA, fundraising for causes are usually adopted for projects. Also the seeking of committed volunteers is essentials. Examples; PTO holds a book fair event to fundraise for a STEMs furniture upgrade requirements for PreK. Or the utilization of IT professionals who are parents or part of the community at large to support the school's technology needs.

It is apparent that allocation of resources is more than assigning dollar amounts to certain programs. It is the examination and confirmation of how those dollars are translated into actions that address the overall school goals as well as the improvement of the learning process. This continues to be a challenge to many Islamic Schools.

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Sifting through the Mixed Messages: Gender Bias in Islamic Studies Curriculum Materials

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Numerous full time Islamic schools and a plethora of weekend Islamic schools educate millions of Muslim children around the world. Moral education, language classes, and religious content areas are forged using pre-packaged curriculum materials, teachers with a range of Islamic and educational expertise, and local expectations. In western countries, Muslims have opened private schools, charter schools, weekend schools, homeschool co-ops, specialized ‘opt-out’ Quran schools and other creative means to provide their children with cultural capital and an Islamic habitus (“...a system of schemes of perception, thought, appreciation and action.” (Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J-C. 1990, p. 35)) in the face of the pervasive culture’s majority norms. If gender norms and expectations are constructed culturally and socially (Hesse-Biber, 1987), and assuming that the Muslim community in North America is building cultural capital in these schools, then it is of primary importance to identify embedded beliefs found in the materials that parents and teachers are using to instruct children in their religion. What are the embedded gender attitudes in religious curriculum materials used in the various forms of Islamic education? Are the materials perpetuating the disenfranchisement and disempowerment of women, effectively going against the Sunna of Prophet Muhammad (s), and inadvertently causing larger social issues?

Context

A long tradition of Islamic epistemology and ontology was interrupted by the modernist movement of the nineteenth century. Responding to globalization and the stresses of colonialism, Muslim revivalist thought called for the rediscovery of truth. It called for a new standardization of knowledge that was ‘directly transmitted’ and rejected the idea of ‘*taqlid*’ or the following of a school of law, encouraging individual intellectual pursuit regarding Islamic law (Imady, 2013). In this way they adopted the modernists “...doctrines of equality, liberty, faith in human intelligence ... and universal reason..” (Harvey, 1990, p. 13). The movement found its way into Islamic schools in the mid twentieth century when the 1965 immigration law opened the door to thousands of professional doctors, engineers, and students to come to the United States. They built mosques and schools in an attempt to reproduce the cultural capital they had come from (Memon, 2009).

The mid-twentieth century also hosted the Nation of Islam movement and the resulting Sister Clara Muhammad schools. The Nation of Islam movement was both political and religious. The religious epistemology moved from radical and unrecognizable beliefs (for traditional Muslims) to mainstream and traditional beliefs under the leadership of Warith Deen Muhammad. Black Muslims, like their immigrant counterparts, began schools and temples (later to be termed mosques) in order to reproduce the cultural capital and religious teachings of their leaders. (Omran, 1997)

Schools opened and curriculum materials were written. The prevalent Muslim epistemologies of the time became the backdrop of Islamic Studies materials.

In recent years Muslim communities have demonstrated a renewed interest in women's spaces and roles in religious society. The Islamic Society of North America, along with the *Fiqh* Council of North America prepared a statement, supported by North American scholars, calling on mosques to provide prayer space for both men and women in the main prayer hall and to include women in decision-making positions in governance². Social media leaders have been agitating for better female representation at speaking events, the inclusion of female scholars on panels, and a recognition of female leadership in the community.³ And Imams across the country speak against domestic violence and other ugly issues plaguing our communities.

Textual evidence against sexism in education is found in both the Quran and *Sunna* (prophetic words and actions) and recent historical works by Muhammad Nadwi (2007) and Beverly Mack and Jean Boyd (2000) have crushed any imaginings that Muslim women were 'always' the subjects of oppression and lack of educational opportunity. Hence Islamic curriculum materials that create a gender bias, disempower women, or send mixed messages about the place of women in society are deviating from the message they proclaim to teach. It is not enough to state that Islam honors women; the principle must be demonstrated within the pages and activities of the program.

² <http://www.isna.net/isna-statement.html>

³ Twitter and Tumbler are replete with blogs, twitter conversations and twalaqas agitating for feminist issues in Muslim communities.

Theoretical Basis

People often think that religious curriculum originates at the standpoint of God. But, of course, Islamic curriculum materials are written by human beings and thus can withstand the same rigorous analysis as any other educational program. Indeed they should be ready to withstand the most vigorous of analyses. Curricular standpoint theory is imperative here, both to demonstrate that by taking the standpoint of women we will have a better understanding of human creation in the curriculum, and that “Given the power and privilege of men in our current social relations, we stand a better chance of getting a clearer, more strongly objective understanding.” of the prevalent attitudes (Au, 2012, p. 70). Curricular standpoint not only supplies the epistemology to further understanding, it is also a foundation upon which to think about methods of research, and continued analysis of curriculum. Critical theory is important as well. Curricular standpoint informs method and analysis, and critical theory provides the underlying question of ‘why’. Curricular standpoint theory “...surfaces the issues of peoples and communities that are either regularly pushed to the margins of school knowledge, actively misconstrued within the curriculum or left out of the curriculum completely.” (Au, 2012, p. 69). It “provides a conceptual and political synthesis that attends to culture/identity and to issues of materiality and practice.” (Au, 2012, p. 69) Curricular standpoint theory points to the questions that need to be asked and the materials will point us in the direction of discovery.

Method

I use content analysis to unpack and analyze curriculum programs used in full time and weekend Islamic schools in Minnesota. Content Analysis is the study of cultural artifacts (Reinharz, 1992). The cultural artifacts of a curriculum are those things found and not found on site. Lesson plans, textbooks, internet downloads, media, classroom decorations, school architecture, classroom management systems and supplemental reading are some of the artifacts that build a curriculum. For this study, I am looking to deconstruct textbook materials in order to uncover embedded attitudes toward women. Using curricular standpoint theory and critical analysis I constructed five areas of analysis to serve as a guide for the content analysis. These areas are as follows:

1. Illustrations: Are both boys and girls represented in the materials? Will male and female students see themselves represented in the pages of the textbook in equal numbers of illustrations?
2. Representation of girls and women: When girls and women are represented, are they happy, neat and tidy? Are they age appropriate? Are the girls in a practical hijab (one that can be worn as opposed to a sloppy draping of impractical fabric)? Are the girls and women only drawn in stereotypical roles?
3. Does the curriculum text include real women from history? Are women of knowledge and community activism mentioned? Does the program include three-dimensional presentations of women around the Prophet (s), and later followers?
4. When the wives and daughters of the Prophet (s) are mentioned, are they mentioned as real people or only as flat unrealistic relatives of the Prophet (s)?
5. What kind of language is used to describe women? Is it positive and empowering or negative and disempowering?

Gender Equity and Islamic Thought

Equal representation, positive imaging, historical truths, three-dimensional personalities and language of empowerment are all part and parcel of gender equity in Islamic thinking. God says in the Quran, “Their Lord responded to them: ‘I never fail to reward any of you for any deed you do, be you male or female – you are equal one to another...” (3:195) Prophet Muhammad (s) warned of gender bias and oppression in his final speech while affirming shared space in society, “They (women) are your partners and committed helpers.” (Ibn Hisham) This verse and hadith are only two phrases of many that form the foundational attitude of gender equity in Islamic thought.

The sīra is replete with stories of empowered women who worked alongside men to build the first community of believers. Women such as Nusaiba bnt Ka’ab (r), who witnessed the second aqaba and demonstrated the manifestation of her oath throughout her life, Rufaidah al-Aslamiyya, who built a make-shift hospital and saw to the wounds of the soldiers of the Khandaq, and Um Waraqa, whose Quranic recitation earned her a mu’athin at her home, are only some of the women that should be mentioned in Islamic studies curriculum materials alongside the sacred stories of great men (Taba’a, 2013).

The wives and daughters of Prophet Muhammad (s) have been set forth as examples of humanity, and Islamic studies texts need to introduce them to students as full people, not as flat characters without personality. It is in meeting the full personalities of the women married to the Prophet (s), those who were given the title ‘Mother of the Believers’ by God himself in the Quran (33:6) that students begin to understand the subtleties of the role of women in society. Finally, Prophet Muhammad (s) did not ignore women or speak negatively about them and as such the language in the texts must reflect his (s) elevated Sunna. See Figure 1 for a detailed explanation of the assessment rubric.

The Rubric:

Figure 1

Category	0	1	2
Illustrations	Zero or less than 50% of boy representation	For every two boys there is one girl illustration	Even distributions (for every illustration of a boy there is a girl)
Representations of girls	Drawings are not happy, faithful, energetic, clear faced (non sexualized) girls	Drawings are mostly happy, faithful, energetic, clear faced (non sexualized) girls	Drawings are all happy, faithful, energetic, clear faced (non sexualized) girls
Women in the text	Stories of real historical sahabiyyat and/or historical women are not included	Stories of real historical sahabiyyat and/or historical women are included rarely	Stories of real historical sahabiyyat and/or historical women are included often
Wives and daughters	The female family members of the Prophet are not represented as contributors to Muslim society outside of their relative status	The female family members of the Prophet are represented as contributors to Muslim society outside of their relative status rarely	The female family members of the Prophet are represented as contributors to Muslim society outside of their relative status often
Language of empowerment	Pejorative language or silence about women	Neutral language, or stereotypical language, and/or semi-silence	Positive language and women often mentioned

Using the rubric, we can analyze each textbook for positive messages about girls and women. I analyzed nine textbooks. Using the rubric, any textbook can be quickly analyzed for appropriate representation of women and girls.

Textbooks

I chose textbooks that are actually taught in weekend schools across the greater Twin Cities area in Minnesota. The publishing dates range from 1991-2013, though most of the books used were published within the last ten years. I looked at the textbooks meant to be in the hands of students, not curriculum guides, workbooks, worksheets or curricular schemes of work. I stayed in the elementary range (grade one to grade five) in order to focus on the images and stories that are foundational to learning. These are the years wherein children are sent to Islamic schools whether they want to go or not, once children are older, they must be won by the school either through great programming or materials. See Figure 2 for titles, publishing companies and levels of the textbooks examined.

Figure 2

Title	Level (s)	Publisher	Author (s)	Yr published
Weekend Learning Series: Islamic Studies	1,2,3,	Weekend Learning Publishers	Mansur Ahmad, Husain A. Nuri	2011
Life of Rasulallah: Madinah Period	(not leveled-upper)	Weekend Learning Publishers	Husain Nuri	2013
I Love Islam	3,4,5	Islamic Services Foundation	(Team)	2006
Muhammad Rasulallah: The Last Prophet	Grade 1	Iqra' International Education Foundation	Dr. Abidullah Ghazi Dr. Tasneema Ghazi	2005
Mercy to Mankind; Makkah Period	Junior level (about grade 5)	Iqra International Educational Foundation	Abdullah al-Ansari Ghazi Tasneema Khatoon Ghazi	1991

Assessment

I examined each book and assessed them based on the rubric in figure two. A score of ten indicates that the textbook is empowering, deals fairly with stories about women and girls, and is consistent with the attitudes of Islamic thought regarding gender. A score of 9 or 8 indicates that the book has a passing grade. A score of 7 indicates that the illustrations and text are problematic, but could be supplemented by the instructor to counteract the gender bias. A score of 5 or 6 indicates that the teacher will have to use counter measures in order to build self-esteem rooted in faith and Islam in the female

students. A score below 5 is a failing grade and really should not be used in the classroom.

The final scores are as follows:

Name	Illustrations	Representations of girls	Historical women in text	Wives and daughters of Pr. Muhammad presented as three-dimensional	Language of empowerment	Total out of 10
Weekend Learning Series: Islamic Studies Level 1	0	0	1	0	1	2
Weekend Learning Series: Islamic Studies Level 2	1	2	1	0	1	5
Weekend Learning Series: Islamic Studies Level 3	0	0	0	1	0	1
Life of Rasulallah: Madinah Period	n/a	n/a	0	0	0	0
I Love Islam, Level 3	1	2	1	1	1	6
I Love Islam, Level 4	1	1	1	1	1	5
I Love Islam, Level 5	1	1	1	0	1	4
Muhammad Rasulallah: The Last Prophet	0	0	0	1	0	1
Mercy to Mankind; Makkah Period	n/a	n/a	1	1	1	3

The books were a dismal failure. The only book with a passing grade is one of many levels, and as such only passes for one school year. Needless to say, the content analysis is not comprehensive. I was looking for illustrations and text that empower young girls and encourage them in the foundational equity of their faith. In this regard I

was greatly disappointed. Illustrations are few across the board, and when girls are drawn they are often in messy hijabs, or messy clothes. There are many boys drawn in prayer and giving charity. Girls are drawn around texts about cleanliness. The numbers of illustrations of girls are far fewer than boys. When girls are drawn, they are often mothers or teachers, not students participating in the practice of Islam.

The presentation of information about early women was blatant in its absence. Nusaiba bint Ka'ab (r) was ignored in the story of Uhud and Asma bint Abu Bakr (r) was not mentioned in the Prophet's (s) hijra. When women were presented in historical narratives, they were passively interacting with their faith, though the Quran presents the women as actively faithful. The wives and daughters of the Prophet (s) were flat and their accomplishments were not mentioned. Khadija (r) especially was stripped of her active participation in the early dawah. Finally language about women and girls included a girl who failed a science test, girls who clean up, and girls who are quiet. The books were silent regarding Muslim girls who are active, good students, and concerned about issues in their lives. Our students are getting mixed messages about gender and the role of women in society. Our books are disempowering and disenfranchising women and girls from their own faith.

Recommendations

“Cultural documents shape norms” (Reinharz, 1992, p. 151) and curricular materials are some of the most important cultural documents that a community provides. Our children are receiving mixed messages. In Islamic school the materials point toward a gender bias that favors boys over girls. Yet our Prophet (s) and the Quran speak often and strongly about the dangers of such bias. Are our children seeking fairness and equity outside of Islamic institutions? What does this say about the next generation of Muslims? We need to look carefully at the institutions we rely upon to reproduce our religious and cultural capital, and critically analyze sources of gender bias in the community. Where the curriculum is at fault, work must be done to develop new programs that encompass traditional Islamic thought and provide a foundation of fairness and equity.

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Formulation of the Behavioral Objectives

Nawal Jadallah

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: مقدمة

لصياغة الصحيحة الطرق هي بها يلم أن معلمة / معلم كل على يجب التي الهامة الأمور من إن أن كما الطالب تقدم تقويم في هام عنصر وهي المعلم أداء في فعال أثر من لها لما السلوكية الأهداف في الكبير الأثر له السلوكية الأهداف تحديد عند (بلوم) صنفها التي الستة التفكير مستويات مراعاة بمستوى يرتقي أن على يحفز الأمور لهذه المعلم فأدراك الطلاب عند التعليمية العملية في الارتقاء أدمغة يحشو أن للمعلم الأول الهم يكون فأحياناً فحسب بالشيء العلم مستوى عند يقيهم ولا الطلاب يعينهم أن تماماً ويتجاهل المعلومات هذه تلاميذه يحفظ أن جهده قصارى ويبذل بمعلومات التلاميذ مع تتناسب مهارات يكسبهم أن على أعاجز ويكون اليومية حياتهم في المعلومات هذه توظيف على تفكيرهم مستوى .

: السلوكي الهدف تعريف

؟ السلوكي الهدف هو ما

حصة خلال من لها يتعرض تعليمية خبرات على حصوله بعد التلميذ/ة من حدوثه المتوقع السلوك هو أكثر أو واحدة

تربوية مؤسسة تسعى التي السلوك في التغيرات "أنواع بأنها السلوكية الأهداف (تايلور) عرف ولقد ، (تايلور التلاميذ سلوك في إحداثها إلى كالمدرسة 1982 ص ، 16 وهو ، بالتلميذ نحدثه أن نريد مقترحاً تغير تصف بعبارته عنه يعبر مقصد أنه عرفه) (ميجر و من لنمط وصف أنه كما ، تعليمية خبرة بنجاح ينهي عندما المتعلم عليه سيكون ما تصف عبارة ، (ميجر إظهاره على درأقا المتعلم يكون أن و ملُيُ الاداء أو السلوك 1967 ص ، 11 ويمكن التدريس عملية بعد التلميذ من المتوقع التعليمي بأنه "الناتج السلوكي الهدف فيعرف سالم أما ، (سالم و يقيسه المعلم يلاحظه أن 1998 ص ، 105 مصاغة عبارة بأنه السلوكي الهدف تعريف يمكن السلوكية للأهداف السابقة التعريفات على أبناء جديدة تعليمية بخبرة مروره بعد المتعلم سلوك في حدوثه المتوقع التغير لتصف و واضح دقيق بشكل . وقياسه ملاحظته امكانية مع

: السلوكية الاهداف تحديد أهمية

- 1_ إلى المضارع الفعل تحويل يتم أن بعد التقويم أسئلة صياغة على يساعد السلوكي الهدف صياغة 1_ الأمر صيغة
- 2_ للطلاب والنهائية الدورية الاختبارات إعداد سهولة 2_
- 3_ من تقلل التي والعشوائية الارتجالية عن المعلم ويبعد التعليم يؤصل السلوكية الأهداف استخدام 3_ التعلم فعالية
- 4_ المعلم إنتاجية من يزيد 4_
- 5_ تطوير إلى يؤدي مما يناسبهم ما تحديد ومحاولة الطلاب لحاجات تفحصه على المعلم يساعد 5_
- 6_ الدراسية المادة محتوى
- 6_ بإشباع الطلاب شعور إلى يؤدي مما الفردية الفروق مراعاة على المعلم يساعد الهدف تنوع 6_ حاجاتها

: السلوكية الأهداف صياغة في توفرها الواجب الشروط

- وهي العباس أبو أحمد حددها كما الأهداف لصياغة رئيسية شروط أربع هناك
- 1_ وللمتعلم للمعلم تماماً ضحاًوا الهدف يكون أن 1_
 - 2_ تحقيقه مدى قياس يمكن قعياًوا الهدف يكون أن 2_
 - 3_ ونضجهم التلاميذ لنمو مناسباً الهدف يكون أن 3_

آخر هدف مع يتداخل ألا بمعنى دأمد الهدف يكون أن 4_

: التالية الشروط علام أبو رجاء أضاف وقد

التعليمية للمرحلة العامة الأهداف مع منسجمة التعليمية الأهداف تكون أن 1_

فقط العامة الفكرة على الهدف يحتوي أن 2_

(73) (التعليمية للخبرة دأمدقو أمباشر ناتجاً الهدف يمثل أن 34ص_ ، 70

عن يعبر مضارع بفعل نبدأ أن الهدف بصياغة البدء عند يجب أنه نذكر أن بمكان الأهمية من
يصف أن بمعنى ذاتها التعلم عملية وليس التعلم ناتج يذكر وأن الطالب عند يحدث سوف الذي السلوك
تكون أن يجب وكذلك ، المعلم أفعال أو المعلم نشاط يصف ولا المتعلم سيؤديه الذي الفعل الهدف
الطلاب وخصائص وقدرات للتدريس المتاح للزمن وملائمة واقعية الأهداف

: الأهداف صياغة في الشائعة الأخطاء

حاولت وقد الأهداف صياغة عند المعلمين بعض فيها يقع شائعة أخطاء ستة هناك أن جرونلند يذكر
الكريم. والقرءان الإسلامية والدراسات العربية اللغة من الأمثلة بعض بدوري لها أضيف أن

التعلم ناتج من بدلا التعلم عملية وصف 1_

مثال: (أ) السكن مكان عن سؤال ل طرح العربية اللغة استخدام على التلميذ كفاءة زيادة

(ب) سكنه. مكان عن يستوضح لزميله سؤال التلميذ يوجه أن

التعلم خبرات على حصوله بعد نتائج من التلميذ يحقق عما تعبر الثانية العبارة : مثال

التلميذ وسلوك التعلم ناتج من بدلا المعلم نشاط وصف 2_

بطلاقة القرءان قراءة على التلميذ قدرة تزداد أن : مثال

أن سوف الذي التلميذ وليس التلميذ قدرة زيادة على سيعمل المعلم أن انطبعا يعطي الهدف هذا

يتعلم

الأخطاء من خالية صحيحة قراءة القرءان التلميذ يقرأ : أن الصحيح والهدف

التعلم ناتج من بدلا التعلم موضوعات تحديد 3_

. الموضوع خطوات تعليم : مثال

. بالترتيب الموضوع خطوات التلميذ يحدد أن : يكون أن يجب هنا الصحيح والهدف

الهدف عبارة في للتعلم ناتج من أكثر وجود 4_

. مختلفة مواقف في ويطبقها العربية باللغة الأسبوع أيام الطالب يذكر أن : مثال

العربية باللغة الأسبوع أيام التلميذ يحدد أن (أ) هو الصحيح والهدف

اليوم هو ما التلميذ يذكر أن (ب))

الأهداف صياغة مع تتناسب لا التي العبارات بعض استخدام 5_

: مثال

الاصلية حروفها إلى الكلمة تحليل على القدرة الطالب لدى يكون أن 1_

الاصلية حروفها إلى الكلمة الطالب يحلل : أن والصحيح

مبعثرة كلمات ترتيب بإعادة مفيدة جملة تكوين من الطالب يتمكن أن 2_

مفيدة جملة لتكوين مبعثرة كلمات كتابة الطالب يعيد : أن والصحيح

للقياس قابلة غير أفعال استخدام 6_

: مثال

التلميذ يدرك أن ، التلميذ يعرف أن ، التلميذ يفهم أن

: التعليمية الأهداف صياغة خطوات

التاليين السوالين على يجيب أن فعلية سلوكية أهداف يصوغ أو يحدد أن معلم أي أراد إذا

التعليمية الوحدة أو للدرس تدريسي بعد يفعل أن تلميذي من أريد ماذا 1_ على المعينة التعليمية والوسائل الانشطه (تحديد تحقيقه من أتأكد وكيف أريد ما لي يتم كيف 2_ من مصطلح + التلميذ + للقياس قابل سلوكي فعل + أن : على يحتوي أن يجب فالهدف الهدف تحقيق للأداء أدنى حد + المادة

: التعليمية الأهداف تصنيف

رئيسية مجالات ثلاثة إلى التعليمية الأهداف (بلوم) قسم

1_ المعرفي المجال

على المجال هذا ويحتوي الذهنية والمهارات القدرات وتطوير للمادة الفكري / العلمي بالجانب يهتم . أتعتقد الأكثر بالمستويات وتنتهي البسيطة العقلية بالقدرات تبدأ مستويات ستة

2_ الوجداني المجال

مستويات خمسة وله والاتجاهات والميول والانفعالات بالمشاعر تهتم التي الاهداف المجال هذا يشمل . التكامل ، التنظيم ، التقييم ، الاستجابة ، التقبل : هي مختلفة

3_ (المهاري) حركي النفس المجال

والحركية البدوية المهارات بتنمية تهتم التي الاهداف يشبه المجال هذا على المعلم/ة مساعدة في نظري وجهة من أهمية من له لما المعرفي المجال على هنا أركز أن احببت حياتهم في يتعلمونه ما وتوظيف المعرفة مستويات أعلى إلى توصيلهم ومحاولة بالتلاميذ الارتقاء اليومية العملية

: هي المعرفي المجال مستويات

- 1 يتضمن ، يذكر تغيير دون المعلومات وتكرار واسترجاع تذكر على القدرة هي : المعرفة العريضة القاعدة المستوى هذا ويشكل والعموميات والحقائق التفاصيل معرفة المستوى هذا المعرفي للهدف
- 2 مستوى في حصلها التي المعلومات صياغة إعادة أو تفسير على التلميذ قدرة هو : الفهم المستوى هذا يسمى ، الفهم درجات أدنى المستوى هذا ويعتبر الخاصة بلغته المعرفة بالاستيعاب
- 3 تعلمها تم التي والقوانين والنظريات المعلومات تطبيق أو استخدام على التلميذ قدرة : التطبيق
- 4 . التلميذ يتعلمه ما خلال من تظهر التعلم عملية فعالية أن ، صحيح وبشكل جديدة مواقع في علاقات من بينها ما وإدراك المختلفة أجزائها إلى العلمية المادة تفكيك على القدرة : التحليل وتركيزها بنيتها على يساعد مما
- 5 غير تركيب أو متكامل نمط لتكوين أجزاء أو عناصر جمع على الطالب قدرة : التركيب صلاً موجود
- 6 محددة معايير وفق الاعمال أو الافكار قيمة حول حكم اصدار أو إعطاء على القدرة : التقويم المعرفي المجال بين وصل حلقة ولكنه فقط المعرفي المجال في الهرم قمة التقويم يشكل لا ، الانفعالي والمجال

: ملاحظة

لتعينه المستويات من مستوى كل مع يستخدمها أن للمدرس يمكن التي الافعال بعض ذكر سيتم أ فقط واحد مستوى في استخدامه يمكن الفعل أن هذا معنى ليس ولكن المناسب الهدف صياغة على (جرونلند) ذكر العبارة كتابة أسلوب إلى يرجع وهذا آخر مستوى في الفعل هذا المدرس يستخدم : مختلفة مستويات على وهي يتعرف بالفعل تبدأ لأهداف مثلاً

التذكر) (مستوى الإدغام لمعنى السليم التعريف على التلميذ يتعرف أن
أن فهم) (مستوى إدغام على تحتوي قرآنية آيات على التلميذ يتعرف أن
تطبيق) (مستوى الإدغام لقاعدة السليم الاستخدام على التلميذ يتعرف
الطالب فأن التطبيق مستوى في مثلاً هدف لديه كان إذا أنه الاعتبار بعين الأخذ المعلم على يجب ب
في والفهم التذكر مستوى يحقق أي قبل التي المستويات حقق إذا إلا الهدف ذلك يحقق أن يمكن لا
إلى ينتقل ثم مائة ٠ خبر
تطبيقها

ملاحظة هامة *

رأى إلا تتطلب لا (التذكر) الدنيا فالمستويات العقلية، العمليات تعقيد درجة هو فيه استخدم الذي
(التحليل العليا المستويات بينما الذهنية، المعالجة أو الفهم، من أيسر التركيب تتطلب التقويم)
. عليها والحكم وتحليلها، الأفكار مناقشة على والقدرة الفهم درجات أعلى

بلوم تصنيف المعرفي المجال في المستوى
الأهداف صياغة في استخدامها يمكن التي الأفعال بعض
التفكير مستويات من مستوى لكل

المستوى	مناسبة أفعال	أمثلة
المعرفة	يعدد يصف، على، يتعرف يحدد، يتلو، يسمي، يذكر،	المبشرين الصحابة أسماء التلميذ يعدد أن بالجنة.
الفهم	يو عن، ةصالخا بلغته ربّعِي يستنتج، يستنبط، بترتي يعيد بأسلوبه، يغصي صخّ يـ	بأسلوبه القصيدة معنى التلميذ يلخص أن الخاص.
التطبيق	فوّ عير، حضيو، بيحسد يعلل، يطبق، يستخدم، يختار، يمثل، أمثلة، يعطي يربط، يطبق، بناء، يعيد يستخدم، يوظف، يشغل، ينظم، , يطور يرسم يحل،	أثناء للسكون العارض المد التلميذ يطبق أن التلاوة.
التحليل	يتعرف ر، صدعنا يحدد يميز، ففّ صي يدقق، يقارن، يحلل، يستخلص، خصائص، يختبر، صيفد قوّ يف، صيستخل يحسب، ...ينقد في،	والجملة الاسمية الجملة بين التلميذ يقارن أن الفعلية.
التركيب	ينتج، يروي، د،ّ يول يكتب، يؤلف، ينسق، يجمع، يقترح، يصمم، يعدل، يصوغ، ينص، يملي، يشنق	. قصيرة قصة التلميذ يكتب أن
التقويم	موّ ية بالحجة، شينا ق ينقد، على، حكما درصي يبرر. بالحجة، يدعم التناقض، يبين قيمة،	التي الأطعمة أنواع في رأيه المتعلم يعطي أن الإنسان لجسم أهميتها حيث من يتناولها

يتعلم، يدرك، يفهم، يعرف، للأهداف: صياغته عند استخدامها يتجنب أن المعلم على يجب أفعال
تفاس لا الأفعال هذه لأن وذلك .

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1. علي بن عبدالله / بلوم عند التربوية الأهداف تصنيف

http://child-trng.blogspot.com/2010/12/blog-post_16.html

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6 .التعليمية بالنواتج وعلاقتها تصنيفها ومداخل الأهداف مجالات

<https://www.ut.edu.sa/.../636e08e2-5404-4af2-9c2c-fe40088ceb07>

ص ملخ

أن يستدعي وهذا واضحة محددة سلوكية أهداف له تكون أن يقتضي اليومي للدرس الجيد والإعداد عمل لأي البداية نقطة الأهداف تعتبر الأهداف هذه بصياغة دراية على المعلم/ة يكون مستوى إلى توصيلهم ومحاولة بالتلاميذ الارتقاء على يساعده/ها مما الأهداف هذه صياغة عند الستة المعرفية التفكير مستويات ومراعاة اليومية. حياتهم في معرفة من عليه يحصلون ما توظيف على يعينهم عالي معرفي

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1. علي بن عبدالله / بلوم عند التربوية الأهداف تصنيف

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Creating Collaborative Teams for Improving Student Achievement

Kathy Jamil

Kathy Jamil is currently an assistant principal for the Buffalo Public School District in Buffalo, NY. She has been an Islamic School principal for 13 years, was one of the founders of the school, and is currently a board member for Universal School. She holds a Masters in Educational Leadership and Supervision and has certification in NYS as a Building Leader and District leader. She is the current Chair of The Islamic School League of America, and has been a board and committee member of multiple organizations, such as RAHAMA (Resources And Help Against Marital Abuse), ISNA Education Forum, college service-learning initiatives, MPAC, and The American Center for School Choice, a national organization that empowers parental choice in education, and the Center's committee on faith-based schools. She has presented trainings and workshops for over fifteen years to social service agencies, colleges, law enforcement, and professional development for both public and private schools.

Creating Collaborative Teams for Improving Student Achievement

Establishing highly effective teams in schools can have a significant impact on student achievement. Teams use data analysis to drive instruction, identify gaps in curriculum within and across grade levels, which in turn develops a viable “living” curriculum. Teams work collaboratively as learners; they learn of their student’s specific needs, school-wide needs, and learn strategies to help students overcome obstacles by sharing strategies with their peers. This is an aspect of a Professional Learning Community, or PLC, where a school culture of collaboration and learning benefits students and teachers alike.

Collaboration among teachers is one of the most effective ways to improve student learning. When teachers share information, resources and skills, work together to problem solve, and create a viable curriculum using data-driven decisions, student achievement increases. High performing teams communicate effectively horizontally and vertically with the PLC foundation:

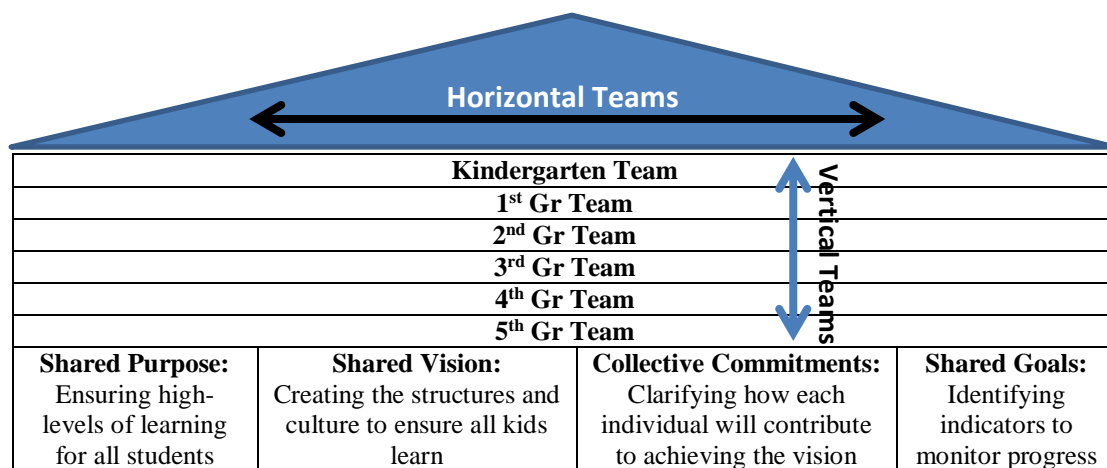


Table 1.0 (DuFour, R., 2011, p. 166)

Differences in content coverage, skill development and grading within the same grade level are common in schools where teachers work in isolation. Two students in the same grade but with

different class teachers may get similar results on a standardized test, while having significantly different classroom grades in that same subject. This can be due to many variables, such as a teacher's grade policy, infrequent assessing, student work expectations, criterion in identifying achievement, depth of curricular coverage, or different teaching strategies. Even with curriculum maps and rubrics, the individual teacher is the most significant factor in student achievement and variations are going to happen while working in isolation. Gaps within grade levels are widened over years as students continue to proceed through each grade level, falling farther and farther behind. Grade levels teams work on vertical alignment (subject-based such as a K-8th Math Team, or interdisciplinary such as a Middle School Team) to cross reference horizontal work and remove gaps in learning school-wide. The following is a suggested model to begin this process:

1. Principals must have a strong understanding how effective teams work, data analysis and the PLC process. Some resources and trainings are offered on www.allthingsplc.info.
2. Board presentations should be done to ensure buy-in from the board and support for initiatives that may require their approval, such as budgetary increases for staff development.
3. Meet with key people in your building (circle of influence) to discuss the initiative. "A principal benefits by working through the issues with a small group of key staff members and securing them as allies before engaging the entire faculty" (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many, 2010, p. 21) Find teacher leaders that will support the process and move things forward. Principals should share the benefits of such an approach to inspire teachers and help them see how they will become better educators. Choose members that are strongly committed and work well with people. These individuals will make up the Leadership Team.

4. Decide which teams should be established based on school needs. If you find that many students are struggling with writing, a Language Arts Team should be one to consider. It's best to start with one or two teams initially. It is possible to start with a vertical alignment before horizontal as gaps can be identified across grade levels and then teachers within grade levels can work together to standardize their work.
5. Train the Leadership Team on how to serve as a liaison between the team members and administration. They initiate collective commitments to establish team norms, help establish SMART goals, and develop, monitor and evaluate the team's action plan to achieve goals. Empower them with additional staff development that focuses on the PLC, data analysis and team building. Provide additional planning time for them.
6. Seek school-wide support from the staff by reinforcing a shared purpose and vision for student achievement. According to Kotter (1996), "a strong, guided coalition is always need – one with a high level of trust and shared objectives that appeal to both head and heart" (p. 52). Monitor attitudes towards the concept that all students can learn. This will take time, depending on what your current school culture fosters. Present the initiative along with other members of the Leadership Team in a stepwise manner, ensuring they feel they are supported throughout the process. Select members from the staff to be on specific teams.
7. Ensure collaborative time is scheduled during school hours.

Though the Principal should attend some meetings, they are more focused on meeting with the Leadership Team to monitor progress and provide support. It is important that the Principal does not take over the team meetings. Distributing leadership by letting others "own" the meeting empowers teacher-leaders. Shared responsibility establishes interdependency rather than dependency. Principals focus on establishing environments where everyone on the team is

heard, request feedback through surveys, and have a non-defensive approach if obstacles are brought up or administrative short-comings are identified. Principals need to keep in mind that it is not a matter of whether they agree that negative feedback is true or false; rather it is how another perceives it.

Collaborative Team Processes

Establish team commitment and norms – Teams create statements to describe what their team is about. For example, the Quran Team’s vision is to “develop a love for the Book of Allah in so that a student is always connected to its divine message and pursuant of maintaining an attachment in their hearts throughout their lives”. Team norms are identified as:

- Meet on time
- Have an agenda
- Have minutes
- Ensure everyone is heard
- Be prepared for meetings
- Ensure everyone has a role

Collect data – Gather information (standardized tests, benchmark and unit tests, etc.) across grade levels for vertical teams and horizontally for within grade levels. Data from multiple years of testing should be used. Compare apples to apples; ensure that assessments are aligned using the same level of higher order thinking and question types. This is more challenging if teams use teacher-created tests that were made in isolation and expected to be compared to another teacher’s assessment results. If you find that you need more data, decide as a team which type of data you need to collect and create a timeline for creating/purchasing, administering and scoring them. Ensure that the assessments are aligned by grade level or within grade levels.

Analyze data – While many testing agencies do most of the analysis for you, teams will decide *how* they will look at the data. Teams can decide how to divide this process; individual teachers can analyze data for the lowest performing areas for their class and share it with their team members to look for trends within and across grade levels. Here teams will find clarity in where the school has a strong academic emphasis and where they have needs. It is important that teams avoid assumptions based on opinions unless they have the data to back it up.

SMART Goal planning – Based on the analyzing results of the team’s work, teams will choose a Strategic, Measurable, Attainable, Result-oriented, Time-bound (SMART) goal. For example, a team discovers 60% of students achieve the school’s target goal of 85% mastery at each grade level for solving word problems. The team establishes a SMART goal: “To increase the percentage of students who achieve the target goal of 85% mastery in math word problem solving on assessments done mid-year and end of the year from 60% to 80%”. Oftentimes our goals are vague, are not time-bound, and don’t clarify exactly what the team is looking for (measurable). Teams establish strategy/action steps, distribute responsibility among team members, establish timelines, and identify evidence of effectiveness for each SMART Goal (see appendix for template). Schools may realize during this process that additional support is needed to enrich and extend learning for some students. Administrative support is critical during this time; if teams have worked hard to identify a need and the Principal does not respond supportively, whether it’s to establish an after-school tutoring program, teacher aid support, developing RTI in the building, the team momentum will quickly die out.

The following table shows results of proficiency levels in 4th grade: writing informative/explanatory texts (Common Core WHST.6-8.1):

Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4
73% of students are proficient	100% of students are proficient	100% of students are proficient	52% of students are proficient

Examples of Some Team Strategies:

- Establish a SMART goal of 90% of all 4th grade students to reach proficiency levels in explanatory writing texts by the end of the year evident on the state exams in May.
- Are teachers 1-4 testing standards the *same* way? Is teacher 1's test considered a high-level critical thinking assessment while teacher 2 is using multiple choice tests? To target gaps in learning, difficulty levels in assessments must also be aligned within grade levels. This team develops formative and summative assessments, administer, grade and share the results to identify whether the gap is related to student knowledge or teaching/assessment strategies.
- Target the weaknesses; what part of writing explanatory texts are the students struggling with? If the team is unsure, they create common formative assessments that breakdown the steps of each component of explanatory writing in order to identify trends in student work where the challenges emerge.
- Student support: students struggling in the class of Teacher 1 and 4 can be grouped for Title I services. The Title I teacher would work 80 – 200 minutes a week with students, depending on their levels and needs, targeting the specific skills needed in writing. Implement intervention times for classroom teachers and their students by providing aides to work with the rest of the class while small groups work with teachers. The team may opt to establish a writing lab in each class as a center. Teacher 1 and 2 may swap

classes for a few days to teach each other's group with a strength they can support students with.

- Teacher support: Teachers learn about their students and learn from each other through Peer Coaching. Teacher 2 and 3 can coach Teacher 1 and 4. Perhaps there are teaching strategies that works well in meeting this standard. Each teacher observes the other teaching or Teacher 2 & 3 teach Teacher 1 & 4's classes while the classroom teachers observe and later come together to discuss their experience. Studies have shown that "there is not one way to teach effectively, but many" (Stigler & Hielbert, 2009, p. 34)

Despite the fact that Teacher 2 and 3 have 100% proficiency in their classes, these teachers are equally concerned for all students. As part of the team's values, accepting that "all students are our students" strengthens teams and provides for a nurturing environment school-wide.

Challenges

Though few would disagree that there are benefits of establishing a culture of collaboration, schools sometimes avoid this process as it poses challenges, such as lack of time and resources, and burn-out of teams.

Establishing collaboration time initially seems difficult, but ways to implement this during the days just requires some creativity. Considering that effective teams should meet about 90 minutes a week, it would be difficult for teachers to work more hours after-school to collaborate. If master schedules 1) schedule subjects to be taught at the same time for each grade and 2) schedule specials during the same period, teachers that teach the same content area will be free for collaborative meetings during the same time while the special teachers have their students (see sample schedule). If more staff is needed to work with students, schools should look into

recruiting college students, high school interns, guidance and administrators for providing additional support for intervention or enrichment activities for students. They can work with students by placing them into flexible groups as a way to group students based on needs while their content teachers meet to collaborate.

Discussions on how to allocate existing resources should include administrators and team members as creativity will be the key to resolving challenges. Schools can better allocate time, people, materials, and funds when multiple people with a shared vision put their minds together.

Teams can avoid burn-out by ensuring appropriate pacing, yet consistent work that show progress of the team's meetings. Disinterest in a team can be expected if little or no results are apparent. Team leaders must be vigilant about ensuring their team has created SMART goals, monitors their progress, and celebrating milestones. The Principal should work with the Leadership Team to ensure there is effective progress and improvement in student achievement. Teams continue through this process, allowing the realities of the student's progress over time to be the guiding principles behind teamwork.

Capacity building takes time, however, if we are serious about learning, the results are worth the work and wait. School-wide progress will be apparent among students and empowerment of teachers will be the school's norm.

“Capacity building...is not just workshops and professional development for all. It is the daily habit of working together, and you can't learn this from a workshop or course. You need to learn it by doing it and having mechanisms for getting better at it on purpose.” (Fullen, 2005)

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Expanding Horizons through Muslim and Multi-faith Online Curriculum

Ameena Jandali

Ameena Jandali is a founding member and Director of Content for Islamic Networks Group (ING) where she co-designs and develops ING's educational presentations and cultural competency seminars. Ameena has delivered hundreds of presentations in schools, colleges, universities, churches, and other venues on Islam and related subjects. She currently team-teaches a class on Islam at San Francisco City College. Ameena received her M.A. in Near Eastern Studies from the University of California, Berkeley, and B.A. in History from the University of Illinois.

Background

Founded in 1993, Islamic Networks Group (ING) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to counter prejudice and discrimination against American Muslims by teaching about their traditions and contributions in the context of America's history and cultural diversity, while building relations between American Muslims and other groups.

ING achieves its mission through education and community engagement. ING focuses on educational outreach in both public and private schools through two of its programs. The Islamic Speakers Bureau consists of speakers from the Islamic faith who supplement existing curriculum and cultural diversity programming relating to Islam and Muslims in public institutions. The Interfaith Speakers Bureau program consists of speakers from the Islamic, Jewish, Christian, Buddhist and Hindu traditions who speak together on panels to increase religious and cultural literacy and mutual respect in a way that reflects religious pluralism.

While ING's speakers program has been successfully implemented for over twenty years, with affiliated bureaus conducting similar programs in various vicinities across the country, there are parts of the country where educators do not have access to ING's programs. The need for greater outreach efforts to educate about Muslims and their faith is apparent from recent polls which show rising anti-Muslim sentiment among Americans. According to a 2014 Zogby Associates poll, the percentage of Americans viewing Muslims *favorably* has declined from 35% in 2010 to 27% in 2014.² In fact, Arabs and Muslims have the *highest unfavorable and the lowest favorable* ratings of any religious or ethnic groupⁱ. These perceptions permeate every aspect of society, and can create a sense of shame and inferiority in Muslim youth. According to a 2014 Pew poll which rated the "warmth" or "coldness" Americans felt toward various religious groups on a scale from 1 to 100, Muslims rated most negatively of all religious groups in the survey with an average rating of 40.ⁱⁱ

In light of the growing need for educational materials about Islam and Muslims, both in response to growing anti-Muslim bias and perceptions as well as to the growth of the American Muslim community, ING has developed online curricula for educators in middle and high schools, as well as colleges and universities. This curricula provides teachers in remote areas of the United States access to authentic and accurate information about Islam and Muslims. The

online curricula is also a useful resource for full time Islamic schools or weekend schools who want to provide their Muslim students with knowledge and about their own faith, history and contributions. Muslim students, even in Islamic schools, can benefit both academically and emotionally from learning more about the history and achievements of Muslims.

ING's Curricula

ING's online curriculum includes four of its most popular digital presentations related to teaching about Muslims and their faith: *Getting to Know American Muslims and Their Faith*, *A History of Muslims in America*, *Muslim Contributions to Civilization*, and *Muslim Women beyond the Stereotypes*. ING also provides two multifaith curricula about *Shared Values* and *Living the Faith*, which address these topics as they relate to five major world religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. ING's most recent addition to its offerings is a new series titled "Muslim Heroes." The first curriculum featured is the story of a 19th-century Algerian freedom fighter and interfaith activist titled *Abd el-Kader, a Muslim Hero for our Time*.

These curricula were designed to supplement content standards in social studies and world history and address many of the themes created by the National Council for the Social Studies Curriculum Standards and the National Center for History in the Schools at UCLA. Many of these themes are also addressed in state social studies content standards of leading states, California, Texas, and New York.

Each curriculum includes the digital presentation, as well as lessons which accompany the presentation. Every lesson includes notes that describe the slides in the presentation. In addition to the presentation notes, each lesson also includes discussion and questions and other activities. Additionally, the lessons include links to dozens of film or film clips produced by popular Muslim academicians, musicians, comedians, and others addressing various topics that bring the subject to life and provide a multi-faceted perspective. Some of the films included are widely known, such as Unity Productions *Foundation's Muhammad*, *Legacy of a Prophet* and *Inside Islam: What a Billion Muslims Really Think*, and the PBS special *Islam, Empire of Faith*, while others are less know works by individual producers. The film titles and links are followed by discussion questions that help students reflect on different aspects of the films as they relate to

the topic being addressed. In our increasingly digital world, including film in classroom learning helps bring subjects to life in a way that engages students at various levels.

The lessons conclude with further references and suggested resources for educators. These curricula were designed to be used either jointly or independently, depending on the time available and the desired focus.

The curricula are available free-of-charge for downloading by educators at <https://www.ing.org/7-12>. After registering one's name, contact information, and place of employment users will be approved for access to all the curricula.

Curricula Overview

Composed of five individual lesson plans, *Getting to Know American Muslims and their Faith* provides a basic overview of what it means to be an American Muslim. Lesson One covers basic terminology and the demographics of Muslims in the world. Lesson Two provides current demographics on American Muslims, a brief history of Muslims in the U.S., and information on notable American Muslims today. Lesson Three explains the six major beliefs and five pillars of Islam. Lesson Four provides an explanation of common misconceptions related to gender equity and extremism, and Lesson Five concludes with a discussion of commonalities between Islam and other faiths. This curriculum is suitable for middle and high schools and is generally taught in 7th grade Social Studies or high school level World History classes.

The curriculum *A History of Muslims in America* consists of eight lesson plans which cover the various periods and groups that make up this history. This curriculum challenges the common trope that Muslims are not true Americans or part of American history. The first lesson begins with a look at some of the sayings of the founding fathers relating to religious freedom in general and Muslims in particular. Lesson Two examines the historical possibility of pre-Columbian Muslim exploration. Lesson Three describes the significant percentage of Muslims among slaves and highlights some of their stories. Lesson Four looks at the African-America rediscovery of Islam, while Lesson Five highlights Latino and White American Muslims. Lesson Six points out some examples of Muslim influence on American culture in areas such as cuisine, music, and architecture. Lesson Seven describes the various waves of Muslim immigration, and Lesson Eight concludes with examples of notable American Muslims today.

This curriculum is suitable for middle and high schools and is generally taught in American History classes.

The *Muslim Contributions to Civilization* curriculum is composed of six lesson plans which highlight different aspects of Muslim achievements, particularly, but not exclusively, in the so-called “Golden Age” of Islam. This curriculum challenges the common narrative that Islam and Muslims are backwards and have contributed little to civilization. The first lesson introduces the topic, while the second lesson looks at contributions to home and daily life. Lesson Three describes contributions to architecture, the arts, and recreation. Chapter Four focuses on the development of libraries, colleges, and mathematics, while Chapter Five summarizes contributions in the field of medicine. The curriculum concludes with a look at various contributions in the humanities and sciences. This curriculum is suitable for middle and high schools and is generally taught in 7th grade Social Studies or high school level World History classes.

The *Muslim Women beyond the Stereotypes* curriculum is made up of six lesson plans which address the role and rights of Muslims women as well as their status today. begins with a look at common stereotypes about Muslim women and their sources. The goal of this curriculum is to both explain these stereotypes by examining textual sources and provide a more nuanced look at the reality of Muslim women’s lives today. Lesson Two examines the role of women in the Qur’an and Prophetic sayings, while Lesson Three describes some of the rights of Muslim women as conveyed by these religious texts. Lesson Four explains the topics of gender relations and modest dress for Muslims. Lesson Five discusses women in the Qur’an and in Islamic history, while Lesson Six looks at contemporary Muslim women and highlights leaders, reformers, and other notable women. The final lesson examines challenging issues, including divorce, polygamy, domestic violence, honor killings, and other topics suitable for high school students only. The lesson concludes with a discussion of prominent Muslim women’s rights organizations. This curriculum is suitable for high school classes only.

ING’s multi-faith curriculum about *Shared Values* discusses such common values of the five major world faiths as mercy and compassion, kindness to parents, concern and care for the needy, honesty in word and deed, the sanctity of life, and justice and peace. The second multi-faith curriculum, *Living the Faith*, examines how the five world religions are practiced at home,

at school and in the workplace, and in the community. The curriculum also describes communal worship and festivals in each faith tradition. These curricula are both suitable for high school level.

ING's most recent curriculum focuses on the life and legacy of Emir Abd el-Kader, a 19th century Algerian freedom fighter. The first lesson looks at his early life and education, much of which centered on religion. The second lesson focuses on French conquest of Algeria and Abd el-Kader's new role as "Commander of the Faithful" fighting against and eventually surrendering to them. Lesson Three describes his exile in France where he spends the next five years struggling to gain his freedom. His eventual success and move to Syria is documented in Lesson Four, as his is new role as a defender of other faiths when he saves the lives of thousands of Christians in Damascus during a massacre and riot in 1860. He is celebrated internationally for his actions. Chapter Five looks at the lessons and legacy of the many different parts of his life and character. The curriculum is a powerful narrative and example of a recent Muslim hero whose ethical character and actions contrast with those of extremist groups like ISIS.

ING's curricula provide diverse and interactive, digital resources for teaching about Muslims and their faith, history and contributions. Teachers can choose to teach an entire curriculum or only on the lessons or parts of lessons that they want to focus on. I

What Educators Are Saying about ING's Curricula

"This new set of curricula from ING provides teachers with a useful set of tools to use in their classrooms when teaching about Islamic history and the global contributions of Muslims. The presentations and supplemental films will enable students to see Muslims in a new light." – Reza Aslan, professor, UC Riverside, author of *No God But God*.

"The curriculum for *Getting to Know American Muslims and their Faith* covers important points that many Americans are not aware of in relationship to Islam. I commend you on the resources you chose and the PowerPoint you produced. I liked the way you drew connections between Islam and other faiths. Well done!" Marcella Fox, Carondelet High School, Concord, CA.

“I can’t wait to be able to use these new curriculums in my classroom, they are extremely well-written and organized. They can be used immediately as a “stand alone” unit or can be added to by the teacher. The inclusion of an ING speaker will only enhance the curriculum.” – Judy Smith Most Holy Trinity School San Jose, CA.

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One size does not fit all: Differentiated Instruction In Arabic Language class

Sanaa Jouejati

Sanaa Jouejati is an Arabic teacher online, in public and parochial schools, a workshop contributor and session presenter at world language conferences locally, state and on the national level.

Sanaa also worked as lead teacher, guided Arabic teachers on integrating technology in teaching Arabic. She was on the committee for rewriting the Ohio foreign language state standards, and currently, is on the committee of writing the high school program of study, all four levels for teaching Arabic nationally. Won the 2012 technology award from the Ohio Foreign Language Association.

Abstract:

The aim of this presentation is to get Arabic teachers familiar with principles of differentiation, to grasp the differentiation concept and how to practically and effectively utilize these principles by conducting a readiness self-assessment, prepare students for differentiation, to serve the much needed differentiation in the Arabic language class.

Objectives:

1. Defining differentiated instruction
2. Comparing and contrasting differentiated instruction and traditional instruction
3. Preparing the teacher to differentiate, self-evaluation
4. Preparing students for differentiation
5. Identifying and planning for content, process and product i.e. what to teach, how to teach, how to assess
6. Sharing examples, activities and ideas

Presentation:

Ideas are demonstrated and shared through a power point presentation.

All aspects of presentation are discussed in Arabic and English if needed.

Points are supported by examples from the classroom.

The handout is in Arabic and contains the power point slides, strategies, activities and examples, all in Arabic.

Designing Lesson Plans to Motivate and Achieve

Susan Labadi, Genius School, Inc.

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That man can have nothing but what he strives for; that his striving will soon come in sight; then will he be rewarded with a reward complete. (translation A.Yusuf Ali, 53:39-41)

Motivation research presents some fascinating prospects for Islamic schools. For while we typically have fewer technological resources, due to budget and training limitations, Islamic school teachers often have a great degree of autonomy which enables them to favor thoughtful social-emotional development, skills, and content knowledge. In an era of short attention spans and hyper “edu-tainment” models, Islamic schools find alternative strategies to build capacities in students. Confirming research, these challenges actually sustain teachers’ motivation when they are acknowledged for their work by administration, students, and their students’ families. It also bonds teachers to a degree that they realize that they are an integral part of the school’s mission. To use motivational research as teachers design lesson plans is a natural outcome, for which this paper seeks to provide awareness and guidance.

“The most beloved of you to me and those who will sit closest to me on the Day of Resurrection are those who are best in attitude.” (Sahih Sunan al-Tirmidhi by al-Albani)

Teacher Motivation

Harvard Business Review ran an article by Frederick Herzberg, who was head of the department of psychology at Case Western Reserve in Cleveland. He researched employee motivation since the 1950s and 1960s and concluded that people are motivated by challenge, interesting work, and increased responsibility. Islamic school teachers certainly have those in abundance each and every day, but what resonates even more, as cited by Daniel Pink in his book *Drive*, people thrive on autonomy, the chance to develop mastery, and to feel that their work has purpose greater than for themselves. This we call our *amanah*, and it is probably the strongest motivator. It surely helps though when hardworking teachers receive positive reinforcement and demonstrations of gratitude.

What is also found among the best teachers is that they become wholly involved with their role as educators; it becomes their identity, and their work features a type of “flow” whereby they become proficient masters of their craft. *“Flow happens when teachers are fully immersed in the process of growth and change. To reach that state of full engagement, the*

activity needs to be intrinsically interesting and just within the reach of their abilities. If the activity is too challenging, then it is overwhelming and stressful. If the activity is not challenging enough, then it is boring and tedious. The sweet spot-the flow spot-is where the level of challenge perfectly matches the skills, training, strengths, and resources of the performer.....,” as described by education and coaching partners Bob and Megan Tschannen-Moran (p. 218). Much research has supported the efficacy of coaching, and it incorporates elements of trust, support, and choice, which coincidentally are correlated as factors in motivation. Yet while teachers’ motivation and enthusiasm is a keystone to school success, the teachers themselves benefit their students by being in tune with what can be manipulated in order to facilitate their students’ motivation for learning and participation.

Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best... (translation A. Yusuf Ali,16:125)

Student Motivation

Teachers should first establish a welcoming, congenial climate in their classes where mistakes are not considered threatening. A creative, appropriately challenging, and achievement oriented atmosphere primes the students for learning something new each day. Formative assessments should not only reinforce learning, but also give motivation when students can own their progress or realization that they may still need more study and focus to master content and skills. Students favor choice and the opportunity to grow in areas they feel secure that they can be successful, and feedback from instructors can certainly motivate when care and the interest of the instructor is evident to students.

Herein is the key to motivation: emotion. Emotion opens the door to focus and when we focus, we pay attention. We find a reason to learn, work, and do something that will result in a release of dopamine. This can be interpreted by the body as a type of reward, according to John Ratey, author of *Spark: the revolutionary new science of exercise and the brain*. He relates, “motivation is the director of emotions.” “It determines how much energy and attention the brain and the body assign to a given stimulus” (p. 247).

Therefore, lessons should ideally have an introductory hook or something that elicits an emotional charge. Suggestions may be art, images, stories, puzzles, video clips, props that can

engage students into the content. Students will also mirror the enthusiasm of the instructor, so be sure to choose something that is interesting or novel. Popular teachers use a variety of activities.

Teachers have often relied on extrinsic rewards to motivate their students, but these can backfire. Known as the Premack Principle, the strategy may modify a child's behavior, but will not do much to promote true motivation (Lavoie, p. 11). It may be appropriate on occasion when it is sporadically used, but do not let it become an expected necessity to entice compliance for students' efforts. The best motivator is intrinsic, where students find an internal rationale for working.

Richard Lavoie, education consultant, writes of the 6 C's of a motivating classroom in *The Motivation Breakthrough* (p. 52):

- **Creativity**-teachers must inject variety and creativity in their lessons
- **Community**-students must feel they are part of a "community of learners"
- **Clarity**-all members understand the rules and expectations
- **Coaching**-connect with students and develop their skills
- **Conferencing**-appreciate the one-on-one value and listen to students
- **Control**-children need to learn to manage their choices, so give them some

Granted, not all students are the same, nor are they all motivated for the same reasons. However, teachers who know their students' motivations can effectively find strategies that will engage and cultivate interest in students. Some may be shy, others outgoing, some may love art, and others enjoy sports. Take an interest in your students and they will respond to your efforts. Teachers have so much power to influence their development and acquisition of manners, skills and content knowledge. The teacher is the most critical contributor to students' success; it is an *amanah*, a trust and noble calling.

Lesson Planning

The first decision is to clarify if you are seeking to help students in skill building or in content knowledge. The state standards and assessment data analysis are typically the determining factors in which approach is chosen, and the teacher's subject area also gives weight to this choice. Once that is established, as the target, teachers decide what criteria will

indicate student success and mastery of the target. Next, the teacher will determine the components of performance that must be sequenced to achieve the end result. This will typically mix content with skills, and a roadmap of this will be designed to incorporate elements that will continually fuel the motivation of both teachers and students.

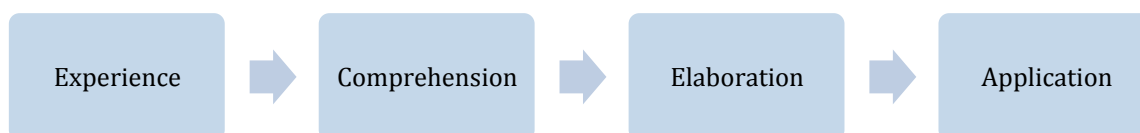
1. What is your priority? Skill or Content?
2. What criteria will define success or mastery? Assessment formats?
3. What sequence of lessons will lead to the target performance?
4. What hooks or emotional motivators can be leveraged to elicit engagement?

Steps to Learning

Once a hook or emotion eliciting provocation is established, these are the critical steps in the most elemental form, as postulated by Kevin D. Washburn, author of *The Architecture of Learning: Designing Instruction for the Learning Brain* (p. 60):

1. **Experience:** contains a pattern based reference point for understanding a skill's steps
2. **Comprehension:** provides the required knowledge and the steps required to learn the skill
3. **Application:** engages students in practicing new skills to develop accuracy and efficiency. For skills, this must be modeled by a teacher.
4. **Intention:** provides widening contexts for students to apply the skill

When applied to content, the following graphic is also from the insights of Washburn (p. 35).



Using a Constructivist approach, teachers expose students to the content to be learned. Comprehension involved understanding how the content connects to prior learning. Additional learning connections are made via a variety of resources and exposures to more fully elaborate similarities, differences, and relationships. Finally, students are expected to interact with the content in order to firmly plant it into their repertoire.

When instructors do assessments, they must match content and mode of learning. Also, instructive feedback is a prime motivator. In fact, researcher John Hattie coined it “the most powerful single modification that enhances achievement” (Marzano, p. 37). This is more than just a grade; it is a process of feedback, student comment with an improvement plan, and it creates an enhanced learning environment. This element of personal connectivity yields a system that Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam consider “the heart of effective teaching” (p.139-148), and it must be part of the planning that teachers routinely execute to keep students engaged and owning their learning. If time is a concern, a suggestion is to do this while students are doing art projects so that conversations may be more private amongst the din of sociable students’ conversations.

While there is a volume of material to contribute to the topic of lesson planning, such as methodology, discussions about homework, and a variety of assessments, let it suffice that these components represent the backbone of what the effective teacher incorporates in the structure of design. It should also be noted that lesson design can be a time consuming and intriguing process, for there are so many resources for every type of lesson that teachers may conceive. It is just a matter of screening and custom designing the best match for one’s students, and it may be that each term a teacher may only be able to truly design a few stellar units. Yet, when students experience a well thought out unit, it makes a lasting impression and fosters a more cohesive class that loves to rise to challenges and feel self-esteem in achievement. This transformation fuels the circle of motivation for teachers and students and is reminiscent of the guidance offered by our beloved prophet (SAW).

“Always his distinctive feature was the combination of strict faithfulness to his principles and human warmth constantly radiating from his presence...That gentleness and kindness were the very essence of his teaching. He kept saying: ‘God is gentle [rafiq] and he loves gentleness [ar-rafiq] in everything.’” (Ramadan citing Bukhari and Muslim) as quoted in Revelation: The Story of Muhammad (Mohiuddin, p. 208)

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Emphasis On Culture or Issues of Diversity Through Reading and Writing Activities

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INTRODUCTION

Thematic unit is the aim of Content-based Instruction. “In the content-based approach, the activities of the language class are specific to the subject matter being taught, and are geared to stimulate students to think and learn through the use of the target language.” (Snow, 2011, p.2)

Thus, backward design is an effective approach to planning that helps teachers meet their teaching goals. It consists of three steps: identify desired results, determine accepted evidence for learning, and plan learning activities and instruction that help students reach the goals. Therefore, teachers need to think about what the students will be able to perform by the end of the unit and the goals they will achieve through texts, learning activities, technology tools, differentiate instruction, and assessments. According to Wiggins and McTighe (2005) “Too many teachers focus on the teaching and not the learning. They spend most of their time thinking, first, about what they will do, what materials they will use, and what they will ask students to do rather than first considering what the learner will need in order to accomplish the learning goals. ” (p.15)

There are several benefits for student learning through the use of thematic units. According to Barto (2013), “there are many reasons to organize curriculum around themes based on questions such as:

- Students see the big picture so that they can make sense of English language instruction.
- Content areas (math, science, social studies, and literature), are interrelated.
- Vocabulary is repeated naturally as it appears in different content area studies.
- Through themes based on big questions, teachers can connect curriculum to students’ lives. This makes the curriculum more interesting.
- Because the curriculum makes sense, English language learners are more fully engaged and experience greater success.
- Since themes deal with universal human topics, all students can be involved, and lessons and activities can be adjusted to different levels of English language proficiency” (p. 1).

Therefore, I use a backward design to prepare my thematic unit under a big umbrella of five C’s. Standards for foreign language learning focus on five goal areas: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. The five C’s work together to help the language learner be able to use three modes of communication: interpretive, interpersonal, and

presentational to foster language skills. I enjoyed teaching the Arabic language through thematic unit instead of using a textbook. In this educational setting, the textbook used for teaching language learning was designed for native speakers in Arab countries. It focuses on reading comprehension and grammar.

UNIT THEME: ARAB SPRING

The Arab revolution or the Arab Spring is the movement of a massive peaceful protest launched in several Arab countries during 2010 influenced by the revolution of Tunisia because of the economic problems, poor living conditions, repression, corruption of the regimes, and lack of integrity of the elections in most Arab countries. Even though there were different local causes for the Arab Spring the protests had the same motivations. The effect of Arab Spring is still affecting some Arab countries today.

This unit highlights the revolution event within the Arab culture through reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities. Students will build their knowledge about the events of the Arab revolutions, types of governments, and how people react toward it using rap music, social media, movies, and political cartoons.

The unit theme contains four lessons: The Arab Spring in Tunisia, Social media and Tunisian Revolution, Rap Music, and Political Cartoons Supporting the Arab Spring. The essential questions that guide this unit are: What is the Arab Spring? What were the causes of the Arab spring? What role has rap music played in the Arab Spring? How do political cartoons support the Arab Spring? And how have social media affected Tunisian revolution?

Lesson 1: The Arab Spring in Tunisia

In this lesson students read an article from Aljazeera's website about how the Arab Spring started in Tunisia. This article introduced students to the causes of the Arab Spring in Tunisia and how an individual can make a difference.

Lesson 2: Social media and Tunisian Revolution

In this lesson students watched video clips from YouTube about the use of social media and technology in the Tunisian revolution.

These video clips attempt to answer several questions, such as: What is the role of social media and bloggers in moving people to streets until the regime stepped down in Tunisia?

Students watched the video to activate their existing knowledge about Tunisian revolution after reading about the topic from the previous lesson. I used this authentic material to provide an opportunity for students to watch an authentic event to prepare them to write about it.

Lesson 3: Rap music supports the Arab spring

In this lesson, students were exposed to videos discussing the rap music. The first video's content is a news report from LBCI News about a rap concert in Beirut (Lebanon). The second video's content was Tunisian rap music. These videos exposed students to both Tunisian and Lebanese dialects.

These videos helped students to access their existing knowledge and expectations to help them understand the concept and identify the role of Rap music in spreading the messages of youth suffering with the Arab regimes.

Lesson 4: Political Cartoons Support the Arab Spring

In this lesson students exposed to another tool used to support the Arab Spring: political cartoons and caricature drawing. This is the first time that Arabs feel free to create cartoons and caricatures about the regimes and dictators without losing their freedom. The revolutions were a dream for almost all of the Arab people.

All cartoon designers and caricature artists act quickly through their graphics to help people express their feeling towards revolutions without losing their sense of humor. In each demonstration, people create several caricatures and drawings to express their feeling towards the governmental corruption and dictatorship.

The use of cartoon and caricature are good opportunities for students to use their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in the target language and to gain more knowledge about the Arab people and their sense of humor even in difficult situations.

INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

The IPA was implemented during the design phase of the thematic unit for this grade level as evidence of what students can do in the end of the unit. I chose The IPA because it provides tasks that are authentic and does the following:

- “Ask students to do/apply the subject matter rather than merely recite information.

- Replicates the context in which adults are tested in the workplace, civic life, and personal life.
- Assess student's ability to use a repertoire of knowledge and skills.
- Assess learner's knowledge and abilities in real –world situations.”(IIPA, p.4)

Students were given five days to finish the three modes of communication including preparation, giving feedback to each other on their writing, proofreading of the essays and questions for interpersonal task. All students received feedback from the teacher and encouraged to ask questions for clarification to enhance their writing skills and build their backgrounds knowledge. Students worked in pairs and small groups to get ready for the performance tasks. The performance tasks are:

Interpretive Mode

- Students read a text selected from an article retrieved from an online newspaper, then used the Comprehension Guide from IIPA to complete the task.

Interpersonal Mode

- Students wrote eight to ten questions from their choice about the unit and choose partners to interact with them using their own questions. The interpersonal task was recorded.

Presentation Mode

- Students wrote letters to the Tunisian ambassador in Washington to present summaries about what they have learned about Tunisian revolution and how rap music, political cartoons, and social media supported the revolution.

WHAT STUDENTS ALREADY KNOW AND CAN DO

Students were exposed to the “Arab Spring” for the first time in this educational setting. They were so excited to learn some topics from around the world in order to be knowledgeable. They have some ideas of the Arab Spring from news and discussions with their parents, but they do not know how the Arab Spring started and spread across Arab countries. From graphic organizers, we concluded that students have little knowledge about the causes of Tunisian revolution and what helped spread the words of it around the world. Furthermore, they lack the vocabulary needed to complete the required activities and their proficiency levels are different.

Thus, I implemented many learning activities that enhance and increase their language skills in writing, speaking, listening, and reading in the Arabic language class.

To meet all students with different styles of learning, I provided hands-on activities, posters, pictures, songs, video clips, drawing, graphic organizers, creative activity by students, vocabulary games, think-aloud, and learning stations. Learning about what students can do and cannot do was very helpful for me to change my lesson plan whenever I felt the students did not understand. Thus, my job is to bridge the gaps and help them to achieve the next level.

Lastly, after exposing students to several speaking tasks using learning activities, authentic materials, and building their vocabularies, the results of the formal and summative assessments showed significant progress in their understandings of the concept and communicative proficiency. According to the ACTFL rating scale, students were understood by native speakers and could handle sample conversations in real world situations. They were able to discuss the concept outside the classroom and provide their perspectives.

The students in this educational setting were learning the Arabic language in a traditional way; thus, the thematic unit instruction and integration of technology tools, grouping, learning activities, visual supports, and giving feedback to each other helped students to build their background knowledge about the Arab Spring and improve their language skills in a short period of time.

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“Grades 5-8 Teaching Islamic Studies Like a Core Subject: Using Co-Operative Learning Strategies, Creative Writing, and Graphic Organizers”

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Introduction

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) taught his companions in the best of ways, using the most effective strategies. So effective was his teaching that even after hundreds of years, his message spread to the remotest of lands and people and still continues to guide many. His teaching method and style changed from one student to another, yet there are many Islamic schools that haven't changed their teaching styles for generations.

In the Quran Allah (swt) says, *"Ye have indeed in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for any one whose hope is in Allah and the Final Day, and who engages much in the Praise of Allah"* (Quran, surah Al-Ahzab 33/21). In following the example of the prophet then, it becomes even more of an obligation on us to constantly review and adapt our teaching strategies. As Professor Şevki Aydın mentions in his article, *Muallim Peygamber (The Prophet as a Teacher)*, "We can see the education principles and methods put forward by modern education scholars in the practices of the Prophet," some of them included modern teaching strategies such as, "organize the content" for an age appropriate audience, "make learners participate actively by thinking, searching, and asking questions", "create activities to reinforce what is learnt", "make them (the students) like what was being taught and to avoid their hating it or getting bored", and many other successful methods ([Aydin, 1996](#)). Unfortunately, Islamic Studies text books are rarely equipped with fun activities, diverse strategies, or even have age-appropriate standardized material. The mundane lectures, notes, and overwhelming lessons can easily bore the students and the teacher, making the subject less interesting or even irrelevant.

We live in an age of technology and multi-tasking where our children's attention span is only "10 to 12 minutes" ([Vawter, 2009](#)). On top of that we have the rise in Islamophobia, which makes Islamic Studies demand of the time. Ideally in Islamic Studies students have to not only learn about Islam, but learn to implement it effectively. Most urgently, use the knowledge to uplift their morale and debunk all the negative stereotypes that media portrays about Islam 24/7 for themselves and those around them. As Islamic Studies educators we have a responsibility to prepare our children using the best and the most effective strategies available to us, so they can be ready for their time. We cannot expect them to learn like we did tens of years ago. As Ali (ra) beautifully mentioned, *"Do not force your children to behave like you, for surely they have been created for a time which is different to your time."*

Effective Teaching Strategies

There are many good books out there on the various teaching strategies available for teachers. But, how do we know which ones are the best strategies and the ones that will prepare our students for tomorrow. Many educators, scholars, and leaders have been throwing the term “21st century skill set” around. The idea of 21st century skill set for teachers and students is not clearly defined or coded by any authority. Nevertheless, many individuals and organizations have tried to define the idea according to their own needs. Therefore the definition can shift from one place to another, but on the overall, “(the) concept is motivated by the belief that teaching students the most relevant, useful, in-demand, and universally applicable skills should be prioritized in today’s schools, and by the related belief that many schools may not sufficiently prioritize such skills or effectively teach them to students. The basic idea is that students, who will come of age in the 21st century, need to be taught different skills than those learned by students in the 20th century, and that the skills they learn should reflect the specific demands that will be placed upon them in a complex, competitive, knowledge-based, information-age, technology-driven economy and society” ([Great Schools Partnership 2015](#)).

According to *Educational Technology and Mobile Learning* three 21st century skills that every classroom should generally have are: inquiry, problem, and project based learning. This is because it is no longer enough for our students to just know, it is more important for them to know how to apply their knowledge. The 21st century skill set for Muslim students coming out of an Islamic Studies classroom would also include a list of skills and tools that will help instill pride, confidence, and faith in their identity. Skills such as: global awareness, self-direction, public speaking and presenting would only be some of the many. ([Great Schools Partnership, 2015](#)) There are many effective teaching strategies to help students attain the above-mentioned skills, and yet how many do we see being implemented habitually in Islamic Studies or even Islamic Schools?

In the recent decade the conversations about teaching and learning are recognizing the fact that effective instruction engages students intellectually, emotionally, and physically. Many prominent journals and magazines often post articles on the need for students to move in the classroom, to be active participants, and discuss more openly in classroom. The shift in education is going away from the traditional style of teaching and learning. Despite the research,

too many of our classrooms, especially Islamic Studies remain reserved, stagnant, lacking any element of creativity, excitement and/or physical engagement.

Despite the success of these strategies in other areas, somehow many Islamic Studies teachers feel immune to them. There could be many reasons for this; the educator/administration may feel that Islamic Studies is not like the core subjects or that Islamic Studies cannot be taught using the methods and strategies used in core subjects. In addition to that, it could be that the Islamic Studies curriculum itself lacks any sort of structure/standards, the mundane textbooks often have nothing in them except text and review questions, teachers could lack the support from the administration to experiment and try new and different strategies, etc... Whatever the reason, the boring classrooms not only do injustice to the subject, but also the students who might even get an A in the subject, but outside the classroom still prefer to call themselves “Mo” instead of “Mohammad”.

Due to the above mentioned reasons, although there are some Islamic Studies programs that are taking the initiative to change, for the majority schools Islamic Studies continues to lag behind the core subjects. Many Islamic Studies classrooms look very typical of a traditional classroom where the teacher is the only one teaching and students are expected to take notes, memorize, and reproduce everything they have learned when they are assessed. This style works great for some students, but for many it drives them to boredom leading them to disengage from the subject and the teacher. These students are then labelled as the attention mongering “trouble-makers”. But truth be told even adults would get bored in these traditional settings. Students need to move, they need to feel excited, they need to have discussions, and be intellectually engaged with Islam, only then Islamic Studies will truly be a life-changing experience for them, until then it will be nothing more than another 45-minute period in their schedule, which is “not that important anyway.”

Another issue that I would like to briefly like to touch on is the “stale” mindset surrounding the subject of Islamic Studies. Islamic Studies is the subject that makes the school “Islamic”, yet it is usually the subject with the least resources- from the physical conditions of the classroom to a well-qualified teacher. The teachers teaching Islamic Studies, the administration, parents, and the students themselves usually do not seem to be as proud of the Islamic Studies subject, as they would be of another core-subject. These double standards could be witnessed in the value of grades in Islamic Studies versus other core subjects, the lack of teacher’s confidence and

pride while teaching the subject; and the parents' lack of enthusiasm in prioritizing the subject's HW/projects over that of other core-subjects. There is an air of "staleness" around Islamic Studies, as if it's a subject that we just need to touch and run. Why is that?

In fact, given the politically charged circumstances that our children are growing up in, this will be the subject that they will carry with them every day of their life. Unarguably, the core subjects provide the students the tools and skillset to compete and succeed in this day and age, but it's Islamic Studies that will give them the confidence in themselves, about who they really are inside as a person; their beliefs, their values, their morals, their faith. If the subject is given the attention it requires from everyone starting with the administration, this could be the most transformative subject that a student ever comes across and it rightly should be the case. We owe it to our students. Not only should they learn about Islam in their Islamic Studies class, but they should learn about it in the best way possible with the most advanced technology and research-based strategies.

Implementation

Co-operative Learning Strategies and Graphic Organizers

In his book, *Classroom Instruction That Works*, Dr. R. J. Marzano talked about nine instructional strategies that are the most effective teaching tools in any classroom. Cooperative learning and graphic organizers were two of the nine he mentioned. Many scholars have written about the different learning styles that individuals have. We have visual, linguistic, kinesthetic, social, aural, and verbal learners. Cooperative learning addresses almost all of the above mentioned learners.

Co-operative Learning is also called small-group instruction. According to David Johnson and Roger Johnson (1999), there are five basic elements that allow successful small-group learning:

- **Positive interdependence:** Students feel responsible for their own and the group's effort.
- **Face-to-face interaction:** Students encourage and support one another; the environment encourages discussion and eye contact.
- **Individual and group accountability:** Each student is responsible for doing their part; the group is accountable for meeting its goal.

- **Group behaviors:** Group members gain direct instruction in the interpersonal, social, and collaborative skills needed to work with others occurs.
- **Group processing:** Group members analyze their own and the group's ability to work together.

The authors of *Classroom Instruction that Works* cite research showing that organizing students in cooperative learning groups can lead to a gain as high as 28 percentiles in measured student achievement (Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock 2001). Other researchers report that cooperation typically results in higher group and individual achievement, healthier relationships with peers, more metacognition, and greater psychological health and self-esteem (Johnson and Johnson 1989).

An Islamic Studies classroom should be the ideal space for the students to exchange ideas, work together, and develop bonds that will last a life time. Students need to interact with the material, instructors, as well as each other. Although educators are aware of the cooperating strategies, many are not certain of how to incorporate the strategies into the Islamic Studies curriculum. I learned about cooperative learning strategies about two years. I am still new to the idea, but every strategy I have used has been incredibly effective and helpful in making the material more fun and lively for the students. And as an educator, I realized for the first time that I could have fun with the material as well.

My favorite cooperative learning strategy is the *Jigsaw Groups* (Johnson and Johnson 1989). This is a great way to break down the material, challenge the minds intellectually by incorporating HOT questions, and get the students to move around. According to *the Washington Post*, “movement is a powerful teaching tool, and when we as teachers thoughtfully incorporate physical elements into instruction, we elevate the learning experience.” (Strauss 2015) Students get an opportunity to read in groups, discuss, and use their bodies to teach and present the material to other students. According to a research conducted by Penn State Professor, children learn better when they figure things out for themselves and present to others. (McDade 2013). As a teacher, I only facilitate the activity and experience the learning as it unfolds at many different levels. It is a great way for me to take a step back and focus on the students who are really having trouble with the material, while simultaneously keeping my advanced students engaged.

As an Islamic Studies teacher for the past 5 years, I have had to do much lesson planning and curriculum modification to incorporate the cooperative learning strategies into my lesson plans. I am grateful to be a part of an administration team who want to see Islamic Studies just as intellectually challenging and engaging as any other core subject. It's a challenging task but at the same time, it is a very rewarding experience to be able to take the material and have the freedom to modify it to fit mine and student needs. When I started researching cooperative learning strategies, I was overwhelmed with the amount of information. However, the key is to pick a couple strategies and stick with them. (Johnson and Johnson 1989)

Based on my experience, it is best to pick a strategy that makes sense to you as an educator and you can have fun with. Once you are comfortable with it, students also enjoy it and fall in love with it as soon as you make it a routine. As I plan my lessons now, it is quite customary for me to take the information packed long lessons and break them down using the Jigsaw strategy. This strategy can be applied to any lesson. The teacher has to break down the lesson, create handouts to go along with each sub-section, assign each section to a group and let the student take-over from there. Students have to then discuss the section, answer questions, and come up with ways to present the material.

Any educator, who would like to find out more about the strategy and its success, simply has to look it up. There are many online resources and student feedback pointing to the effectiveness of this strategy. From personal experience, I have observed student participation and interest go up at least 40-50% more compared to when I taught the same lesson in a traditional "copy down my notes" method. Higher participation has led to better test scores and willingness to learn. I have seen students who are kinesthetic, visual, and oral learners improve their scores every time I have implemented this strategy into a lesson.

Moving on to creating graphic organizers; Islamic Studies textbooks often lack maps, tables, graphs, and any other form of visual cues. Gardner's *Theory of Multiple Intelligences* posits that students are better able to learn and internalize information when more than one learning modality is employed in an **instructional strategy**. Since **graphic organizers** present material through the visual and spatial modalities (and reinforce what is taught in the classroom), the use of graphic organizers helps students internalize what they are learning. (McKnight 2010)

It is imperative that an Islamic Studies teacher knows how to create graphic organizers and use them routinely to teach new concepts and review old ones. It is an effective way to break down concepts and help students remember important events and concepts. One can also get creative with graphic organizers and use them for multiple purposes. For example, I often have a graphic organizer to go along with any text that the student reads. I also use them for notes, as assessment tools, for group work, study-guides, and assignments.

Creative Writing

“I like nonsense, it wakes up the brain cells. Fantasy is a necessary ingredient in living.” -Dr. Seuss

Educators and parents emphasize and know the importance of good writing, but a very few focus on the creative writing aspect of it. And, even fewer focus on the importance of creative writing in Islamic Studies. Islamic Studies is a great area for creative writing. The Quran is filled with amazing stories and each one of them can have its own creative writing piece attached to it. According to a recent study, “creative writing” combines handwriting and cognitive writing processes, which are predominantly associated with memory, integrating information from diverse sources, and spontaneous [writing composition](#). The results emphasize that literary composition is based on very complex brain mechanisms and not restricted to a single brain area. (NeuroNet Learning 2013)

So, how can creative writing be a part of Islamic Studies? There are many ways to do it and it is up to the educator to find the one that works best for him or her. Creative writing can be a tool that can bring a dead story alive. To many students, the stories of the prophets, the important historic events are tales of the past. But, as practicing Muslim adults, we know that the truth is far from that.

Students enjoy the creative writing process. They can take a story or an event and have fun with it by adding dialogues to historic events, creating a scene, turning the story into a play, or simply keeping a journal. They take a story that is in the books and make it personal and memorable when they interact with through a creative writing process. ([Ciotti](#)) Many of my students love to read books, write stories, and are creatively intelligent. Once again, I have observed a student who is often bored light up when I attach a creative writing piece to and say the words, “now imagine...” as you can imagine the possibilities are limitless.

As an Islamic Studies teacher, my goal is always to make Islamic Studies more than just a subject that has HW and CW. I want them to learn from it, be challenged, and more importantly internalize it. I want my students to see Islamic Studies as a way of life and have fun with it. I want Islamic Studies to be the air that my students breathe. After all that was the case with the best of Muslims, who carried Islam with them everywhere they went.

Conclusion

It's interesting times for Muslims in this country. Our children are uniquely positioned to be the representatives of Islam in America. As educators, we need to enable them to be proud Muslims who are productive members of the society. They need to be prepared for the world that they will face. Through his teaching methods the prophet (pbuh) had instilled so much love for Islam in his students, that no matter who they faced, they were able to impress their competitors with the best of Islam. They were able to do so because they were the best and proud to be Muslims. In order for our children to be proud and balanced Muslims, our schools need to work outside and inside the classrooms. Firstly, psychologically we need to change our mindset towards Islamic Studies. And secondly, inside the classrooms, we need to use the most effective strategies to provide a balanced Islamic education.

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Be a Classroom Management Champ!

Hina Memon

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Classroom Organization and Management Planning Guide

Step One: Create a Mission Statement

Developing a statement of purpose establishes and clarifies the major goals and the mission of the classroom. An effective mission statement is focused, direct, clearly understood, and jargon-free; it allows class members to review values and ensures a common language on a daily basis. In aligning a mission statement students, as well as teachers, are able to create a clear focus for who they are, who they strive to be, and what actions need to be taken in order to reach their goal(s). Below is a sample classroom mission statement:

“We, the 3rd grade students at _____ school will study, learn, and make friends by listening to each other in order to gain knowledge and make ourselves the best people we can possibly be”

Step Two: Establishing Do's and Don'ts:

Classroom rules are the first line of defence against misbehaviour. They should never be left to chance or created as an afterthought or copied from the teacher next door. Classroom rules must be created thoughtfully and in a way that is relevant and meaningful to students. There should be 3 to 5 rules that are specific, observable and measurable, stated in positive terms, and convey the expected behaviour.

Guidelines for Writing Rules

Rules govern relationships with others, time, space and materials. They are consistent across situations and few in number. The eight guidelines below can help you develop *Effective rules for your classroom:*

1. **Maintaining positivity.** This encourages the desired behaviour. Although this is not always possible, most “don'ts” can be transformed to “do's.” (Even “No gum” can be stated as “Leave all gum at home.”)
2. **Constantly applicable.** Rules should be consistent across situations and all students; do not make exceptions.
3. **Attainable.** Make rules that are doable and students are capable of following. They must be within your students' mental abilities, physical abilities and maturity levels.

4. **Controllable.** Rules must be manageable and easy to detect when broken. Do not take up excessive classroom time to check all students for accordance with the rules.
5. **Comprehensible.** Rules must be understandable and stated simply, neatly and cleanly. The vocabulary used in the rules needs to be on the level of your students' grade and or ability level.
6. **Consistent with school rules.** Classroom rules should be created in accordance with general school rules. While classroom rules can be stricter than school rules, do not attempt to allow something in your classroom that the school has rules against, to maintain authority in the classroom.
7. **Stated behaviourally.** Rules can be easily understood and monitored when they begin with a verb, creating action statements. For example, "Leave all gum at home" or "Bring needed materials to class."

Examples of Effective Rules (specific, observable, measurable, positive)	Examples of Ineffective Rules
Work when you are supposed to.	Be ready to learn
Turn in completed assignments on time	Think before responding.
Walk in the hallways	Don't run.
Come to class on time, prepared, with all supplies and assignments.	Be a good student.
Sit in your seat unless you have permission to leave it.	Be responsible
Keep hands and feet to yourself	Respect others
Unless you have permission to speak, talk only about your work.	Do your best
Follow directions immediately	Respect authority

Check your rules:

- My rules are observable and measurable.

- My rules are stated positively.
- I have a minimal number of rules.
- The expected behaviours in my classroom are clearly stated.

Step Three: Identify, Elaborate and Develop Procedures

Classroom procedures are patterns for accomplishing classroom tasks. Procedures form routines that help the students meet expectations you have created in the rules. Rules and routines must be taught, practiced and enforced consistently in order to be effective in the classroom. It is important that procedures be written succinctly, positively, and in age-appropriate terminology.

When developing procedures, keep "Who, what, when, where, why, and how" in mind.

- WHO needs to be taught this procedure?
- WHO will teach this procedure?
- WHAT are the steps for successful completion of the procedure?
- WHERE is this procedure needed? WHAT is the procedure?
- WHEN is this procedure needed?
- WHEN will the procedure be taught?
- WHEN will the procedure be practiced?
- WHY is this procedure needed?
- HOW will you recognize procedure compliance?

Complete a student procedural plan sheet for each of the following:

- Asking teacher's assistance or attention
- Start of class
- Group work
- Independent work
- Obtaining materials and supplies
- Managing personal belongings (examples: hat, coat, backpack, etc.)
- Entering/exiting the classroom

Step Four: Develop a continuum of positive consequences to encourage appropriate behaviour.

Appropriate consequences must follow positive or negative behaviour. Effective consequences preserve the student's dignity, increase their internal locus of control (i.e., students see the link between what they do and what happens), and increase the student's motivation to follow the rules appropriately in future situations. Consequences work best when they are: (1) clear and specific (2) directly related to the rules and procedures broken/followed (3) arranged in a hierarchy of severity and (4) natural and logical. It's important to have a continuum of positive consequences, ranging from frequent to long term, to encourage and maintain appropriate behaviour.

Level 1 - free and frequent = used every day in the classroom involving praise, perhaps stickers... easy things that teachers normally deliver.

Level 2 – intermittent = more powerful and should be awarded less frequently, such as student of the week, occasional free time, etc.

Level 3 - strong and long term = year-long or month-long types of recognition that students can work for, perhaps a special trip, working in the office, serving as a peer assistant, etc.

Examples:

Free & Frequent	Intermittent	Strong & Long Term
Verbal Praise Smile Stickers Rubber Stamps Thumbs up Home notes	*Special Privileges *Extra Computer Time *Special Seat *Phone-call home	*Field trips *Special Projects *Recognition *Student of the Week *Honour Roll

Step Five: Develop a continuum of negative consequences to discourage inappropriate behaviour.

Consequences must be educative and not vindictive. A teacher's job is not to get back at the kids, but to decrease problem behaviour. In developing negative consequences, it is best to develop a negative consequence hierarchy in the classroom, ranging from least severe (e.g.,

rule reminder) to most severe (e.g., requiring an office referral).

Consequences for "repeat offenders" should start at the top of the hierarchy and move to more severe consequences. Major rule violations should receive more severe consequences than minor rule violations. When developing negative consequences, make sure that they are (1) logical, (2) natural to the classroom environment, (3) connected to classroom rules and (4) educative, not vindictive.

Example:

Level 1: Class rule reminder

Level 2: Individual rule reminder

Level 3: Environmental modification (e.g. change seat)

Level 4: Parent contact

Level 5: After school detention

Level 6: Office referral

Step Six: Develop a Crisis Plan

For a classroom teacher, key components of a crisis plan usually include getting immediate assistance for either behavioural or medical situations. Behavioural situations might include scenarios when a student's behaviour is out of control, potentially self-injurious, or potentially harmful to others in the environment. A medical emergency might include situations where a student is having a "sickling crisis" due to sickle cell disease, a seizure, or an asthma attack.

By pre-planning and developing well thought-out strategies for dealing with a crisis, a teacher can (a) reduce the uncertainty of what actions he or she may take; (b) increase their control of a situation; and (c) decrease their own anxiety, fear or frustration about handling a crisis.

When developing your plan, it is important to include the following:

- Who will seek assistance (e.g., the teacher, another student)
- Who will be notified (e.g., the office, the nurse)
- What you want the rest of the students to do during the crisis (e.g., get help, continue working, give the student in crisis some space by backing away)

- What you will do after the crisis is over (e.g., talk to the student, contact parents)

Example Behaviour Crisis Plan

1. Send designated student to the office with Behaviour Crisis Card
2. Send rest of class to Miss Burke's room.
3. Help crisis student re-establish self-control.
4. Bring students back to class once control is re-established.
5. Follow up with phone call home and Crisis-Follow-up Sheet

Example Medical Crisis Plan

1. Send designated student to office/nurse with Medical Crisis Card.
2. If needed, have rest of students help with furniture (e.g. move if student is having seizure)
3. Monitor student
4. Call ambulance if needed
5. Reassure student after episode is over.
6. Fill out crisis follow-up sheet and notify parents

Step Seven: Develop an Action Plan

Action plans can contain several key items.

1. **A toolkit.** These are the posters, forms, and materials that a teacher will need in order to implement a behaviour management plan. Posters clearly display any procedures that the students need to learn, forms include behaviour and medical crisis forms, and post cards are an easy reward to send home when students have successfully followed the behaviour management plan.
2. **Lessons for teaching the plan to students.** Teachers will need to take out time to teach specific rules and procedures that the students are expected to follow. An action plan can include the lessons, a timeline for when these lessons will occur, and the order in which they will be taught.

3. **A method for teaching the plan to parents.** Behaviour management plans are usually more effective if the parents are involved and informed of classroom expectations. Writing an action plan that gives parents a role in this process is very important.
4. **Recognition activities for students.** These are for students who demonstrate success in the plan, because they deserve to be recognized. A behaviour management plan will be more successful if students are rewarded for following it (remember all those positive consequences!). Building recognition activities into an action plan is just one more reminder for teachers to reinforce that positive behaviour.
5. **Booster sessions for students.** A good action plan will include pre-planned lessons throughout the year where the comprehensive components of the behaviour management plan are reviewed with all students. Periodic review helps to remind everyone of expected behaviour and keeps the plan running smoothly.

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RTI IN OUR ISLAMIC SCHOOLS

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to identify Response to Intervention (**RTI**) as a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. The **RTI** process begins with high-quality differentiated instruction and universal screening of all children in the general education classroom. RTI is a critical and crucial component missing in our current day Islamic schools. Differentiation in the classroom is the first necessary step in the RTI process. Within this paper, research was reviewed to support the idea that differentiation is a fundamental component in the RTI process. Approaching differentiation in our educational systems require researching, understanding, and implementing the RTI multi-tier approach in its entirety. Based on this research, we can conclude that the RTI method, with all of its components, requires an understanding of what high-quality differentiated looks like in the classroom.

Statement of Problem

Response to Intervention (RTI) was originally designed as a process to help identify students with learning disabilities. RTI is an approach which identifies students early and provides interventions and targeted instruction at increasingly levels of intensity. Differentiated instruction is at the heart of RTI and it holds the greatest level of importance in this process. The biggest problem our Islamic schools are currently facing is having the ability to understand the dynamic role differentiation plays in the RTI process. Differentiated instruction provides our students with the greatest opportunities for academic success. Current research supports that differentiated instruction, when fully implemented and understood, can significantly improve student achievement (Goddard & Goddard, 2007). Response to Intervention begins with effective and differentiated instruction to all students in the general education classroom. Understanding the connection between effective differentiated instruction and providing interventions to struggling students is absolutely essential for our Islamic schools.

Review of Literature/Research

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) was signed into law in December 2004. This version of the law allowed for educators to utilize RTI as a process for identifying students with learning disabilities (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). RTI can now be

implemented in the early primary years and utilized as an effective approach to identify students at risk.

RTI allows for educators to meet the individual needs of students and closely monitor their individual progress. The student's progress is closely monitored at each tier of RTI to identify the level of intensity required for research-based instruction and interventions. Tier 1 of RTI consists of high quality classroom instruction. Differentiated instruction, such as flexible grouping is provided at the tier 1 level and helps support diverse student learners. According to Betty Hollas, Differentiation is when you consistently and proactively create your students with different pathways to be successful (Hollas, 2003).

The needs of the student are used to create interventions that use research-based methods to address the needs of the student (Johnson, Mellard, Fuchs, & McKnight, 2006). Research suggests that our RTI process must begin in the classroom with differentiation being provided in the areas of content, process, and product. However, if a student requires more support than what differentiated instruction can provide, a student would be considered for tier 2. Tier 2 provides students with research based interventions in a small classroom environment alongside additional targeted approaches in the general education classroom.

When a student doesn't respond to the interventions provided in tier 2, the student will be considered for tier 3. Students receive a more specialized and individualized targeted instruction plan, which may include special education or one on one instruction.

Methods

Progress monitoring is the fundamental method that leads to intervention. Consistent progress monitoring of students in all tier is the fundamental approach in RTI. There are two primary methods of RTI; the problem solving method and the standard treatment protocol method (Fuchs & Fuchs 2006).

The problem solving method can be implemented primarily in the general education classroom. It basically identifies a problem, utilize a researched based intervention to address the problem, and modify and adapt the interventions to suit the individual needs of the student. This method is very individualized and focuses on solving the learning problem.

The standard treatment protocol method is adapted for all students to utilize small group instruction to address their learning deficits. This method is primarily provided outside of the general education classroom in a small intervention classroom. Students that require additional

intervention move through the tiers as needed and the level of intensity is increased at every tier level. It is important for every tier to be completed properly in this method.

Regardless of which method is utilized, monitoring the progress of each individual student is critical. The school must have a standard which defines what is considered progress or responsiveness. Measuring the responsiveness of the students with the standards helps determine the effectiveness of each method. RTI allows educators to utilize data to drive collaborative decision making utilizing both recommended methods (Feifer, 2008).

Implementation

RTI is an approach that has very broad guidelines and methods. In an effort to fully implement an effective RTI program in our schools, guidelines need to be further clarified and implemented. RTI allows for a lot of flexibility from educators and this could easily cause confusion and errors in the effective implementation of this approach. Our schools need to implement guidelines and protocol for each component of RTI, such as the components of progress monitoring, a timeframe for each tier, and guidelines for data collection.

Differentiation can only be implemented after RTI is clearly implemented and defined. Guidelines for a specific protocol for differentiation and a reasonable timeframe during the tier 1 phase should be established prior to implementation. Our Islamic schools should choose a method or approach of RTI, establish clear standards, and create a protocol for implementation. Differentiation should be encouraged on all tier levels and our teachers should be required to constantly be developed in this area.

Implementation requires our schools choosing a valid and research based assessment tool for all grade levels. Upon adequately choosing and utilizing an assessment tool, our schools should create an effective progress monitoring protocol for all tier levels. Professional development should be provided for all staff members to assist them with differentiation and to support their understanding with RTI. Lastly, our schools should create collaborative teams within the school and on a national level. We will only truly benefit from RTI if we decide to work together.

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Understanding Sexual Violence & Working Toward Prevention: A Resource for Professionals Working with Youth

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Introduction

In light of recent sexual assault allegations in numerous Muslim communities throughout the United States and Canada, it is clear that the need for increased awareness and education on sexual violence is long overdue. Muslim communities can play a key role in working to create safer communities for all and reducing the prevalence of sexual violence. As such, the Muslim tradition is rooted in the concepts of justice and commitment to serving others, and these overarching values form the foundation for Muslim leadership roles in social justice efforts throughout the world. Sexual assault and sexual abuse are human rights violations that occur much too often – with 1 in 6 women being a victim of sexual violence sometime in her lifetime. As long as people remain unaware of the root cause and extent of sexual violence, the cycle of abuse will continue and the trauma and suffering experienced by survivors will not end. Muslims can be both a vehicle for raising awareness and advocating on behalf of victims of sexual violence by adopting a victim-centric approach.

The invisibility of sexual violence against all people, including women, men, children, and LGBTQ people has been an issue of concern for many community activists. The problem is not specific to one community or culture, but rather is a reality throughout the world. Statistical evidence cannot realistically portray the occurrence of sexual violence, as many victims are silenced by the stigmas associated with sexual abuse. This is particularly true in the Muslim community. Research and culturally-sensitive resources and services are still relatively limited in the Muslim community, as studies of relevant issues, such as domestic violence, have only gained traction in recent years. As a result, the community has been slow in creating safe spaces that also tend to the unique cultural and religious needs of sexual assault survivors—most mosques, Islamic schools, and community centers do not have professionals and leaders equipped to address and counsel survivors. Moreover, the cultural barriers to addressing these issues for Muslims often prevent Muslim survivors from pursuing or trusting the secular resources and professionals that do exist.

As mentioned earlier, the Rape, Incest & Abuse National Network estimates that approximately 1 in 6 women are victims of sexual violence sometime in their lifetime.

There is no reason to believe that the prevalence is any different in Muslim communities. In fact, the unfortunate reality is that sexual violence happens much more frequently in the Muslim community than is addressed, and has profound implications on an individual's physical, spiritual, social and mental well-being.

This paper will provide readers with background information on sexual violence, and the importance of developing culturally-sensitive information and services. Additionally, it will offer readers with recommendations on how to begin effectively addressing this highly sensitive, yet neglected topic in the community. We hope this paper will be useful in helping you understand the issue, educate your colleagues, family and friends about the harms of sexual violence and work with them to identify ways to take action toward change.

Sexual Violence 101: What is Sexual Violence?

All unwanted, nonconsensual acts – whether harassment, abuse, or assault, is considered sexual violence and morally abhorrent and a crime. The key word here is nonconsensual – which means that one of the two parties involved has not given consent to – or agreed to – what is happening. Put differently, one of the people involved is being forced to engage in the sexual activity without their permission.

There are many types of sexual violence, and we have included some important definitions for you below.

Sexual Harassment: unwanted sexual attention that one person inflicts on another. Can be verbal, non-verbal, or visual. Examples include:

- Subtle pressure for sexual activity
- Patting or pinching
- Deliberately brushing against one another
- 'friendly' arm around the shoulder
- sexually explicit photos or pictures hanging for others to see

Sexual abuse: an act of non-consensual sexual conduct* used by one person to exert power and control over another. Sexual conduct is any intentional touching or fondling by the victim or the accused, either directly or through clothing of the sex organs, anus, or breast of the victim or perpetrator, or any part of the body of a child under 13 years of age, for the purpose of sexual gratification or arousal of the victim and/or perpetrator. Examples include:

- Molesting
- Groping
- Fondling

Sexual Assault: any act of nonconsensual sexual penetration used by one person to exert power and control over another. Sexual penetration is any contact, however slight, between the sex organ or anus of one person by an object, the sex organ, mouth or anus of another person, or any intrusion, however slight, or any part of the body of one person or of any animal, including but not limited to cunnilingus, fellatio, or anal penetration. Examples include:

- Rape
- Attempted Rape
- Forced Oral Sex

Child Sexual Abuse: any sexual activity between an adult and a minor (under the age of 17). Examples include:

- Rape or attempted rape
- Touching the child's body or making the child touch someone else's
- Sexual contact with a child
- Someone watching or photographing a child in sexual situations
- Someone exposing his/her own body to a child
- Someone exposing a child to pornographic material

Consent: Both parties involved have agreed to the sexual encounter AND either party can decide AT ANY TIME that they no longer consent to continuing. Consenting to one behavior does not obligate one to consent to other behaviors. For example, giving permission to be kissed does not give permission for the other person to go beyond that, such as remove clothing. There are several situations when consent cannot happen (even if there is a yes):

- If one of the parties is a minor (under 17)
- If one of the parties is under the influence of a substance or alcohol
- If one of the parties is in a position of authority (teacher, doctor, law enforcement, etc)
- If one of the parties is mentally incapable

Now that we have explored a little bit about what sexual violence is, let's also briefly explore what sexual violence is not. First, sexual violence is not about the sex, but rather it is about the power and control an abuser wants to exert over his or her victim. Although it is commonly believed that those who commit sexual crimes are seeking sexual gratification, this is in fact not the case. Sexual assault is not at all about sexual gratification, but rather about the abuser exerting power over another. Second, in Muslim communities in particular, sexual violence is spoken about in the same context as zina (fornication or adultery). We will explore this concept a little more in depth further in the paper, but it is important to clearly distinguish between the act of zina and the act of sexual violence. While both are sins, they are drastically different by one main factor: zina is an act of *consensual sex* between two people, while sexual violence is the exact opposite, and is also a crime punishable by incarceration.

Sexual violence occurs against men, women, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) people, boys and girls. Perpetrators are usually in a position of power relative to the victim. Sexual violence often begins very subtly and with emotional manipulation. Most of the time, the perpetrator is not a stranger, but rather someone in the family or community, and works in such a way that he or she gains the victim's trust and makes subtle advances at

times when the victim is most vulnerable. In fact, more than 93% of the time, the perpetrator is someone known to the victim. Coercion techniques may include physical force, but often include subtler techniques such as psychological intimidation, blackmail, guilt-trips, and sometimes even praise, rewards, and gifts. Perpetrators are incredibly creative and manipulative, especially in cases of child sexual abuse. Many times, they are so successful in gaining their victims trust, love and respect, during a period that is known as the grooming period, that victims are no longer able to identify that they are in fact being abused.

Frequency of Sexual Violence and its Effects on Survivors

According to the Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network (RAINN), one in every six American women has been the victim of attempted or completed rape. About 3% of men experience attempted or completed rape. Still more disappointingly, about 15% of victims are under the age of 12, while 29% are ages 12-17 and 44% are under the age of 18. Seven percent of girls in grades 5-8 and 12% of girls in grades 9-12 report having been sexually abused. The Centers for Disease Control estimates that as high as 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys are sexually abused or assaulted by the age of 18. It is important to also note that sexual assault is also one of the

most underreported crimes in the United States – with more than 68% of crimes not ever being reported to law enforcement. As such, the above statistics do not include the many more who do not report their abuse to anyone, or who are unable to determine that they are, in fact, being abused. More than 90% of victims know their attacker, with family members constituting approximately one-third of all attackers.

Survivors of sexual violence can face a multitude of emotional, mental, social, physical, and spiritual after-effects of experiencing sexual violence. Victims are more likely to suffer from depression and post-traumatic stress disorder as compared with those who have not been abused. Specifically, victims of sexual violence are:

- 3 times more likely to suffer from depression
- 6 times more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder

- 13 times more likely to abuse alcohol
- 26 times more likely to abuse drugs
- 4 times more likely to contemplate suicide.

There are several significant emotional and social results of being a survivor of sexual violence. The responses may be stronger in some survivors than others, depending on the individuals' life experiences. Responses include, but are not limited to: flashbacks, anger, inability to set boundaries, grieving, guilt, shame, blame, low self-esteem, inability to trust others, and difficulty in engaging in sexual activity.

Additionally, survivors of sexual violence often experience other physical effects long after an attack. Many of these are the body's reaction to the experience, while others are a result of the depression and low self-esteem that results from sexual violence. Possible physical conditions include sleeping disorders, eating disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, self-harm/self-injury, suicide, unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and somatic body memories (headaches, migraines, stomach difficulties, teeth grinding, unexplained pain, dizziness, and hot/cold flashes).

Barriers to Disclosing

As mentioned earlier, sexual violence is the most underreported crimes in the country – with nearly 70% of crimes never making it to law enforcement. Research shows that underreporting is even higher in communities of color. In our own anecdotal evidence, we would estimate those percentages being as high as 85% or even 90% of sexual assaults in the Muslim community do not make it to law enforcement. Before we can work toward prevention of these crimes, it is crucial to understand the barriers to reporting, and to work toward eliminating those barriers. The safer we can make it for survivors to report, the more perpetrators will be exposed and held accountable. As such, the barriers facing survivors include the following:

Shame & self-blame. The number one reason survivors do not report is that they feel shame. Often times, survivors feel as if they did something to provoke the assault and that they could

have done something different to prevent it.

Victim-blaming. The second reason survivors do not report is that they fear they will be blamed for what happened. If they know that will be the first (or only) response from others, they may feel paralyzed from coming forward. Examples of victim-blaming: why was she dressed that way? What was she alone with him? What did she do to tempt him?

Perpetrator is someone the survivor loves and respects. Nearly 90% of the time, the perpetrator is known to the survivor – either a family member, or a community member, neighbor, etc. Victims often struggle with turning their loved ones into the police, or having them arrested and sent to jail.

Survivor fears the perpetrator. Another reason victims do not report is because they fear the perpetrator will cause further harm to them or their loved ones.

Fear of not being believed. The survivor is afraid no one will believe them, and in some cases has tried to tell someone and has not been believed. In other cases, the perpetrator has told them as such. This fear is especially greater when the perpetrator is in a position of leadership or enjoys fame. Often, when the perpetrator is a religious leader, that fear of not being believed is even greater, as many would immediately ask, “how can someone so religious do commit such a crime?”

Perpetrator is in a position of power or leadership. It is not easy to stand up to a perpetrator, let alone one who is in a position of power or leadership. Often times, perpetrators use their position as a way to manipulate their victims into remaining silent.

Legal process is long, exhausting and re-traumatizing. During the investigation, survivors are often relentlessly questioned and find giving testimony to be re-traumatizing. Moreover, the defense often tries to inflict the same kind of victim blaming the survivor has feared in order to paint the victim in a negative light.

Survivor is a child or doesn't identify as a victim. Many children do not have the language

or tools to identify abuse when it is happening. Moreover, often times, survivors don't recognize the abuse because it's sandwiched in btw lots of love and devotion. How could someone they love and loves them really be abusing them? Or they don't recognize it because they're in denial that they are a victim.

In some families or communities, sex and sexual abuse are not talked about openly. As such, the survivor may feel it to be immodest to bring such issues up.

Survivors fear social consequences. Those who are a part of close-knit, cultural or faith communities may fear being outcast, dividing the community, or never getting married.

Survivor comes from a community that values forgiveness and covering up of sins. There are faith communities that encourage victims of crimes to show mercy and forgive their perpetrators, or to protect them by not exposing their crimes.

Myths about Sexual Assault in the Muslim Community

Among many of the important findings during our work in raising awareness on sexual violence, are that the myths and misinformation about sexual violence are rampant in the Muslim community. In this section, we hope to explore some of those myths and facts to clarify some of these myths.

1. It is immodest to talk openly about sex and sexual abuse.

It is not immodest to talk about sex and sexual abuse. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) encouraged everyone to ask questions and take care of their bodies. Matters regarding the body were seen as natural and nothing to be ashamed of. The need to uphold privacy and modesty should not be at the expense of one's personal safety. Privacy can and should still be maintained even if one discloses.

2. If someone discloses that he/she has been sexually abused or sexually assaulted, no one will marry him/her because he/she is not a virgin.

Because the sexual purity is so highly regarded in the Muslim community, those who have been sexually abused/assaulted are (wrongly) stigmatized.

3. Sexual violence is a sin just like premarital sex and adultery.

The act of *zina* (premarital sex/sex outside of marriage) is the act of engaging in extramarital consensual sexual intercourse, while sexual violence is where consent is inherently absent.

4. Religious scholars do not sin or commit crimes.

Religious scholars are not infallible. While they are often held to a higher standard of moral code, they are human beings with flaws and are capable of committing both sins and crimes.

5. If you want God to forgive your transgressions, you should show mercy to those who transgressed against you.

In Islam, forgiveness for a crime is incumbent upon the perpetrator seeking forgiveness from the victim and the victim forgiving in return. Sexual violence is a crime against another individual, and it is up to the victim to forgive the act, not the community. The

concept of forgiveness should not be manipulated to silence a victim and protect the accused.

6. If you were drunk or had sex before marriage and were sexually assaulted, you deserved it and God is punishing you.

This is another tactic that the community uses to shame and blame the victim. Yes, Islam does not permit alcohol, substance abuse or sex outside of marriage, but that does not justify the act of violence against another. Islamic tradition states that suffering is not tied to sin. Plenty of people suffer who never deserved it. Similarly, plenty of people do wrong and do not ever see the consequences of those actions in this world. This world is not a place of retribution, as Muslims believe the afterlife is for that.

7. It is impossible for a person to sexually assault a married partner.

It is absolutely unlawful for a man to harm his wife in any way. In Islam, both spouses are granted rights and responsibilities. One of those rights is the right to sexual intercourse (for both spouses). Often times, this is misinterpreted to mean that the man has unlimited sexual access to his wife, and that consent isn't really needed. Islam highly values the institution of marriage, encourages both spouses to act with kindness, love and mercy with each other, and consent to sexual activity is very much a part of the equation. So while the rights to intimacy and sex exist, there is no implication whatsoever that the spouse may seek this right violently or forcefully.

8. If you wear hijab and dress modestly, you will be protected from sexual abuse and rape.

Hijab or any other clothing does not protect a woman from being sexually assaulted or abused. Often times, assailants have attacked fully-clothed women. Furthermore, the rates of sexual assault are not lower in much of the Muslim world, where women are fully covered every day.

9. If you do not date or have a boyfriend, you will be protected from sexual abuse and rape.

Although some sexual assault does occur between intimate partners, sexual assault can

happen even if one does not date or have a boyfriend. The assailant can be anyone – a friend, neighbor, relative, or a stranger.

10. If you only interact with other females and only close male relatives, you can prevent from being sexually abused or raped.

Although an overwhelming number of assailants are men, women can be abusers too. There have been situations where a woman has assaulted another woman or girl. Similarly, many assailants have also been close male relatives, such as one's father, uncle or brother.

11. As long as a person wasn't raped (ie there was no penetration), any other abuse and molestation is not really that big a deal.

Many times the community minimizes other forms of sexual abuse other than rape. Often, child sexual abuse cases in particular do not involve penetration at all, but are still traumatic for the victims. All forms of sexual abuse and assault are crimes and are extremely traumatic for the victim involved.

12. You need 4 witnesses to prove sexual assault.

Many have incorrectly cited the need for there to be four witnesses. The act of *zina*, which is the act of engaging in extramarital consensual sexual intercourse, is what requires four witnesses, and the act of penetration must have been witnessed. The rationale behind this is to make it nearly impossible to prove adultery, practically speaking, because it is unlikely four witnesses would exist. This is also to prevent personal sexual sins from entering the public sphere, unless they are so egregious that at least four people have witnessed it. On the other hand, the same standard does not apply to sexual assault, a crime of physical and psychological violence. In these instances, sex is a weapon, not a mutual act of lust. Just as

assault, kidnapping, and other crimes do not require four witnesses, neither does sexual assault. Indeed, such a standard would be absurd and unjust, and those who seek to impose such a standard on victims of sexual assault are being unjust.

13. Everyone deserves 70 excuses. We should give perpetrators 70 excuses.

Some Muslims in the community have quoted the hadith of providing 70 excuses for a person. This narration of the Prophet Muhammad (S) states: “If a friend among your friends errs, make seventy excuses for them. If your hearts are unable to do this, then know that the shortcoming is in your own selves.” An error is a mistake. Sexual violence is not about mistakes, but about a crime committed against another individual in which a person’s inalienable rights were violated.

14. Exposing sexual assault or sexual abuse is giving more fuel to add to Islamophobes’ fire.

Many blame the victims for coming forward. It is important to remember that the victim has every right to seek justice as the Qur’anic verse (4:148) mentions, "God does not like that evil be publicized except if one is wronged." Here, whether the crime is committed by an unknown person, or a leader in a higher position, the victim has every right to come forward and seek justice. Speaking up against an injustice is a part of Islam. Speaking up for those who are in weaker positions and have had an injustice occur against them is also mandated by God. The Quran says “Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to God, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor (4:135).” The Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him said: “Fear God in your treatment of the weak, slaves, and women.

Rape Culture

Rape culture is when rape is prevalent and pervasive, sanctioned and maintained through fundamental attitudes and beliefs about gender, sexuality and violence. A culture in which society encourages, tolerates, excuses and maintains violence

against women. Conditions for such a culture to exist include:

- Traditional gender roles that are enforced for what is viewed as acceptable masculine and feminine behavior.
- Sexuality is narrowly defined and dictated by men's desires and fantasies. Men cannot control their sexual impulses and it is the role of women to satisfy men. Women are viewed as the objects of male sexuality and are not supposed to enjoy sex for their own pleasure.
- Violence, particularly against women, is an acceptable means of dealing with social control and resolving conflict.

Second, rape is seen as inevitable and not preventable. Rape is an expression of the sexual norms of our culture - men as dominant over the insubordinate women.

Finally, rape is seen not as a cultural practice, but as an individual act between a man and a

Historical Roots of Rape as a Form of Social Control

There is evidence that collective societies existed without rape some 3,500-5000 years ago. These were societies in which violence against women was not the norm and women were seen as equal in strength to men.

Yet, there has been a clear system of patriarchy within the past 500 Years. As such, many societies historically have been controlled by men, elevating the masculine role and diminishing the female role. The domination of men over property and wealth has been supported by the state going back to classical Greece and Rome. Women have been considered property. Additionally, the economic structure of capitalism renders everything a commodity to be bought and sold; this includes women and girls (pornography, trafficking).

Consequently, women have historically been reduced to the status of property - their father's before marriage, their husband's after marriage. If a woman was raped, it was seen as a crime against the male she belonged and if there was punishment for the rapist, money was paid to the male who owned the woman and the rapist could marry the woman he raped.

Finally, the conquering of new land through war have included sanctioned rape of the real property, women and land, and of the conquered land, as we saw in

Bosnia and Afghanistan. **Rape as a form of Contemporary Social Control**

While rape has many historical roots in both peaceful and war-torn societies, there are many examples of it as a form of contemporary social control, using the fear of rape to keep women from sharing the world equally with men.

For example, many activities restricted or controlled for women, such as going out at night, going out alone, camping alone, going to a bar alone, freedom to dress as she chooses, and being in an all male environment. This includes warnings at a very young age from family and older adults about keeping themselves safe and recommendations to take Self defense classes. Put differently, women are encouraged to be proactive in protecting themselves from rape: from considering their attire, to dating, drinking, flirting, to time restrictions on leaving homes, and job choices eliminated.

The above social controls are further reinforced by society through rape myths. These myths hold women responsible for rape and encourage victim-blaming, such as:

- She turned him on
- Boys will be boys
- She went out with him
- She kissed him
- She shouldn't have been dressed like that

Secondly, these myths define conditions when it is understood (and expected) that women will be raped and therefore should be held responsible, such as:

- Being out late at night
- Drinking with strangers
- Being dress in provocative or sexy attire.

Finally, we would be remiss not to acknowledge that the media plays a significant role in promoting rape culture. In all forms of media, are three main messages about women:

1. The cause of male problems is the female: women manipulate men by taking them to the cleaners emotionally and financially. Women cheat and take advantage of otherwise nice guys.
2. Women resist sexual advances by men, but it is not to be taken seriously; women say no, but they really mean yes.
3. Women get mixed messages about being sexual: slut, shore, bitch, tease. Likewise, there are a number of equally strong messages about men in media, such as:

1. Aggressive men, who are powerful and in control, are glamorized, glorified and rewarded.
2. Masculinity is identified with dominance, aggression, and lack of emotions other than anger.
3. The image of masculinity is reinforced through narrowly defining male emotions and placing a high value on competition and winning on all costs.
4. Feminine qualities expressed in men are deemed undesirable.
5. When boys don't conform to images portrayed by the media, they are ridiculed (i.e. called fag, punk, bitch, girl, wimp).

Rape is not Inevitable

Recently, more progressive sexual assault laws have expanded the definition of a victim and perpetrator, which means:

- Women can be rape victims of their husbands.
- Children can be rape victims by their parents or caretakers.
- Prostitutes can be rape victims
- Prior relationship between the victim and the perpetrator does not preclude the charge of acquaintance or date rape.
- Lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender individuals can be rape victims
- Adolescents and children who commit rape are culpable for their actions.

Additionally, more public attention is now given for the crime of rape. For example, faith leaders, such as clergy and priests, are being punished for past and present sexual violence. Disclosure of the widespread use of rape during war is being seen as a war crime.

Professionals who exploit their position of authority are being brought to trial on sex charges with loss of professional license and the ability to practice their profession. Finally, rape by professional and collegiate athletes and entertainers are making the headlines and being prosecuted.

What to do when Someone Discloses: A Step-by-step Guide

The act of reporting is one of the single most courageous acts ever. The revictimization is so overwhelming, the social, emotional and physical consequences can be so overwhelming, that many find it nearly impossible to report. Because of this, the likelihood of it being a false report are slim to none, with only about 2%-8% of reports being false. As such, we have included for you a list of things you can do when someone discloses to you that they have been

sexually abused or assaulted.

- 1) **Believe them.** The first, and most important thing you can do for any survivor when they disclose to you that they have been abused or assaulted, is to believe them.
- 2) **Encourage professional support.** Meet them where they are rather than telling them what they should be doing. Of course, the most ideal course of action is to go to a hospital to get examined and go to the police to file a report. However, the survivor may not be mentally ready to do this just yet. Remember that being sexually assaulted is an act that strips the victim of his/her control – it is much more important to empower them to make their own decisions rather than making decisions for them. Of course, this is more applicable to older victims, and not young children.
- 3) **Report if you are a mandated reporter.** The guidelines for mandated reporting and who is a mandated reporter differ by state, but generally, mandated reporters are: teachers, principals and other school personnel, social workers, physicians, nurses and other health care professionals, law enforcement, clergy, and board members.
- 4) **Maintain the victim's confidentiality, especially if the victim is a minor.** Nobody needs to know the identity of the victim and there are crisis centers and advocates that are trained to help you continue to offer the individual support they need without having to reveal their identity to others.
- 5) **Offer victim-centric approaches.** If both the victim and perpetrator are part of the same institution, make sure the victim feels safe while the investigation proceeds. For example, the a victim in a school may need:
 - a. To request a schedule or classroom change

- b. To request a specialized homework or exam schedule from their teachers without drawing attention to their situation
- c. Additional counseling sessions

What you can do to Prepare your Institution to Properly Respond to such Allegations

- 1) **Create policies and procedures.** Bring best practices regarding policies such as making sure you have up-to-date manuals, security cameras, and other staff and facility policies in place that put in place preventative measures in your institutions. Make sure that your staff is reminded of these policies, and that these policies are readily available and accessible on your institution's website.
- 2) **Hire a counselor specially trained to address complaints.** If your institution already doesn't have a trained social services professional or counselor, consider hiring one. If funding is an issue, consider sharing such a professional between two or more institutions or partnering with a local crisis center to serve this role until your institution is ready to bring one on full-time.
- 3) **Develop a procedure to collect anonymous reports.** Often times, people do not report abuse that they suffered or witnessed, out of fear of being penalized for coming forward with that information. Not having a procedure for anonymous reports can be a significant barrier for someone who has endured or witnessed something. Many universities are now developing a system where students can submit anonymous complaints to a confidential service.
- 4) **Develop a procedure to resolve complaints.** Once you receive a

complaint, it is imperative to address it in a timely manner. Not considering it seriously or delaying a response can be very disheartening to a victim, and also gives the perpetrator the opportunity to continue to victimize others. Work with a crisis center or other trained professionals in developing an objective and fair process to address victim complaints in a way that still honors the privacy and needs of the victim.

- 5) **Have students and staff and faculty engage in annual trainings, as well as ongoing awareness and education efforts throughout the year.** It is important to note that simply having one training a year is not going to prevent sexual assault from occurring at your institution. Preventing sexual assault requires a shift in the organizational culture and tone, and it is necessary to have ongoing awareness and education efforts throughout the year, and not just at the beginning of the year.

We recognize that many Islamic institutions may not have the budget to incorporate all of these changes at once, and so we recommend an excellent way to fill the gap is to partner with their local rape crisis center and social services to help meet those needs while enough funding and resources are secured to bring such services in-house.

Resources

Hotlines

[National Sexual Assault Line](#) - 1-800-656-HOPE

[Rape Crisis Hotline](#) 1-888-293-2080

DCFS Number for Mandated Reporters - 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873)

Illinois Domestic & Sexual Violence Hotline – 312-745-3401 toll-free number: 1-877-863-6338

Illinois Crisis Centers – List

www.icasa.org/crisiscenters.asp

National Crisis Centers - <http://www.nsvrc.org/organizations>

Statewide Organizations - <http://www.nsvrc.org/organizations/state-and-territory-coalitions>

Victim Support Organizations - <http://www.nsvrc.org/organizations/victim-survivor-support-organization>

National Organizations

National Sexual Violence Resource Center, www.nsvrc.org Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, rainn.org Peaceful Families Project, peacefulfamilies.org

Community-based organizations (Chicago)

Rape Victim Advocates, rapevictimadvocates.org Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault, icasa.org Arab American Family Services, aafsil.org

Hamdard Center for Health and Human Services, hamdardcenter.org Turning Point, turningpointmacomb.org

Toolkits and Other Resources

Engaging Muslim Communities In Ending Sexual Exploitation
<http://heartwomenandgirls.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Toolkit-Ending-Sex-Exp.pdf>

Talking to Kids about Sexual Violence: A Parent's Guide to Age-Appropriate Conversations
<http://bit.ly/ParentSVtalk>

HEART Women & Girls Publications, <http://heartwomenandgirls.org/publications/>

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Special credit to Ayesha Butt and Dr. Shabana Mir for their insight to these myths.

Stop Telling Me What to Do: Brain-Based Methods to Get Others to Think

Jelena Naim & Fouzia Haddad

Jelena Naim is the Principal of Al-Falah Academy, a Pre-K-through HS Islamic school in Atlanta, GA. She has over 20 years of experience as teacher, instructional coach, director of curriculum and instruction, and a member of the founding team of a public charter school as well as of a network of private Islamic schools in the metro Atlanta area. She and her husband have 4 adult children, and are enthusiastic campers and fans of the national and state parks, having visited 49 states in their family camper.

Fouzia Haddad is one of the founding administrators of Al-Falah Academy, a Pre-K to High School Islamic school in metro Atlanta, GA. She joined the staff in the first year of operations, 2010, and has held increasing responsibilities including After School Enrichment Program Coordinator, PTO Liaison, and Business Manager. She has been the Director of Student Services since 2013, and is currently responsible as the Enrollment Coordinator, managing our rapidly-increasing enrollment (up 400% in 5 years), and the Database Administrator for our digital gradebook as well as for our 3x/year MAP assessment administrations. She has a Master's of Business Administration and worked for several years as a Project Manager for international companies from her base in Morocco.

As principals, we are responsible for building a team of staff members who are hired for their expertise in a particular area, whether as assistant principals, subject or grade-level specialist teachers, or office administrators of various levels. We orchestrate this diverse group to function as a team for the betterment of students. We must bring out the best performance in others by coaching them, and we are called upon to solve conflicts between others.

Traditional advice given to handle “difficult” employees is typically focused on training the thinking of the supervisor: “remain calm,” “define goals and expected results,” “clarify actions required for proper completion of goals,” “define the ideal solution.” But this focus often does not work—not for challenging personalities, not for millennials, and frankly not for anyone we expect to be engaged in their work.

We have found a resource that has a successful track record and is based on brain research regarding how coaching or advice is processed by our brain. *Quiet Leadership* is a 6-step format developed by neuroleadership coach, teacher, and public speaker David Rock, CEO of Results Coaching Systems.

We have used this approach with “difficult” employees and others, and have found that this respectful, non-confrontational, yet effective approach has the potential to increase productivity, morale, and job satisfaction. *Quiet Leadership* techniques have the advantage of gaining time as principals avoid getting into the details and drama of a variety of school scenarios, while at the same time empowering staff to be more metacognitive in their thinking, and gaining insights themselves that push them more quickly towards solutions they are motivated to undertake.

Our first step is to see how the structure and purposes of the human brain lead us to the *Quiet Leadership* approach. **What is the goal of our brain?** In asking a random sampling of educator colleagues this question, we typically receive answers focusing on thinking, logic, and rational thought. Although we humans like to think that we are primarily rational, thinking creatures, we actually are not. We are *feeling creatures* who think, NOT *thinking creatures* who feel. The emotional regions of the brain are the oldest in terms of human development, the largest, and the most active. When we keep in mind that the primary purpose of the brain is the

survival and **reproduction** of its owner, we see that the brain's functions that are the most deeply embedded reside in the limbic system, which is the oldest area of the cortex, the area that triggers *fight or flight* instincts essential to human survival.

Brain-based research reminds us of *Fitra*, the natural disposition of humankind, because it discovers the structures and patterns of the brain that Allah SWT created in each of us. Subhan'Allah, the notion that the primary purpose of the brain is survival points to the primary rights given to us by Allah SWT in our Islamic Law—rights of life, security, justice, dignity, etc. When we see the primacy of reproduction in our brain structure, we understand better why modesty, chastity, and privacy are so highly regarded in Islamic values and culture. Each of these primary brain purposes is worthy of a workshop or entire conference on its own, but we will note for our current purpose that humans instinctively, unconsciously, and uniformly react defensively and emotionally to actions of supervision, management, critique, or advice. People cannot help it, and though intentional training can mitigate it, most education leaders working in a fast-paced school environment must adjust their style in order to evoke the most productive response from their colleagues.

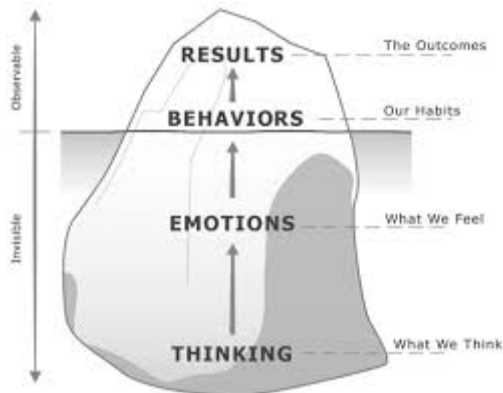
Rather than telling our staff what to do, we must find an efficient method of improving the thinking of our staff. Curriculum designers have long strategized coming up with “teacher-proof” resources, basically scripting out each step of a lesson plan and each element of differentiation that goes with it. Yet these curricular resources lack data to prove that such micromanaging has led to any increase in effectiveness. As professionals, teachers are trained and paid to think, lead, initiate, and evaluate, but many supervisory district and school practices provide only rigid directives that discourage experimentation or the generation of insights through flexible, customized approaches.

Another imperative in managing staff is the generation gap in evidence today between principals who are “baby-boomers” and teachers who are “millennials”. The younger adults who are filling in the ranks are expressive, confident, and open to learning and change. They have grown up in school environments that develop collaborative project-management skills. They have passion and an upbeat attitude regarding their profession of education, taking on challenges like a mission. In contrast, more traditional settings structure schools in imitation of

large organizations, with restrictive policies and heavy-handed control. We must encourage the younger generation of professional educators to join our schools by matching their work ethic traits with a more empowered and accountable ethos, one that respects professionals as people who can think and evaluate without dictates and rigid controls.

Today's Islamic schools, despite their booming numbers and soaring enrollment, face a great obstacle in the dearth of school leaders. We need to support ready staff members to make the transition from managing a classroom of students to managing adult colleagues. Despite the uptick in education professionals in our community gaining Educational Leadership degrees and certificates, little in the required coursework of graduate school prepares mid- and top-level school executives for the effective leadership of staff, especially in nurturing a culture of continuous improvement and strong motivation. Looking into the development of leadership in business organizations brings more advanced and cutting-edge research into view. For example, many Fortune 500 organizations have abandoned performance evaluations using ranking tools in favor of frequent yet brief conversations. The March 2015 edition of the *Harvard Business Review* reports, "The move away from conventional, ratings-based performance management continues to gain momentum. By November this year, at least 52 large companies had shifted from the practice of once-yearly performance appraisals; estimates are that hundreds of other companies are considering following suit. A wide range of industries are represented, from technology (39% of the 52) to business services (19%)." Coming from the business management world, Quiet Leadership provides a viable leadership skill that can be taught and transferred to teacher leaders as they gain experience coordinating colleagues, thus preparing the way for a smooth transition into a full-time leadership role that they step into with success.

Improving the performance of a staff of adults requires improving thinking. If we use the simple metaphor of an iceberg, we see that performance Results are merely the tip of the iceberg; thinking happens at the deepest level. Observable Behavior is the feature that leads to the Results, but in order to change behavior and improve thinking, one has to deal with miles and miles of deep Emotions, the strongest feature in our human brains.



How can we navigate through these deep emotions? With techniques that allow your staff to step around old fixed habits and develop new neural connections to solve problems. We need to find how exactly thinking leads to action—we are bombarded with great advice and ideas, but getting these ideas implemented to fruition is the obstacle.

There is actually a physiological “anchor” in Motivation! Motivation doesn’t come from your heart, as many would have it. Here’s how David Rock explains the alternative to getting people to follow your advice or directives. The brain is a connection machine, making order out of chaos. Brains must come up with their own insights in order to create new neural connections, or “maps”. To take committed action, people need to think things through for themselves, not be told what to do. This is very hard work; a new solution, or map, requires comparing, associating, and matching ideas with existing maps. People exhibit some inertia in thinking for themselves due to the high energy required. A thinking model is needed, and Quiet Leadership provides a questioning strategy that avoids details, drama, and an unproductive focus on the problem. With this questioning strategy in action, the individual answering the questions is directed towards the bigger picture, allowing him/her to realize patterns s/he would not have normally seen had the person stayed wrapped up in the details or drama of a problem. A match in the neural connection is made, and this releases neurotransmitters, or hormones, along with a change in brain waves. The way we move ideas forward is assisted by this chemical burst in our brains at the moment of insight. This energy burst pushes us to activate that new bright idea, making us willing to take action.

The brain tactics that underpin Quiet Leadership prove one key strategy. Pushing for insights can be accomplished by creating new wiring, rather than by trying to convince people to change

their habits, or hardwired patterns of thinking. Rock warns of the challenges assumed when one tries to deconstruct long-set thought patterns. A stark example is that even when the risk of heart attack is high, over 85% of people cannot eat less and exercise more to prevent such a fate. The most simple and brilliant advice goes unheeded. Instead, focus on solutions, not problems, to prevent firming the hardwiring even more. Use the subject's strengths in formulating a solution, and get data on the person's thinking in order to push them for insights. This is achieved by the questioning—avoiding specific details of the problem, and questioning about thinking, gets people to realize insights.

Advice is a threat to our brain, says Rock, based on brain research regarding the strong response shown the limbic system, the emotional foundation in the brain. These are the brain's survival needs, and they are known by the acronym SCARF:

Status: Our brain always assesses how a social encounter enhances or diminishes our status. We spin our story all the time. Advice makes us feel “lesser” than the person giving it. Our inner voice tells us to wonder: “Don’t you trust me to figure this out?”

Certainty: If there is any risk involved in advice, our memory decreases and the brain is more likely to focus on all the things that could go wrong.

Autonomy: Our brain registers a threat when our options are narrowed. With no ability to choose, we sense an emotional threat.

Relatedness: Our brain is always assessing who is a friend or a foe. Before giving advice, build a relationship.

Fairness: There is a cognitive drive to seek fairness. Perceptions of favoritism blocks acceptance of advice.

How to prevent the violation of one of these five limbic elements? Rock advises us to be aware of the model of thinking we are currently using in any conversation. He argues that leaders must allow their people to think by supporting them in actually staying out of the details, not dwelling on the problem itself, and certainly not inviting a retelling of the drama of any negative situation, which only reinforces feelings of insecurity and powerlessness. Instead, focusing on the vision of the goal, as well as on the big picture planning (not details), will get the other party to identify priorities in how to solve his/her problem. Rock calls this the Choose Your Focus

model. It is easier said than done, because when we do get into details, problems, and drama, that is the realm of the “interesting.” But to be useful as a mentor and supervisor who is urging his knowledge workers to think, it is more useful to focus only on the big picture of the vision and planning elements.

The heart of the Quiet Leadership approach is in the questioning tools advocated by Rock to keep the focus on getting others to do the thinking, and gaining insights to spark motivation and action. Along with *Quiet Leadership*, Rock has authored another book entitled *Your Brain at Work*. Both offer many dialogs to illustrate how Rock’s questioning techniques force people towards metacognition—thinking about their thinking. These techniques prove that having conversations not around the content of the problem, but rather around the process of understanding. The tools used in such conversations include seeking permission to discuss to avoid ambushing anyone and thus losing trust, establishing “placement”, or in other words delineating the parameters of the conversation to prevent any threat, asking only thinking questions which focus on the “what”, not the “why”, to establish objective facts, and clarifying, another way of pushing towards helping the other person gain insight. These tools are characterized by respect, prevent what most humans avoid or dread in terms of confrontation, and coach the subject to effectively control thinking efficiently.

We offer these techniques to school leaders because by applying them ourselves, we found that we could have more welcomed and productive conversations with our colleagues, without any defensive reactions. We have also found that staff members are able to take on greater responsibilities and solve problems more independently when shown that we trust them and depend on them to do the thinking needed in the myriad decisions educators must make in the course of a typical day. Finally, in nurturing leadership so that a growing school can develop staff that can move from teaching to managing teachers, or from completing administrative tasks to managing full projects, the Quiet Leadership techniques have proven beneficial for us. Insha’Allah we hope to share these ideas that align with our values of teamwork, shared vision, and respectful collegiality with all our Islamic school colleagues.

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Why Every Great School Needs A Powerful Mission

Necva Ozgur

Necva Ozgur is the founder and Executive Director of MERIT and the founding School Head of New Horizon School Pasadena, NHSP. She 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 in California. Ms. Ozgur played a pivotal role in establishing NHSP and led the school to its accreditation from WASC and CAIS. With her leadership and a skilled administrative team, NHSP earned Blue Ribbon recognition from the Department of Education. Ms. Ozgur served as a trustee of several non-profit organizations, including the New Horizon School Board, Islamic Center of Southern California Board, California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) and Council of Spiritual and Ethical Education (CSEE). She was a member of The Non-Profit Executive Forum and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Ms. Ozgur is currently serving on the Islamic Society of North America's (ISNA) Education Forum Programming Committee, on the Board of the Council of Islamic Schools of North America (CISNA), and as the board chair of Bayan Claremont Graduate School in California.

WHY EVERY GREAT SCHOOL NEEDS A POWERFUL MISSION

A powerful mission statement motivates and steers the whole school towards new heights. As Frances Hesselbein, co-founder of Leader to Leader institution says, “Mission is the star we steer by. Everything begins with mission, everything flows from mission.” How do we create such a powerful mission statement that it makes all the stakeholders motivated and excited? The board will lead the process of creating, and guarding the mission statement. Trustees not only create a powerful mission, vision and core values, but they must also be able to articulate and defend the mission; be the advocate of the mission; review and revise it regularly; and make their decisions according to the mission. The board needs to build their board with people who have passion for the mission and, most importantly, hire a principal who cares deeply about the mission of the school and is willing to make that mission a reality in every aspect of the school.

The board members are trust-keepers of the schools. They are entrusted jointly to be in charge of the direction and governance of the school. Keeping this trust is a huge responsibility and should not be taken lightly. Allah (SWT) orders us in the Qur’an, to be faithful to our *amanat* (trusts). The board and principal work together as a leadership team to lead the school. As partners of the team, they lead the school to success. In this powerful partnership, the board is in charge of governance and the principal is in charge of managing day-to-day activities of the school. The board chair leads the board, and the principal leads the staff. The board and principal work together to ensure the success of their school and first, they need to define success. For many people, success means the school’s ability to accomplish its mission. Ideally, every decision the board or the principal makes should be completely aligned with its mission, which is called *True North*—and no decision should be made that deviates from this direction.

Unless all the stakeholders share the mission and vision, it will not have much power. The board, together with all the stakeholders, creates, articulates and guards the mission statement. That mission statement summarizes the purpose of the school: why does the school exist? The board keeps the mission as the compass for the direction of the school; it makes its decisions with the guidance of the mission. The board delegates their authority to their principal to make the mission a reality. They hold the principal accountable for making the mission alive in every aspect of the school and the community holds the board accountable for guarding the mission.

In this session we will focus on:

- I. What are the Mission, Vision and Core Values? Why do they matter?
- II. How do we re-focus all stakeholders on the mission?
- III. Step-by-step process of developing powerful mission & vision statements
- IV. What are the characteristics of mission-driven schools?
- V. Common mistakes in writing mission statements
- VI. Mission drift: How to recognize and deal with it?

I. WHAT ARE THE MISSION, VISION AND CORE VALUES? WHY DO THEY MATTER?

CORE VALUES

MISSION

VISION

Core Values, Mission and Vision statements are the Ideological Foundation of any school. The difference between a mission statement and a vision statement is that a mission statement focuses on a school's present state while a vision statement focuses on a school's future. A mission statement answers the question "Why do we exist?" and the vision statement answers the question "Where are we going?"

CORE VALUES

The identification of core values is perhaps one of the first and most important in developing the mission. The beliefs and values encompass those convictions towards such areas as student learning, school climate and culture.

One knows if a value is a core value if:

- ✚ It permeates the whole school
- ✚ It derives decisions
- ✚ It is the last thing you will give up
- ✚ There is a strong reaction when it is violated

Some typical core values are

- ✚ We believe that we need to provide to our students a lifetime gift of quality academic education balanced with Islamic education and environment.
- ✚ We believe each child is a gift from Allah and they are each endowed with a different gift. It is our responsibility to find each child's gift and nurture it.
- ✚ We believe that we need to provide a safe, caring, and healthy environment where individual differences are respected.
- ✚ We believe we are developing tomorrow's leaders with honor and integrity.
- ✚ We believe all students can achieve according to their abilities.
- ✚ We believe that our teachers are our most important resources and we value their contributions.
- ✚ We believe our teachers and administrators to be role models for our students.
- ✚ We believe that our parents are our partners in educating and raising our students. We value their partnership.
- ✚ We believe continuous improvement is a key to success and we provide professional development opportunities to each stakeholder to assist them in their personal and professional growth (Board, principal, teacher and parent).

MISSION STATEMENT

A mission statement is a statement about the basic purposes of the school. Every school should have a mission statement, as a way of ensuring that every stakeholder is "on the same page". A mission statement is a statement about the organization's reasons for existing. A mission statement may grow out of discussions around the following four questions:

1. Who are we?
2. What are the basic needs we exist to meet?
3. What do we do to respond to those needs?
4. What makes us distinctive or unique?

A good mission statement addresses the following important points

- ✚ A mission statement should include the school's values, purpose and action.
- ✚ A mission statement should say who your school is, what you do, what you stand for.
- ✚ A mission statement is best developed with input by all the constituencies of the school.
- ✚ The best mission statements tend to be 3-4 sentences long.
- ✚ Avoid saying how great you are, what great quality and great services you provide.
- ✚ Examine other school's mission statements, but be sure your statement represents your school. What is unique about your school?
- ✚ Make sure you actually believe in your mission statement.

Criteria for Evaluating the Mission Statement

- ✚ It should be brief
- ✚ It should be simply worded and easily understood
- ✚ It should not be so universal that it could have been written for any school
- ✚ It should be clear about what, who, and how the organization serves
- ✚ It should reflect the distinctive competencies of the organization
- ✚ It should reflect on how we are unique
- ✚ It should reflect on what we do best
- ✚ Our school's mission matches what we do. We are "walking the talk"
- ✚ Our school truly aligns itself with its mission
- ✚ Our mission is reviewed regularly

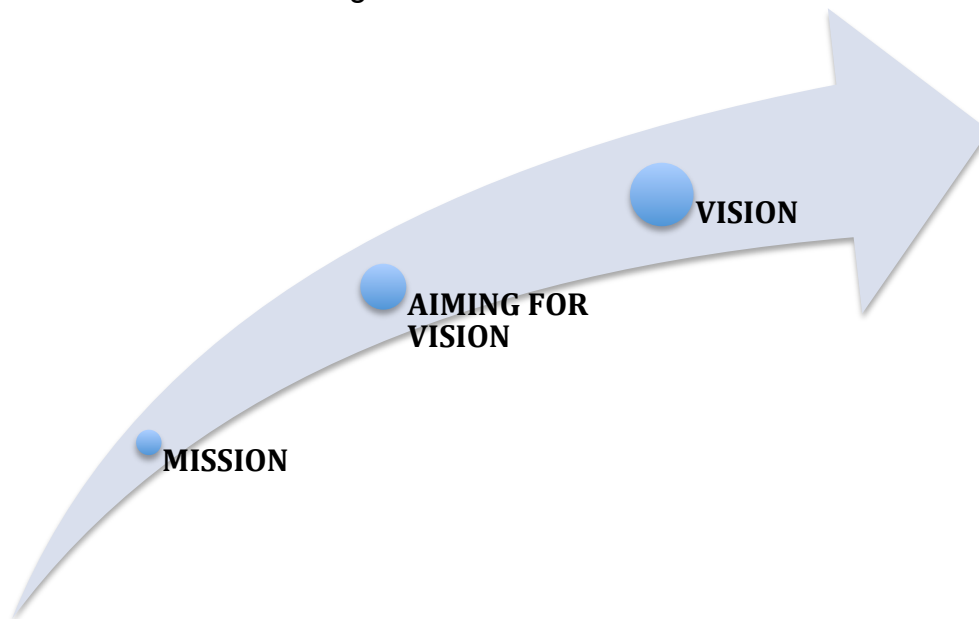
What are the things we value most?	Core values
What is the purpose of the organization? Where are we now?	Mission
Where do we want to be?	Vision

VISION STATEMENT

Vision is a mental image of a possible and desirable future state of the organization. While a mission statement tells why your school exists, a vision statement tells you where you are going. It paints a compelling word picture of a desired future state. It can make anyone who reads it, hears it or lives it want to support, work for, give to, or in some other way be part of your school. When taken to its highest level of effectiveness, a vision statement leads an organization to become visionary.

Vision evolves out of answers to questions like:

- + What is our vision for the future? What vision do we have for our school in the next five to ten years from now?
- + If we could invent the future, what future would we invent for our school?
- + What do we have a burning passion about that we would like to be able to express through our work?
- + What could be the distinctive role or contribution of our school in the world?
- + What is our collective agenda?



VISIONING EXERCISE

If your school could be the school of your dreams and have the impact you most desire, what would that look like in the year 2021?

You imagine, we are in the year 2021. One of the board members enter the boardroom running; with excitement she announces, "We are in the news!" Share the headlines you see about your school.

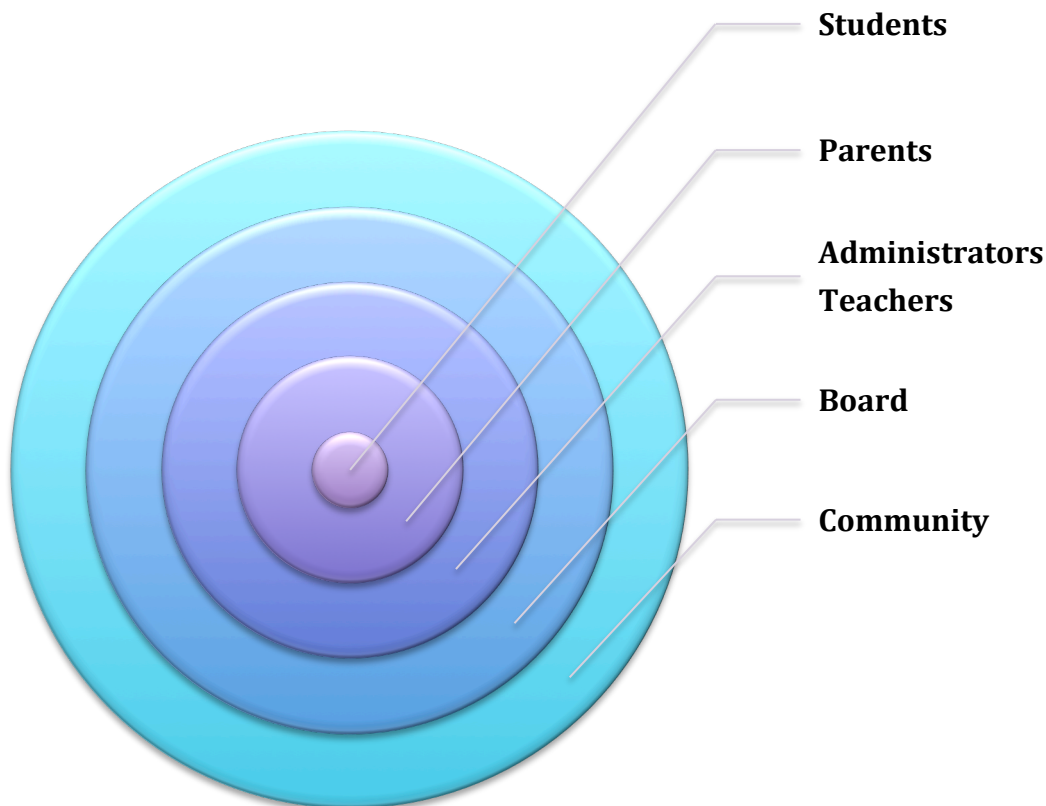
II. HOW DO WE RE-FOCUS ALL STAKEHOLDERS ON THE MISSION?

What is a stakeholder?

A stakeholder is a person or a group that has interest or concern in the organization. **Stakeholders** can affect or be affected by the school's actions, objectives and policies. It's important for any schools and their boards to understand who their primary stakeholders are and identify what they most want and need from the school. Boards play a key role in helping their school to understand their key stakeholders.

One of the most important responsibilities of any leader is establishing a vision and inviting all the stakeholders to share in its development. As important as developing a shared vision, keeping that vision alive is as important. If stakeholders have no involvement in creating the vision, they see no real reason to dedicate themselves to it. The board needs to create a shared vision with all the stakeholders and review it annually and revise it as needed. By doing this we can keep the vision alive and all the stakeholders committed to the vision. The vision is likely to be realized when there is a common understanding of a shared vision.

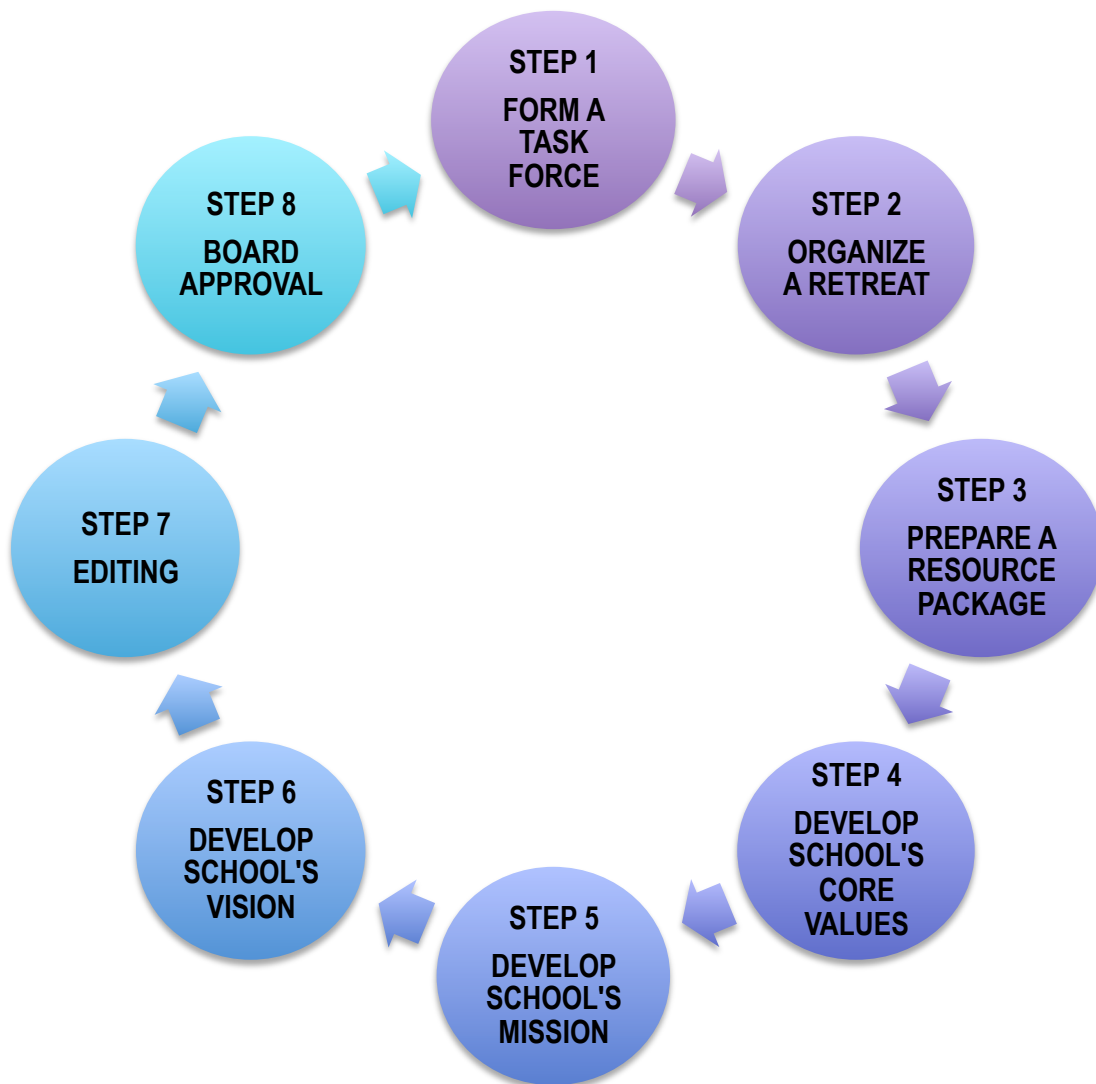
Let's first decide who are our stakeholders:



III. STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS OF DEVELOPING MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

Developing strong vision and mission statements can help stakeholders in your school reach a common understanding. Your school must have a vision that all stakeholders recognize as a common direction of growth, something that inspires them to be better. An effective vision also announces to parents and students where you are heading and why they should take the trip with you. Without a vision, your school lacks direction. If you don't have a common, agreed-on destination, then everyone is left to his or her own decision to imagine one, which results in unfocused efforts, with everyone believing that what he or she is doing is right. A common understanding of the destination allows all stakeholders to align their improvement efforts.

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS OF DEVELOPING MISSION AND VISION



Step 1: Identify the stakeholders and form a task force

First, identify all the stakeholders of the school and form a task force from all the stakeholders of the school. Be sure you have at least a few representations from each group. Usually, the stakeholders are: board members, principal, administrators, teachers, parents and students. It would be beneficial to have representations from community members, and alumni and alumnae.

Step 2: Organize a one-day retreat

The second step is to invite this task force to a retreat. This could be a one-day retreat or series of retreats. Also, it could be beneficial to have a few focus groups to get the wider circle of people's feedback. The retreat would start by explaining the purpose of the meeting, which is setting the future direction of the school, and establishing or reviewing the school's core values, mission and vision. It would be great if the retreat starts with a motivational talk by a respected community leader. Imagine if the stakeholders would feel that they are setting the direction of the school, how empowered and motivated they would feel. They also feel committed and have a buy-in to the newly established mission and vision. The retreat would continue by providing training and guidance in order to lead in developing core values, mission and vision process by using the resources in this paper. Give the opportunity to participants to ask questions and distribute the resource package.

Step 3: Resource Package for the Task Force

Prepare a package for the attendees with the following information:

1. Agenda (see the sample agenda attached)
2. What are the Core Values, Mission and Vision
3. School's current core values, mission and vision
4. Sample core values, mission and vision statements from other schools
5. Articles about core values, mission and vision

Step 4: Small Group Discussions to Develop the School's Core Values

Form small groups of 6-8 people in each. Ask them to assign one person as a facilitator, one person as a timekeeper and another person as note-taker. Their task is to identify the school's core values. Give them time to discuss sample core values and compare it with the school's current core values. Share their thoughts and impressions with one another. You can ask the following questions to generate some dialogue:

- a. What patterns do you see in the statements?
- b. What do you like or dislike in the statements?

By discussing the current core values, the sample statements, answering the questions, and pertinent articles that you shared as well, the team should be able to reach an understanding of what makes strong core values. At this point, each team would be able to write their draft core values. Each spokesperson for the small group will share his/her group's core values. The whole group discusses commonalities, analyzes and synthesizes the core values. Finally the whole group agrees together on 6-8 common core values.

Step 6: Small Group Discussions to Develop the School's Mission

A similar process will continue to develop the mission statement. The facilitator leads the group to use the key words from the core values to come up with the mission statement. By discussing the current mission statement, the sample statements, answering the questions, and pertinent articles that you shared as well, the team should be able to reach an understanding of what makes a strong mission statement. At this point each team will be able to write their draft mission statement. Each spokesperson for the small group will share his/her group's mission statement. The whole group discusses commonalities, analyzes and synthesizes the newly drafted mission statement. The whole group will reach a consensus of what they would like to see in their new mission statements.

Step 7: Small Group Discussions to Develop the School's Vision

The facilitator this time encourages the small group to dream big to come up with the school's vision for next five years. The facilitator encourages each team member to share his or her dreams. By discussing the current vision statement, the sample statements, answering the questions, and pertinent articles that you shared as well, the team should be able to reach an understanding of what makes a strong vision statement. At this point, each team will be able to write their draft vision statement. Each spokesperson for the small group will share his/her group's vision statement. The whole group discusses commonalities, analyzes and synthesizes the newly drafted vision statement. The whole group will reach a consensus of what they would like to see in their new vision statements.

Step 8: Editing and Board Approval

Hopefully, by the end of the day the school has newly drafted core values, mission and vision statements. If that is the case, then board will form an editing team. Ultimately, this team is the one putting together the pieces of the puzzle and editing all the drafts and writing meaningful core values, mission and vision statements. When they finalize the document, they send it to the whole team for their review and they incorporate their feedback and send it a few more times until everyone feels satisfaction and ownership, then they send it to the board for final approval.

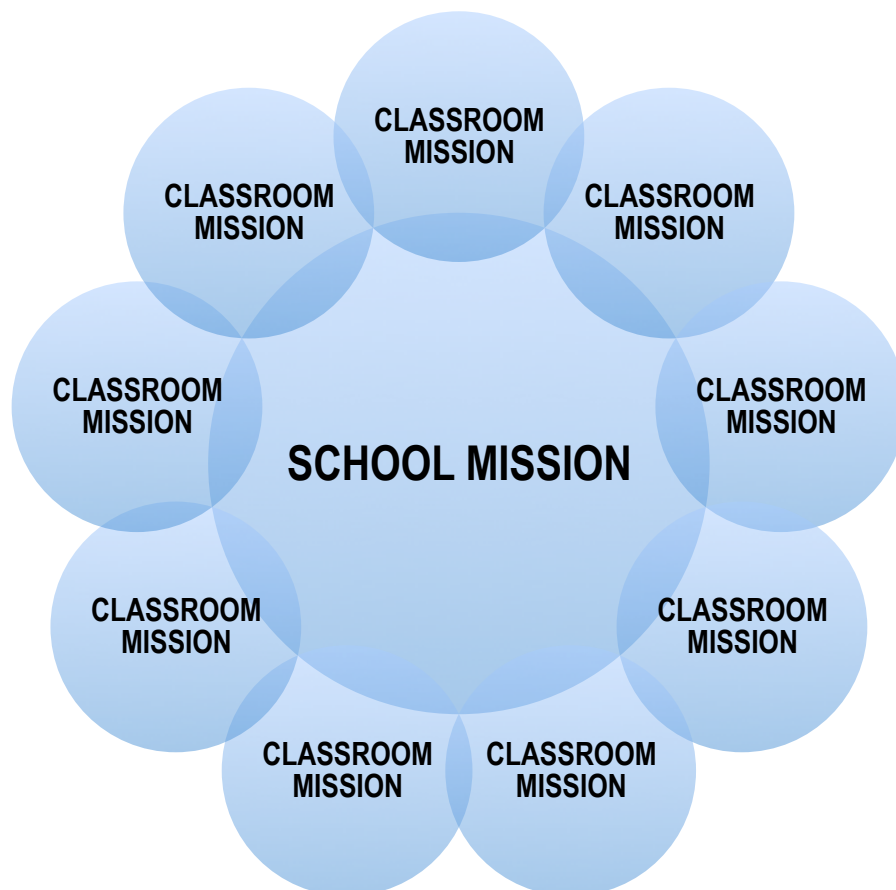
If there isn't consensus, the board might call for another retreat or continue the process by having focus groups with different stakeholders. For example the board might call for a few parent meetings and get their feedback and buy-in, while the principal could have numerous meetings to get the faculty's feedback. The principal will explain to the faculty how the vision is a reflection of the school's values and hopes: it offers an opportunity to dream bigger, so stresses to the team that it shouldn't let the faculty develop a "get-by statement." Tell the faculty to articulate what it is they truly want from their students and school. The principal might consider having teachers brainstorm a list of adjectives or values and beliefs that will help them come up with inspirational and compelling mission and vision statements for their classroom.

SAMPLE AGENDA FOR DEVELOPING MISSION AND VISION

- 9:00-10:00 Welcome address
 Goal of the meeting
 Motivational talk
- 10:00-11:00 Presentation
 a. What are the mission, vision and core values?
 b. How to develop a mission statement?
 c. What are the components of a compelling school mission?
 d. Does our school's mission match what we actually do?
 e. Characteristics of mission-driven schools
- 11:00-11:15 Form small groups
 Assign their tasks
- 11:15-12:15 Task 1: Each group to identify the school's core values
 Use guidelines
- 12:15-1:00 The small groups shares their core values
 The whole group discusses commonalities
 Analyze and synthesize core values
 The whole group agrees together on 6-8 core values
- 1:00-1:30 Dhuhr prayer and lunch
- 2:30-3:30 Task 2: Each group drafts the school's mission statement
 They use 6-8 agreed upon core values, use guidelines
- 3:30-4:00 The small groups share their Mission Statement
 The whole group discusses commonalities
 Analyze and synthesize the Mission Statements
 Agree jointly on one or combine few
- 4:00-5:00 Task 3: Each group drafts the school's vision statement
 They use agreed upon Mission Statement
 They use guidelines
- 5:00-5:30 The small groups share their Vision Statement
 The whole group discusses commonalities
 Analyze and synthesize the Vision Statements
 Agree jointly on one or combine a few
- 5:30-5:45 Assign an editing team to edit Core Values, Mission and Vision
- 5:45-6:00 Decide on Next Steps:
 Either decide on another meeting reviewing C.V., M, and V
 Or, through email exchanges finalize C.V., M and V
 After the group agrees jointly on these three statements
 Board needs to approve the C.V., M and V.
 Closure and Prayer

IV. WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MISSION-DRIVEN SCHOOLS

1. Board, with the principal, takes a lead to develop the mission statement.
2. All the stakeholders participate in development of the mission statement.
3. Board makes all their major decision in conjunction with the mission.
4. The mission statement permeates every aspect of the school life.
5. The Board and the school head use the mission statement as the foundation for decision making and planning.
6. The leadership team invites different school constituencies regularly to review and revise the mission statement.
7. The mission statement is visible in public places and classrooms. Also the mission statement is in all official documents and the website of the school.
8. All the constituencies understand the mission statement and commit to it.
9. The school head annually reviews the mission statement with the faculty and staff.
10. The school head leads teachers to develop a classroom mission statement with the participation of the students. The classroom mission is an incredible document, which translates organizational document to a living document. The classroom mission statement is a wonderful reinforcement of the overall school mission.



V. COMMON MISTAKES IN WRITING MISSION STATEMENTS

If you want to create a powerful and meaningful mission statement, avoid these common mistakes:

- 1. Your mission statement is full of verbiage:** We want someone who has no understanding of your school to understand what your school is all about after reading your mission statement.
- 2. It is too generic or broad to be meaningful:** It is easy to write a generic mission statement that is modeled after someone else's. The challenge is writing one that is unique; one that brings forward everything that is special about your school.
- 3. It lacks inspiration; it is boring:** Your mission statement should be powerful enough to incite passion and excitement from those who read it. You want the reader to be nodding his or her head in agreement about the value your school brings to the table.
- 4. Your mission statement is too long:** A mission statement is meant to be short; mission statements are typically short paragraphs that are one to three sentences in length. Avoid the temptation to pack your mission statement with filler in order to cover every aspect of your school.
- 5. It is hard to believe:** Your mission statement shouldn't leave the reader thinking, "that's impossible." You want your mission statement to be realistic and accurately reflect what your school is about.
- 6. The writing process has been a one-person exercise:** You can develop a great mission statement with the help of other people. Different perspectives can help you to find the right wording that will capture the essence of your school.
- 7. You don't do anything with your completed mission statement:** There's no purpose in having a mission statement if it just sits collecting dust once it's completed. When it is approved by the board, send it out to employees and stakeholders; post it on your website to help prospective parents understand what your school is all about. And make sure you refer back to your mission statement regularly to remind yourself why you're doing what you do every day. Your mission statement is the foundation of your strategic plan.

VI. MISSION DRIFT: HOW TO RECOGNIZE AND DEAL WITH IT?

From time to time, when the school is growing and moving towards success, the school leadership starts focusing on adding new programs, and new programs require more people, more expertise, occasionally added space and facility which eventually leads to added financial resources. At this stage, the focus might change from fulfilling the mission to maintaining the school financially. Ideally, the board guards the mission and never loses sight of being mission driven, not budget driven.

Another reason for mission drift is focusing on bringing new blood to the school, and not paying enough attention to bringing people who have passion to the cause. Sometimes, the board recruits new board members without doing necessary screening, and this might lead to members with different agendas, which leads to disharmony in the board or mission drift. The worst-case scenario is to hire a principal who doesn't have a passion for the mission. That might lead to the principal hiring staff that doesn't have a passion for the mission. The principal also might admit families that are not the right matches for the school.

Here are some of the key signs that your organization is suffering from mission drift:

1. **Making budget-driven decisions, not mission-driven decisions:** The school leadership should focus on achieving the mission. All the decisions the leadership takes should be based on the mission; sacrificing quality for budgetary reasons is usually the first sign of mission drift.
2. **You look for the dollars first and build programs around the dollars:** When the driving force is dollars rather than improving quality and designing programs that are targeted directly to the constituency, that is another sign of mission drift.
3. **Your mission is not clear:** When you ask board members what the organization's mission is and everyone has a different answer, you know something is not right.
4. **Recruiting board members who don't have passion for the cause:** If the board is recruiting new board members without doing a necessary screening that might lead to members with different agendas, which leads to disharmony in the board or a mission drift.
5. **Hiring a principal who doesn't have passion for the mission:** The worse case scenario is to hire a principal who doesn't have passion for the mission. That might lead to the principal hiring staff that doesn't have passion for the mission.
6. **Admitting families who don't believe in the mission of the school:** The principal might admit families that they are not the right matches for the school.
7. **Large turnover of staff and board members:** Big turnover rate of staff and board often takes place when a school leadership loses sight of its mission.
8. **A core group of board members pushes the school in a certain direction:** Sometimes that direction is not consistent with the mission. This usually happens when you have a board that is removed from the mission and has a different agenda than the core staff.
9. **The numbers of students are decreasing:** The principal's energy is wasted in explaining decreasing numbers of students, or is admitting families that are not the right match.
10. **Realizing your school is not on the cutting edge of creativity and effectiveness:** When some schools reach maturity, the leadership is not capable to move the school to new heights and they lose their energy and passion and feel that the work is just a job rather than a way to change the world.

Effective School Boards Leading the Way to Successful Islamic Schools

Yasmeen Qadri

Dr. Yasmeen Qadri, Ed.D. is a tenured professor in the Teacher Education Program at Valencia College in Orlando, FL. She is the co-founder and principal of the first Islamic school in Central Florida and has three decades of experience in Teacher Education. Dr. Yasmeen has been invited to speak and consult at the local, state, and national levels on Conflict Transformation, Teachers as Change Agents of Peace, School Boards, Opening full-time schools, and Diversity. She is the recipient of numerous Endowed Chair awards that took her to Turkey, Indonesia, Malaysia, India, Saudi Arabia and Hungary. Dr. Yasmeen received the NISOD and Great Teacher Destinations Facilitator's Awards. She is a leader in her community and is well recognized for her continued scholarly work and dedication to education.

School boards are the heart of a school and responsible to keep schools vibrant, and with an active flow of healthy blood to keep the entire school body alive! There are estimated to be 1.5 million nonprofit organizations in the United States and 20 million dedicated, influential, and connected members that lead these organizations. There are 90,000 men and women serving as members in approximately 14,000 school boards. (www.centerforpubliceducation.org) Although the number of Islamic Schools in the United States may be significantly low with an estimated number of approximately 500 schools, they do make a significant impact on the future generations and the private school sector in the United States.

Regardless of the size, vision, and mission of the school boards the characteristics that make them effective and the challenges they face have some commonalities across board. Additional challenges that Islamic School boards face are that they are fairly new, each school is unique and diverse in its own way, and worst is the current negative stereotypes and prejudices against their religion Islam that is widespread in the United States.

Many Islamic schools run with minimum school board members with the composition of the governing body that is unclear and the responsibilities that draw no line of separation between governance and management. Depending upon the individual needs of each community's ethnicity and language, Islamic schools must form their own Boards, select their own governance structures, and policies often times from a self-referential standpoint and as trial and error.

Understanding the role and nature of a school board toward all stakeholders is critical to enhancing the stability and viability of the school. This paper will focus upon School Boards structure, governance, and functions as described in the models introduced by EdConsultations:

The 5 R's: Model of Effective School Boards: Responsibilities, Roles, Rules, Rights, and Righteousness. Learn about:

- 1) Responsibilities through The ISLAM Model.
- 2) Roles of members through the Model, 7 Highly Effective Committees
- 3) Rules through the List of Don'ts
- 4) Respect through the PJI Model of How We Treat Each Other: Our Practice of Respect and Nonviolence (PJI Model's vision: All People, All Voices, All Matter)

5) Righteousness through the 5 Pillars of Islam Model

Audience will leave with a clear understanding of the governance and structure of the school boards of Islamic Schools. The highlight of the session will be the conflict transformation model to help keep peace between management and governance. The presenter will use humor to demonstrate the effective use of various models with open dialogue at the end of the session.

Working Successfully with Difficult Students

Nikki Boyd Rana, Ed.D and Marc Flatt, Behavior Support Specialist

Dr. Nikki Rana completed a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education (K-8) and a master's degree in Mathematics Education and Educational Leadership at Western Governors University. Dr. Rana completed a Doctor of Education degree with a specialization in Curriculum and Teaching at Northcentral University. Dr. Rana has served as an Instructional Resource Teacher, Testing Coordinator, Social Studies Chair for Middle School, Literacy Coach, School Improvement Committee Data Chair, Behavioral Support Teacher, Special Education Teacher, and Study Island Administrator. Dr. Rana was the assistant principal at Al-Iman School and holds numerous teacher certifications.

Marc Flatt is currently serving as a Behavior Support Specialist in Lee County, North Carolina. He has 15 years of experience working with behaviorally challenged students. Marc has over 21 hours post graduate work in Special Education. Marc had prior careers in banking as senior management and as a Major in the US Army.

Statement of the Problem

Establishing effective classroom and school-wide discipline systems can be a real struggle, but is absolutely necessary in order to create and maintain a positive learning institution. The most effective discipline systems use proactive strategies designed to prevent discipline problems rather than strategies intended to correct problems after they occur. Since prevention does not always work, school staff must develop strategies to use when prevention approaches are not enough.

Literature Review

Vital Components of Effective Classroom Discipline

In a study reviewing 11,000 pieces of research spanning 50 years, Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1993/1994) identify 28 factors that influence student learning. The most important one was classroom management. More recently, Boynton & Boynton (2005) identify four components that, when implemented correctly, are crucial for establishing an effective classroom discipline system: positive teacher-student relations, clearly defined parameters of acceptable student behaviors, monitoring skills, and consequences.

School-wide Discipline

There is a strong relationship between classroom discipline and school-wide discipline. In fact, classroom discipline is the “driver” of building discipline because students spend the majority of their day in the classroom and often take the discipline culture from the classroom with them to the rest of the building. Marzano (2003) states that school-wide discipline is as important as classroom management and may even contribute more to the climate of the school.

Surefire Discipline Strategies

During Boynton & Boynton’s (2005) collective forty-three years in elementary and secondary school administration, they have made numerous classroom observations. During the observations, certain strategies were regularly noted to have a positive impact on student behavior and academic performance. These strategies are: relationship strategies, parameter strategies, monitoring strategies, and consequence strategies. Each strategy involves a

commonsense approach that most teachers are well aware of but sometimes forget to emphasize.

The Challenging Student

According to Adelman and Taylor (2002), anywhere from 12 to 22 percent of all students in schools suffer from mental, emotional, or behavioral disorders. Many of these students do not respond to routine strategies and behavior expectations that typically work for the rest of the class. Difficult students create severe challenges to school faculty on a regular basis. Acts of defiance, rebellion, aggression, inattentiveness, continuous movement, and persistent talking out of turn are just some of the behaviors presented by these students.

Methods

Vital Components of Effective Classroom Discipline

Positive Teacher-Student Relations

Research shows that authors have a lot to say about positive relationships with students. Thompson (1998) says, “The most powerful weapon available to secondary teachers who want to foster a favorable learning climate is a positive relationship with our students (p. 6)”. Kohn (1996) goes a step further, saying, “Children are more likely to be respectful when important adults in their lives respect them. They are more likely to care about others if they know they are cared about (p. 111).” Some ways that positive teacher-student relations are formed can include such things as communicating positive expectations, calling on all students equitably, increasing latency periods when questioning students, giving hints and clues to help students answer questions, telling students they have the ability to do well, correcting students in a constructive way, developing positive classroom pride, demonstrating a caring nature, and taking steps to prevent and reduce stress and frustration (Boynton & Boynton, 2005).

Clearly Defined Acceptable Classroom Behaviors

Marzano (2003) found that “across the various grade levels the average number of disruptions in classes where rules and procedures were effectively implemented was 28 percentile points lower than the average number of disruptions in classes where that was not the

case” (p. 14). Canter and Canter (1997) describe a discipline plan as an umbrella policy that specifies rules that apply to all students, at all times, in all locations. A discipline plan also specifies how you will respond when students comply or fail to comply with the rules. Establishing and teaching clearly defined parameters for acceptable student behaviors is an important component of a discipline plan. When both are done effectively and monitored closely, consequences rarely need to be used (Boynton & Boynton, 2005).

Consistent Monitoring

Thompson (1998) defines monitoring as being “acutely aware of what each student is doing every minute of the class. It requires the hyper-alertness of a combat veteran. . . . It’s the famous ‘eyes in the back of your head’ that is the hallmark of excellent teachers who can write on the chalkboard and tell a student in the back of the room to stop passing notes at the same time” (p. 165). Boynton & Boynton (2005) asserts four monitoring skills that should become part of your repertoire are: maintaining proximity, invoking silence, providing response opportunities, and practicing the “teacher’s look.” A fifth skill is the ability to use all these monitoring skills simultaneously.

Application of Consequences

Consequences for misbehaviors will be required when other approaches are ineffective. When overused, consequences often lack the desired impact. The best discipline plans attempt to limit the necessity for punishments and negative consequences by having a preventive emphasis (Boynton & Boynton, 2005). Some interventions Boynton & Boynton (2005) identify for teachers to use are: (1) teacher reaction, (2) tangible recognition, (3) group contingency, and (4) home contingency (pp. 29–30).

School-wide Discipline

Philosophical Beliefs

To create a functioning school-wide discipline plan, the entire faculty must embrace a shared philosophy. Boynton & Boynton (2005) point out that a strong school-wide discipline philosophy comprises six major ideas: (1) Chaos outside the classroom will spill into the classroom; (2) Pay now or pay later; (3) A chaotic school environment is destructive to the

school climate; (4) Strategies that work in the classroom also work outside of the classroom; (5) Creating a structured building environment is not easy; and (6) Everyone must do his or her part.

Prevention Strategies

Establishing strategies that can be used on a schoolwide basis to prevent discipline problems involves teamwork to select the most effective approach for the school and to work on it with fidelity throughout the school. Strategies that can be used on a schoolwide basis to prevent behavior problems include: (1) conducting a discipline assessment; (2) supporting all of the policies; (3) promoting staff visibility; (4) communicating with parents; (5) complying with instructions from all staff; (6) instilling a “it takes a village” approach; (7) communicating and teaching the school rules; (8) utilizing recognition programs; (9) imparting schoolwide pride; (10) establishing off-campus rules; (11) monitoring building blind spots; and (12) exercising established protocols for dealing with angry parents (Boynton & Boynton, 2005).

Consequences

There are reasons why consequences may not be effective. One reason is that schools do not have a variety of disciplinary actions from which to choose, and, as a result, use the same ones again and again, thereby decreasing their effect. A second reason is that only weak or pointless consequences may be accessible. Third, staff often fails to include guardians, thereby reducing the effect of the disciplinary action. Finally, when a significant time delay between a rule violation and its consequence is noted, the consequence loses significance and the end result is less potent.

Administration and staff should work together to set up a number of school support systems that allow faculty to select from a variety of disciplinary actions in response to student misbehavior. Some of the most effective measures include: processing, lunch detention, after-school detention, office referrals, and in-school suspension (Boynton & Boynton, 2005).

Policies for Specific Building Locations

Marzano (2003) states that “ecological interventions” should be considered for counteracting “negative consequences of the school’s physical characteristics or of the school’s schedule” (p. 107). As a result, Boynton & Boynton (2005) asserts that specific policies should be addressed by schools for the following: (1) assemblies, (2) hallways, (3) the school office, (4) the lunchroom, (4) dress code, and (5) fighting which are some of the areas and events that are often a major source of office referrals and student disturbances.

Surefire Discipline Strategies

Relationship Strategies

Positive relationships form the foundation of a positive discipline plan. There are specific strategies that faculty members use to develop strong relationships with students, which in turn help reduce the number of student discipline incidents. These strategies include: (1) don’t be one of the kids; (2) never use humiliation or sarcasm; (3) start parent conferences with positive statements; (4) start difficult conferences with the student outside of the room; (5) let the parents get their message out first; (6) make some concessions; (7) talk about the future; (8) call parents before a disciplined student gets home; (9) actively encourage parents to call the school; (10) increase the power of praise; (11) smile and greet the students; and (11) learn students’ names (Boynton & Boynton, 2005).

Parameter Strategies

Another component of a strong discipline plan is the establishment and articulation of clearly defined parameters of acceptable student behaviors. Examples of some parameter strategies include: (1) teach the discipline plan and rules of conduct; (2) teach and enforce a classroom signal; (3) get the “junk” off the desks; (4) teach the logic behind the rules; (5) post classroom rules; (6) post building rules; (7) establish a schoolwide signal; and (8) provide support for substitutes (Boynton & Boynton, 2005).

Monitoring Strategies

Once established clear parameters for acceptable student behaviors have been set, faculty need to ensure that students following them. Some monitoring strategies include: (1) move around the room; (2) call on students at any time; (3) eliminate blind spots during classroom transitions; (4) go to the students when they need help; (5) maximize wait time; (6)

correct non-disruptive off-task behavior; (7) take roll silently; (8) use sponge activities; (9) remember the three “make or break” times; (10) change hall passes; (11) encourage students to leave the building at dismissal; and (12) stagger transition periods (Boynton & Boynton, 2005).

Consequence Strategies

Even when faculties use all of the preventative strategies, there will still be a need for consequences. Some consequence strategies include: (1) tolerate no exception; (2) pay attention even to little problems; (3) keep your physical distance when disciplining; (4) refrain from punishing the whole group; (5) don’t let students become “attorneys;” (6) take notice of misbehavior; and (7) assign lunch detention for tardies.

The Challenging Student

Dealing with Challenging Students

Categories for strategies for dealing with challenging students include: (1) relationship/climate strategies, (2) academic strategies, and (3) disciplinary strategies. Relationship/climate strategies include: (1) gradually assign responsibility and leadership; (2) display a personal interest daily; (3) drop all grudges; (4) limit negative faculty room talk; (5) open parent conferences with a positive statement; (6) tell the student you understand his feelings; and (7) value the student despite the inappropriate action. Academic strategies include: keep the class moving and unleash the power of appropriately high expectations. Disciplinary strategies include: (1) bargaining is not an option; (2) criticize the action, not the student; (3) have an emergency response team in place; (4) have a buddy teacher available to help out; (5) apply immediate and meaningful consequences; (6) judge students’ actions fairly; (7) make the “death penalty” the last option; (8) never intervene physically with a student; (9) provide the student with choices; (10) quiet corrections are the most powerful; (11) reward students for accomplishments, not promises; and (12) saving face is everything.

Responding to Classroom Disruptions

When classroom disruptions are dealt with effectively, consistently, and immediately, the chances of their escalating and spreading is greatly reduced. Handling a classroom disruption begins with responding nonverbally and moves to responding verbally, then making demands, and, finally, implementing consequences (Boynton & Boynton, 2005).

Dealing with Major Rule Violations

Major rule violations include power struggles between students and teachers. When dealing with power struggles, Tauber (1999) and Walker and Walker (1991) suggest the following process: (1) disengage your emotions; (2) de-escalate the situation; (3) admit the student's power; and (4) review alternatives.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Developing and preserving effective levels of classroom and school-wide discipline is difficult work. There are definite approaches and components to student discipline that faculty must recognize, accept, and embrace if this critical goal is to be achieved. Faculty must embrace the conviction that establishing positive relationships with students is crucial step toward establishing a structured and orderly classroom and school setting, as students will work to please staff whose actions make it obvious that they respect and care for the students.

Recognizing that students acquire what is taught and not what is announced, teachers must formally teach their discipline expectations just as any content area of the curriculum is taught. Teachers must have an assortment of immediate, meaningful, varied, and easy-to-implement consequences for students who unsuccessfully obey the discipline policies and procedures. Finally, administrators and parents need to support teachers so students are held accountable for their behaviors.

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Crossing Borders: A Cross-Curricular Approach to Teaching

Zakia Rodriguez

Zakia Rodriguez is a Social Studies teacher at Noor-Ul-Iman School, New Jersey. She received a B.A. in History at Rutgers University, NJ. She is a certified Teacher of Social Studies in New Jersey. She completed the National Geographic FLOW Education program (Facilitating Learning through Outdoor Watershed Education), to teach students the significance of watersheds. She works towards integrating essential topics into the Social Studies curriculum such as the environment, global citizenship, and technology. Her current projects include working on becoming a Google Certified Teacher, and training with the U.S. Green Building Council, to receive certification as a Green Classroom Teacher.

In an interdependent world, where a mutual dependence exists between nations, peoples, and the environment, education can be enhanced when it is compatible with this global relationship. Cross-curricular teaching, known also as interdisciplinary teaching, aims to apply knowledge, principles, and values to more than one academic discipline simultaneously (What is Interdisciplinary/Cross-Curricular Teaching? (n.d.). Retrieved March 11, 2016, from <http://www.eduplace.com/rdg/res/literacy/interd0.html>). This method of teaching can benefit students across all grade levels because it allows them to form lasting connections between the various subjects they learn in school. These connections can allow learning to be relevant to the everyday lives of students, who may be the future generation of leaders.

Since Islamic Schools are independent learning institutions, they are afforded the flexibility needed to implement this particular method of teaching. As Islamic Schools in North America continue to progress, and improve the curriculum to meet the standards of 21st century educational models, there are optimal ways to facilitate cross-curricular learning. School administrators can begin by providing professional development on cross-curricular teaching, and learning to the entire faculty (administration included). This training can be conducted by educators who are experienced with this technique, and who can provide guidance, and resources for the faculty. Prior to the training, faculty at all grade levels, and subjects can evaluate the methods of instruction currently used. This evaluation of teaching will assist in understanding the learning climate at the school, and to sort out which methods are effective, and ineffective. The faculty, and administration should be tuned in to the learning needs of the students, and how they can work together to establish learning communities that are successful. This “learning audit” can take school days, weeks, or even months to complete. However, it is necessary to establish clear and consistent learning goals that will be enhanced with the cross-curricular teaching approach.

Students can truly benefit from the deeper learning that cross-curricular teaching can provide. It can be easy to remain in the comfort zone of isolated instruction and learning. As educators, we strive to make education innovative, and effective, but how can this be possible if students are not challenged? Today, students across the United States are desperately in need of more from their education. For example, it is observed in the “Race to Nowhere” reform, an initiative to reclaim health and learning of students, quality work in the classroom is more effective than an overabundance of homework. According to Vicki Abeles, the director of the

documentary “Race to Nowhere,” the schools that are making groundbreaking changes in the classroom are those that incorporate lessons that are relevant, and make connections to their global surroundings:

According to Abeles, “These schools are led by teachers and administrators, and supported by communities of parents, who understand that the old ways of education don’t work for most kids and that the old ways of education don’t work for most kids and the modern world demands something different. Their methods are driven by the belief that our educational system should modernize its purpose and work to unleash the true potential of every child” (Abeles, 2015, p. 154).

When a school begins planning for cross-curricular learning, division and grade level meetings are helpful. In these meetings, all subject teachers can share monthly curriculum goals to see where different subject matter can fit into lesson plans. Discussions can present opportunities where certain topics or projects can be connected between the subjects that are being taught. This planning should include all subjects, including: Languages, Religious Studies, Physical Education, and electives. Interdisciplinary teaching offers educators the chance to broaden learning, and encourages students to think and reason on these integrated lessons. Therefore, grade level meetings will allow subject teachers to share monthly curriculum goals to see where different subject matter can fit into lesson plans. This detailed planning can also lead teachers to learn the value of all the subjects, not just their own.

Once teachers decide which subject they want to work with, plans can be made to create an effective lesson plan. There should be a common theme between both subjects, in order to establish learning objectives that are clear, practical, and effective. Subjects that do not usually work together, such as Math and English, or Social Studies and Islamic Studies, can use a common theme to support each other. Instruction can include a formal lesson, class activity, or an assigned project. For optimal benefit, teachers will work together to decide what methods can be used to evaluate student learning, and which assessments are suitable.

Students need to be prepared when a cross-curricular lesson or activity is introduced. They should be aware of: the reasons as to why they will be learning with this the novel approach, how exactly they will be expected to learn, and finally the structure that the instructor will implement, to complete the assessment. This will then allow students to understand what

the expectations are, and to then realize that they are supposed to recognize the value of the inter-connectedness between the multiple subjects. The various resources that students may need should be provided by the teachers. Also, appropriate guidance and instruction should be shared as well. In addition, to effectively evaluate the interdisciplinary approach after lessons are given, teachers can hold follow-up meetings after the lesson, to discuss progress and to share feedback. Specific resources, such as scoring rubrics and learning tools, can be utilized as well (Cross Curricular Projects. (n.d.). Retrieved from

http://glencoe.mheducation.com/sites/0078738180/student_view0/crosscurricular_projects.html

Furthermore, the use of technology and web tools can substantially assist teachers working together to create lessons. There are remarkable online resources that are available for every subject. Various skills such as creative writing, graphing, scientific observations, and mapmaking can be enhanced by the Internet. A benefit of teachers working together to generate lessons is that they will have the capability to share the tools and devices that they have experience with (How Do I Integrate the Internet into my Classroom Curriculum? (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.cyberbee.com/intclass.html>).

Over the years, Noor-Ul-Iman School, a Pre-K to 12th grade Islamic School in New Jersey, has used cross-curricular teaching at the Middle School level (6th to 8th grades). One example is the “Landmark Project,” a project that was planned collaboratively by the 7th grade Math, Social Studies, and English departments. The objective of the project was to inspect different landforms throughout the world. The Social Studies portion of the project focused on examining the historical significance of the landmark, and to research the demographics as well as geography of the surrounding area. The Math objectives were to graph and measure the landmark, and subsequently to fashion a 3D model. The English objectives were to evaluate the student's’ ability to write a research paper.

The Landmark project took one month to complete and had different due dates for each teacher. The students received three grades for this project, one for each class. Students were able to work independently on this project, but still received help from their teachers when necessary. The Landmark project was a learning experience for the students, as well as for the all the teachers involved. It was an effective assignment, mainly because students were able to learn significantly more about the topic when combined with multiple subjects.

Cross-curricular learning can enhance the learning of all subjects, academic and non-academic. In order for this instruction to be successful, the administration, department heads, and teachers need to collaborate, sharing their resources and expertise in the process. Teachers at the different grade levels can create long term curriculum goals to integrate the cross-curricular approach consistently throughout the school year. Cross-curricular instruction can enhance the traditional “isolated” learning approach, to all students, grade levels, and learning styles.

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Refocusing on Testing: Assessing for Student Success

Patricia Salahuddin

Patricia Zahirah Salahuddin, Ed.D. has been an educator for 30 years, teaching middle and high school students in public and Islamic schools. During her teaching career, she held positions such as team leader, department chairperson, and class and club sponsor. In 2000, she became a National Board Certified teacher, and in 2011 she earned a doctorate of education from Florida International University (FIU); the focus of her research was character education in a Muslim school's curriculum. She is a founding member of Muslim Teachers Association (MTA), an organization designed to facilitate networking and professional development for teachers serving Muslim schools. Patricia is the chairperson for Clara Mohammed School Board in Miami, Florida. Additional board service includes: Board secretary for the Council of Islamic Schools of North America, (CISNA) and Board member for Islamic Schools League of America, (ISLA). Patricia is married, a mother of five, and a grandmother of 17.

“Then We made you successors in the land after them so that We may observe how you will do.” Surah 10:14

Testing is a natural part of the learning process. As Believers we are continuously tested by Allah to determine our level of understanding and willingness to adhere to what we say we believe. From these assessments, we learn more about ourselves, about Allah and about the lessons being taught. Similarly, assessments in the classroom should be an opportunity to learn more about the student, our instructions and the subject. In the school environment, assessment should not become the means by which we collect data to determine if the student is an A student or if our school is an A school. Assessment should be used to determine what students already know, what they need to learn, and how to encourage them to be open to future learning experiences. In other words, assessment should be comprehensive and authentic. This interactive workshop will examine how assessment can be used to promote student success. Participants will explore comprehensive, authentic and multiple assessment strategies that, insha Allah, can promote student learning.

Types of Assessments

A doctor orders a test to diagnose the patient’s condition or complaint. The patient and the doctor may gain an understanding of the problem and in most cases find an approach for treating the ailment. Similarly, by testing students both the teacher and the student can identify areas in which the student may have difficulty understanding certain concepts or ideas contained in the lesson. As in the medical field, based on the need, educators have multiple types of assessments to apply. Pre-assessment, formative, summative and performance assessments are types of tests educators have at their disposal.

Pre-Assessment

Pre-assessments are used to determine what the student knows or understands about a topic, idea or concept. The pre-assessment is a useful tool in planning initial instructions for a unit. Effective pre-assessment provides a preview of students’ skill levels as it relates to the skills required to meet the objectives of the unit. When teachers plan in advance and devise various data collecting activities, gathering this information can be fun and enjoyable for both teacher

and student. The collected data can be used to determine students' entry position. Tomlinson (2013) refers to this as the "KUD"- Knowledge, Understanding and Do:

K- Knowledge: a teacher needs to be clear as to what students need to know in order to meet the objectives; for example, vocabulary necessary for the unit;

U- Understanding: a teacher needs to understand the student's insight, does the student understand the significance of the unit;

D- Do: a teacher needs to be clear as to what the student should be able to do after the lessons of the unit are complete.

According to Tomlinson there are formal and informal assessments using various formats, such as self-reporting and teacher observations. Strategies for implementing pre-assessment will be discussed later in the paper. It is important to remember that pre-assessment is used to gather evidence for determining student readiness, interest, and learning profile. Teachers use this data to construct appropriate instructions for student learning (Tomlinson, 2014). Since pre-assessment guides instructions, quality time and effort should be invested in pre-assessment in order to make a difference in student learning progress.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is a major part of assessing students' progress. At this stage of assessment, teachers have the opportunity to keep abreast of student progress and as needed make adjustments in instructional strategies. During formative assessment, teachers are monitoring the students' growth at every stage of the lesson. For students to get the most out of the formative assessment experience, teachers should:

1. Create a growth mindset with students. By encouraging students to be open-minded to learning regardless of the difficulty. Instead of dreading it, students may see formative assessment as a part of their learning process.
2. Allow students to set learning goals. According to research studies, goal setting is one of the most effective approaches to preparing students for learning during formative assessments. Students should set learning goals that are aligned with the standards being taught. Setting goals allows students to take ownership of their learning, making the

implementation of formative strategies more meaningful and more effective (Vega, 2015, Tomlinson 2014).

3. Plan ahead. Consider what will be assessed before starting the lesson.

Summative Assessment

Where formative assessment is used during the process of teaching a lesson, summative assessment is the formal and official gathering of evidence at the end of a unit, after students are given an opportunity to master a skill or concept. “ At some points during a unit of study, it is both necessary and important to formally assess students’ levels of achievement relative to predefined sets of learning goals” (Tomlinson, 2013). It is important to note that Tomlinson stated “At some points”. Therefore, summative assessment can and should be administered at predetermined segments of the lesson, before the very end. Formally assessing during intervals allows student and teacher to make any adjustments necessary that will improve learning and student success.

Although summative assessment allows the teacher to analyze student progress, it is also a time that teachers can reflect and evaluate the effectiveness of their instructions. Asking: what was or was not effective? And where can I make improvements. If the first two assessments are applied effectively the ideal scenario is that the summative assessment results will reflect positive gains in student achievement.

Performance Assessment

A form of summative assessment, which I find most interesting, is performance assessment. Performance assessment allows students to demonstrate what they have learned with the presentation of a product. Performance assessment is aligned with Project Based Learning (PBL) instructional strategy. This assessment is analogous to a piano recital or a dance performance or even a sporting event. Students get instructions from various lessons delivered with multiple approaches and, during a culminating event, they demonstrate their ability to apply predetermined skills by making a presentation or performing a task. Through this authentic approach, performance assessment provides a meaningful experience for students, while at the same time, providing teachers the opportunity to measure student progress. Although students are working to produce a product, performance assessment requires the application of ongoing formative assessment as well. As with conventional instructions, also

with performance assessment, teachers will need to assess students' progress at each stage of instruction, insuring student success.

Assessment Strategies to Promote Learning

Now that we have identified and defined the different types of assessments, in this section we will identify effective assessment strategies to promote student learning in each type of assessment. During the workshop, we will watch a video application of some of these strategies in the actual classroom.

Pre-Assessment Strategies

“The most important single factor influencing learning is what the student already knows. Ascertain this and teach him accordingly.”—David Ausubel, *Educational Psychology: A Cognitive View*

Pre-assessment puts teachers in the driver's seat. You know your goals and objectives and knowing the students' level of knowledge before starting the journey allows you to map out a specific course for all students; thus, increasing the possibility for students achieving the learning goals. Tomlinson (2013) identifies two types of strategies for pre-assessment: Indirect (informal) strategies and direct (formal) strategies.

Indirect (informal) strategies may include:

Hand signals- Students self-assess their own proficiency with knowledge, skill or understanding

KWL Charts and Other Organizers- Graphic organizers where students report what they know about an area or topic

Response Cards- Teacher poses right answer questions and students respond by holding up an index card with a prepared response on it.

Informal Conversations and Observations- Teacher talks informally with students while they work on a project or task. As a result of observing students, the teacher becomes aware of the way students work or approach tasks. This can be valuable information for increasing students' learning progress.

Direct (formal) pre-assessment strategies include:

Frayer Diagrams- Teacher gives students a rectangle divided into four and students are to write in each quadrant a response to a question. In the center of the diagram there is a topic and the questions related to that topic.

Systematic Observation /Interviews-Teacher has individual conversations with students or observe them systematically as they work or present work.

Journal Entries/Writing Prompts- Students respond in a journal to a prompt or question posed by the teacher.

Show and Tell- Students illustrate and explain their response to a question posed by the teacher. This strategy is good for English Language Learners (ELL).

Student Self-Rating- Students rate their proficiency in a list of topics that pertain to the unit of study.

Quizzes- Students take a quiz that reflects their knowledge and understanding of a topic.

Interest Surveys- Students select from or rank options according to their interests.

Pre-assessment strategies whether formally or informally gathered, when effectively implemented, provide insight into a student's thinking by identifying misconceptions and gaps. Implementing these strategies will enhance student learning significantly.

Formative Assessment Strategies:

Formative assessment warrants the most time because this is the time when the student and teacher can learn the most about the intended skill, concept or topic. As so eloquently stated by Tomlinson, "formative assessment is- or should be- the bridge or causeway between today's lesson and tomorrow's"(2014). Tomlinson gives 10 principles of formative assessments:

1. Assist students in understanding the purpose of formative assessment
2. Begin with clear goals
3. Acknowledge student differences
4. Provide instructive feedback
5. Make feedback effective

6. Assess persistently
7. Engage students with formative assessment
8. Look for patterns
9. Plan instruction around content requirements and student needs
10. Repeat the process

(adapted from Tomlinson, 2014)

During the ongoing formative assessment, teachers have an opportunity to gauge student progress and make adjustments in instructions. Students should be engaged in formative assessment in that they should use the feedback given to them to grow. How students use feedback in formative assessment is influenced by the delivery of the feedback. For example, Leah Alcala, a teacher featured on the Teaching Channel, gives her math students feedback by highlighting steps in the problem where students made mistakes. Students are placed in groups to discuss their mistakes. The teacher also discusses her “favorite” mistake with the whole class. “Favorite” in her definition is a pertinent mistake made in a step of the problem from which the whole class can learn the most. Formative assessment keeps teachers informed of student’s level of understanding and their willingness to put forth the effort to achieve their learning objectives.

Brent Duckor (2014), assistant professor at San Jose University, California, identifies seven formative assessment strategies that teachers may use to improve student achievement.

1. *Prime students first*: Prepare students for questioning that elicits thoughtful responses in a non-threatening manner. Establish “norms and routines” that encourage student participation.
2. *Posing good questions*: Posing good questions requires teachers to have knowledge of where their students’ level of understanding is. Questions should relate to the unit and should encourage students to think deeper about the topic.
3. *Pause during questioning*: Giving students extra time to clarify their thinking gets more students into the discussion and makes teachers more aware of the level of understanding of every student in the class. For example, think-pair-share with a journal entry.
4. *Probing*: A process for uncovering deeper understanding- collecting data that informs teachers where students may need more instructions or re-teaching. Ask follow up

- questions such as “do you think...” or “what other things...”. To apply effective probing, teachers must avoid “yes/ no” questions and questions with one right answer. On the other hand, questions that are too open-ended may result in silence and blank stares from your students.
5. *Bounce questions throughout the classroom:* Devise a system that ensures that all students are engaged in the discussion/questioning process. Avoid the two or three way communication between teacher and the two to three eager students willing to participate.
 6. *Use tagging:* Create a venue/space for students to reveal their misconceptions and understanding. For example, create a word web. Put a word (related to the concept of the lesson) on the board and ask each student to write their response on paper. All responses will be listed. Having student feedback allows teachers to know which students do not understand the concept.
 7. *Build your bin:* Know where students get stuck and categorize student responses for later use. Increase the power of formative assessment by knowing what questions trigger misconceptions related to a skill or idea under instruction.

Researchers Brent Duckor and Carol Tomlinson emphasize the importance of strategically applying assessment before and during instructions to ensure student success. I have mentioned only a few strategies that can be used to monitor student progress, but assessment resources are plentiful. In addition to the books and articles by researchers such as Carol Tomlinson and Brent Duckor, teachers can visit the Teaching Channel and Edutopia websites for additional information on formative assessment, as well as view practical applications of them. The best thing about these resources is that they are free.

Summative Assessment Strategies

After instructions are delivered, it is time to measure the degree to which students have mastered pre-identified learning goals with summative assessment (Tomlinson, 2014). Summative assessment is formal and may be administered as midterms, final exams, chapter test, unit test, papers, and projects. Because summative assessment is attached to grades and is time consuming, it is not often received with open arms. Nonetheless, it is an important part of the learning process. Making summative tests a learning experience for students and teachers

can be achieved through designing tests that meet certain criteria for quality. According to Carol Tomlinson (2013), there are five indicators of quality summative assessment:

- Indicator 1. The assessment mirrors the learning goals.
- Indicator 2. The content of the assessment reflects the relative importance of each learning goal.
- Indicator 3. The format of the assessment is aligned with the cognitive level of the learning goals.
- Indicator 4. The range of knowledge indicated by the learning goals is the range of knowledge reflected in instruction, which in turn, is the range of knowledge needed to appropriately respond to assessment items.
- Indicator 5. An assessment should not require students to have specialized knowledge, understanding, skill, or resources beyond what is targeted by the learning goals and is taught or available in class (2013).

Another strategy for implementing successful summative assessments is “chunking” assessments- dividing the expected outcome into segments- teachers may obtain knowledge of students’ progress at incremental stages of the unit. Instead of one snapshot of student progress, teachers will get two to three snapshots of the student’s level of growth. According to Tomlinson (2013), “Summative assessments can and should take place several times, at the summing-up points during a unit of study.” Do not wait until the end of the unit to give that one and only formal assessment. An example of “chunking” is the science project. The project is divided into segments and parts. Students are assessed to determine if they understand the hypothesis and how to write one and so on. Another example is a research paper. Students have several points at which they are assessed for skill development after instructions and practice. One point is the thesis statement. After lessons about thesis statements and practices in writing thesis statements, students are formally assessed only on writing the thesis statement. After formally assessing the student’s ability to write a thesis statement with proficiency, the results will reveal whether the student moves forward or the teacher re-teaches until proficiency is achieved. Chunking in summative assessment increases student success.

Performance Assessment is another aspect of summative assessment. Because of its hands on nature, performance assessment offers an authentic assessment of students’ level of

understanding through presentation and portfolio. In fact, performance assessments may provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their abilities in various skill sets, such as speaking and listening, creativity as well as demonstrate deeper understanding (Miller, 2015). Performance assessment is usually related to Project Based Learning (PBL). Instead of using paper-pencil assessment, rubrics aligned with learning goals are used in performance assessment. Although it comes at the end of the unit, whether traditional or performance-based, summative assessment continues to yield valuable information that can be used to direct student learning.

Conclusion

Assessment is an opportunity to foster growth in our students and in our instructions as teachers. Applying effective assessment strategies will increase students' learning progress as well as make assessment a palpable experience for students and teachers. Because obtaining knowledge is a form of worshipping, we as educators should make every effort to make learning a positive experience for students to encourage life long learning. We should put forth maximum effort to build self-confidence and positive self-concepts in our students. As a result, insha Allah, we will witness growth and a love for learning.

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Spaced Learning: A New Era in Instruction

Fawzia Mai Tung

Dr. Fawzia Mai Tung, a retired psychiatrist and journalist, has an Advanced Diploma of Education from the University of London, as well as her Arizona teacher certification and Arizona principal certification. Dr. Tung taught various subjects at all K-12 levels and Anatomy & Physiology at the Estrella Mountain Community College. She also established the Chinese Community School in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and served as principal of Arizona Cultural Academy before founding Aim High Institute, a K-8 charter school, and Pax Academy.

In your classroom, is your achievement curve a bell-shaped curve? Is the top of the bell centered on 60%? 75%? Or 85%? In other words, is your bell shifted to the right? What does that mean? Does it mean that you are too lenient in grading? Or that your teaching is so effective that most students mastered the information?

Is the goal of instruction supposed to be: Let ALL or MOST students learn and master the information? If this is not happening, then, are we failing our students? In other words, there ARE children left behind.

What, then, is the biggest stumbling block in the students' learning? Is it understanding the concepts? Mastering the skills? Or memorizing the facts? In today's educational climate in the West, memorization has become the big bad M word. So I would venture to pronounce Memorization as the black sheep of classroom instruction.

When you come across something to memorize (it could be a poem, a few Qur'an verses, a multiplication table, the functions of the liver, or the periodic table), how do you deal with it? Do you assign the students to go home and memorize it? Or do you help them memorize it in class?

Should you help them memorize it in class? If so, ***HOW***?

Let us try to answer some of these very vital questions.

Introduction

1. Types of memory:

Psychologists have long determined that there isn't just one type of memory. The nomenclature has changed over the years, but generally, they agree that there are two distinct types of memory:

- a. ***Short-term***: A memory that can be held for less than one minute. Often does not exceed five items.
- b. ***Long-term***: A memory that can be held for a lifetime. May be kept dormant, but easily recalled.

2. Learning:

What we call learning simply means: Turning short-term memory into long-term memory. Traditionally, teachers have relied on repetition to make this process occur. Simply put, if you repeat a poem at least 100-500 times, you should then know it by heart.

Obviously, this method is not very easy to implement, especially today when the amount of material to be learnt in school from K through 12 has increased enormously. Not only because of the lack of time, but simply because very few students today are willing to put in the time and effort.

Factors that have been shown to improve learning/memory retention are:

- a. Motivation: the more motivated a student, the easier the material will be retained.
For example: passing a driver's license test.
- b. Connection: If there is a relationship between the items to be memorized, they all are easier to retain. For example: the story line for Snow White.
- c. Strong emotional connection: Information taken in when a strong emotional event occurs concurrently associates the two together, and therefore get recalled together. How many of us can recall exactly what we were doing when we first found out about the events on 9/11? Yet do not remember what we were doing the day before or after?

However, none of these are practical on a daily basis in the classroom. We can teach some mnemonics, or create a story line to link the metals in their order of reactivity, but it would be simply not possible to do so for every single piece of information taught.

3. *Spaced Learning:*

In 2007, a small piece of news appeared, which caused a sensation in some quarters, and barely a ripple in others. Somewhere in the UK, at a high school called Monkseaton, a group of students studied for the GCSE (High school graduation) Biology test for only 90 minutes, one year ahead of the normal schedule, and scored just as well on the test as other students who had studied two years for it. The Principal/Head Teacher responsible for this amazing feat was Paul Kelley.

It all started with a 2005 article in Scientific American by R. Douglas Fields, Making Memories Stick. Kelley realized that much progress had been made by neuroscientists in the field of memory, yet its importance and implication had not yet trickled down to the world of educators. Based on the research results, he designed an instructional module for high school biology. The results, as mentioned above, were extremely astounding.

Since that first amazing trial, Spaced Learning, as it came to be named, has come quite some way. In the first formative phase, Kelley and others created the method and carried out a number of trials. In the second, or development stage, at least one formal experiment was carried out, and trials moved on to high-stake testing.

As of today, all research and studies are still supporting the original claims. There is indeed a neurologically improved method of memorizing new knowledge, which not only improves retention and raises test scores, but also successfully reduces time spent in learning.

On-site Demo

1. Two groups:
 - a. Traditional learning:
 - i. Give printed material to study in the hallway
 - ii. Return in 3 minutes,
 - b. Spaced learning:
 - i. Show ppt
 - ii. Finish in 3 minutes
 - c. Stand and clap
 - d. Explain that we shall now have a 10-minute “break” from learning
 - i. Meaning: go back to our lecture

Neuroscience base

So what exactly did neuroscience discover that was so earth shattering?

The nervous system, in particular the brain, is made up of cells, the most important of which is the neuron (see diagram). The neuron has a “tail”, the *axon*, which is the outgoing branch, and a number of “arms”, the *dendrites*, which are the incoming branches. The electric current travels “in” through the dendrites and “out” through the axon. Then the current jumps over a gap called a *synapse*, in the form of chemicals, and continues running through the next neuron.

In short-term memory, the incoming stimulus, enters a *neuronal circuit*, a series of interconnected neurons, and travels round and round this circuit. As long as the current still travels, the memory is still there. But as it travels, part of the current goes down the various dendrites and gets lost elsewhere. So the main current becomes weaker along the way. Thus, the memory fades eventually and then disappears altogether.

It was known for a long time that long-term memory involved something more solid and tangible than just an electrical current. Since the 1960’s, scientists agreed that genes in the nucleus of the neuron would somehow activate the production of proteins, which were the seat of the long-term memories. But the exact way this happened was still being researched. It was a summary of new findings on long-term memory that Fields explained in his 2005 article *Making Memories Stick*.

First, new proteins (memories) would have to be produced within minutes of the introduction of that memory, before it disappeared from the short-term neuronal circuit.

Secondly, once a synapse was “sufficiently stimulated”, this synapse could “hold” the memory for a short time, while a theoretical molecule would need to send a message from the synapse to the nucleus. There this molecule would activate specific genes, which would manufacture specific proteins. These proteins were the key to long-term memory: they would permanently strengthen that synapse.

By the mid-1990’s, a “transcription factor” named CREB was identified as an on/off switch for turning a short-term memory into a long-term one. Subsequently, in a seminal experiment, Fields and others found that a synapse becomes permanently strengthened when the same stimulus is applied three times – a state called late long-term potentiation (LTP). However, the stimuli cannot be repeated one after the other unless spaced by 10 minutes of inactivity.

Classroom Implementation

How do we translate this discovery into something we can implement in the classroom? The key answer lies in the intervals of inactivity: ten minutes. The total learning process should look like this:

1. First stimulus
2. Ten minutes of inactivity
3. Second stimulus
4. Ten minutes of inactivity
5. Third stimulus

If we apply this model to a 50-55 minute-period, the time allotted to each segment would be as follows:

- | | |
|--|------------|
| 1. Present information in a power point: | 8 minutes |
| 2. Do some unrelated activity: | 10 minutes |
| 3. Second review of information: | 8 minutes |
| 4. Do some unrelated activity: | 10 minutes |
| 5. Third review of information: | 8 minutes |
| 6. Total time taken: | 44 minutes |

This allows another 6 minutes or 11 minutes to open and close the class. Note that the vital time NOT to change is the ten minutes. The actual amount of time spent on presenting and reviewing information is not important. You can actually vary it without affecting the retention power.

Paul Kelley wondered what to do with the ten-minute intervals. He first decided to let the students shoot baskets. The idea was that pumping some blood around the body would increase oxygen flow to the brain anyway. In later experiments, students would be asked to do maybe creative crafts, thus using a different part of the brain.

Arizona experiments

I stumbled across Spaced Learning in 2008, quite accidentally, when reading a report by my children on an article in Odyssey. I could not believe my eyes. Could this be possible? Did it

really work? I immediately tried it on my own children. I still had three of them of school age at home. I immediately made up a simple power point on a topic I knew they did not know: Geography of China. I am using the same information, though in a retooled the presentation, today as your on-site demonstration.

The information included: countries bordering China; Seas/oceans bordering China; Main Rivers; Main mountain ranges; major cities; major ethnic groups. All information that needed plain memorization.

In this initial trial, I presented the same power point three times, and sent the girls to the backyard to skip rope during the ten-minute intervals.

After teaching the required presentation-activity-presentation-activity-presentation, I told my three daughters they would be tested on this the next day. Immediately, they looked at me in apprehension and asked for the power point to study it. I had to convince them that I would NOT be upset if they did not test well, that this was just a little experiment, that they should NOT even try finding the information elsewhere and review it.

The next day, I gave them a test. Let me deviate a little here and explain that building a reliable test is an art and a science in itself, but this is the subject of a separate presentation altogether. If your test is testing beyond your expectations, then you are bound to get failing scores. So, they all took the test dutifully, and to my total amazement, all three scored 100%! They were then aged 7, 11 and 13.

I was then teaching Anatomy and Physiology at the Estrella Mountain Community College. After a semester of disastrous scores (by my standards), I rethought the entire teaching strategy and decided to try Spaced Learning. I discussed it with my supervisor who gave me the go ahead. Normally, each class meets three times a week for a 75-minute lecture, followed by a 15-minute break then a 75-minute lab session. So I did the presentation in one straight session, followed by a 10-minute lab break, followed by a second re-presentation, followed by the second 10-minute lab break, followed by the third re-presentation. This took up the first 75-minute lecture. We would then finish the lab.

A good way to keep your fingers on the pulse of the students' learning is what I call the 2-minute quiz. This is a very short and simple quiz on half a piece of paper that I used to give at

the start of each lecture. One minute to turn on the question slide and let them answer it. And one minute for them to pass their half page paper to the front of each line and for me to collect them all. The question was always about the main points of the previous lecture, divided into four answers: For example: Name four functions of the liver. Each answer was worth $\frac{1}{4}$ point, for a total of 1 point. There were no re-takes for the quiz. Needless to say, I very rarely had tardies and absentees, which surprised my supervisor. During the previous semester that I taught the course, the average score for the 2-minute quizzes was between 0- $\frac{1}{4}$. During the semester that I implemented Spaced Learning, the average score jumped up to $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 point, for both the 7:30am class and the 11:00 am class.

It could be because of Spaced Learning, but then again, it could be that the students in the previous class were particularly bad? More than halfway down the semester, a few students from the 11:00am class asked me to change the teaching method. They said that all this jumping back and forth and 10-minute thing was very confusing and they preferred going back to the old way: 75 minutes of straight lecture and 75 minutes of straight lab. I asked the rest of the class, who apathetically agreed. I thought that their grades were good anyway, so why not? I scrapped Spaced Learning. Within a week, the scores of the 2-minute quiz started slipping. I attributed that to the material which was more difficult. The 7:30am class was still doing well, and I assumed it was because the students were more motivated and working harder. Soon, in that class, someone spoke up and said, he'd heard that the 11:00 class was back to regular type lectures, so why couldn't they? I asked the rest of the class, who also apathetically agreed. So I did. Within a week, their scores too started slipping. By the end of the semester, their average quiz score was as bad as those of the previous semester. However, because the downward turn occurred only toward the end of the course, they all still achieved a good average score, including all other tests and assignments. In both 24-student classes, 19-20 students scored an A or B, and passed, compared to just 5 students the previous semester.

In other words, the pass rate went from 20.8% to 83.3%, or an increase of 62.5%. Although this was not a rigorous scientific experiment, the main difference was: using Spaced Learning.

After that semester, I opened a K-8 charter school (Aim High Institute), and later a PreK-12 private school (Pax Academy). In both, I trained my teachers to use Spaced Learning: Only the

science teacher for AIH but all teachers for Pax. Thus, we gradually developed over the years a format for our Spaced Learning.

The science teacher, Qadri Tung, went on to implement Spaced Learning in his classes, at first here and there when he felt the need of memorization, but later in most of his classes. In Aim High Institute, he was able to teach all 3rd and 4th graders to successfully memorize the digestive system. In Pax Academy, in the AIMS (Arizona Instrument for Measuring Standards), all students who sat the Science component (4th and 8th graders) scored above “Meets the Standard” or “Exceeds the Standard”. Later, he went on to teach at University High School where he applied Spaced Learning to his Anatomy and Physiology course. After some time, the students asked to return to a regular delivery of the material. However, within a very short time, and declining test scores, the students organized themselves, and as a group, requested to return to Spaced Learning, as they could see the difference. For the ten minutes of synapse inactivity, he used physical exercises related to anatomy.

It is interesting to note that there has been a parallel development of the method at Monkseaton HS, and looking at the videos and articles they have posted, we have reached a similar position.

Rather than re-presenting the same power point three times, the method has evolved into a graduated presentation-and-recall. The first presentation is still introduction of information. The second one asks for slight recall. For example, you can animate your slides so that all the information does not appear at once, but only when clicked on. So you can ask the students to try to complete the sentence, or recall the information, before you click on it. Allow no more than a couple of seconds, and do not score, grade, reprimand or give any negative feedback. The idea is to allow them to try to recall the information when a hint is given. Another way to do this second stimulus is to give printed worksheets, and the students would fill in the information as they proceed. This paperwork can then be saved as the students’ study guide.

The third stimulus can be done in a slightly deeper manner. If done verbally, then questions can be more difficult and you can wait more than just 3 seconds for answers. If done in writing, then similarly, responses can be more in depth. But all the work must be completed within the time allotted (8 minutes) so you have time to give a complete ten-minute rest to those synapses and neuronal nuclei.

Let's look at an example. Suppose you plan to teach Irregular Verbs. The first stimulus would consist of showing a power point of a list of those verbs, ten per slide. The second stimulus would consist of showing the same slides, but this time, with the past participles missing. The students would either say those out loud or fill them in their worksheet. For the third stimulus, only the infinitives would be on the slides, and the students would be expected to say or write both the past tense and the past participle.

First Stimulus

160	stink	stank, stunk	stunk
161	strew	strewed	strewed, strewn
162	stride	strode	stridden
163	strike	struck	stricken
164	string	strung	strung
165	strive	strove	striven
166	study	studied	studied
167	swear	swore	sworn
168	sweat	sweated, sweat	sweated, sweat
169	sweep	swept	swept

Second Stimulus

160	stink	stank, stunk	
161	strew	strewed	
162	stride	strode	
163	strike	struck	
164	string	strung	
165	strive	strove	
166	study	studied	
167	swear	swore	
168	sweat	sweated, sweat	
169	sweep	swept	

Third Stimulus

160	stink		
161	strew		
162	stride		
163	strike		
164	string		
165	strive		
166	study		
167	swear		
168	sweat		
169	sweep		

Frontiers in Neuroscience Study

Besides the early “trials”, Paul Kelley did carry out a formal research. In 2013, he co-published with Terry Whatson in *Frontiers in Neuroscience* an article entitled “*Making Long-Term Memory in Minutes: a spaced learning pattern from memory research in education*”.

The test chosen was the GCSE Biology, a UK nation-wide test given to students 16 years of age. Learning occurred under three “conditions”.

In Condition 1, the experimental group was taught Biology 2 through Spaced Learning one year earlier (age 13), before being taught Biology 1, to eliminate the possibility of previous knowledge affecting learning and retention. This group was tested five days after the SL session to eliminate the effect of short term memory. The control group was taught the regular way, Biology 1 and 2 in the following year, each course taking up four months. They were then tested the regular way.

In Condition 2, both the experimental and the control group took a regular four-month course of Biology 1. Then the experimental group took Biology 2 in a Spaced Learning session, while the control group took it the regular way. These two groups were of matched abilities and assigned randomly.

In Condition 3, Only one group of students were tested. The experimental factor was the Biology 1 course taught the regular way followed by a review consisting of one session of Spaced Learning. The control factor was Physics 1, taught the regular way, followed by a few sessions of review. Both then sat for the GCSE test.

Results:

1. All groups tested significantly higher than random groups.
2. Condition 1: Surprisingly, the experimental group's scores in the high-stakes test were NOT significantly different from the control group.
3. Condition 2: Again, the experimental group's cores were NOT significantly different from the control group.
4. Spaced Learning sessions lasted 60 minutes, while a regular four-month course totaled 23 hours of direct instruction. Calculating the percentage of test score gain PER hour of instruction yielded a more striking efficiency gain.
5. By using predicted and achieved high-stakes test scores, no difference was found between the individual students when grouped by sex, age, and ability.
6. Condition 3: The Physics test scores closely matched the national cohort mean. The Biology (with Spaced Learning review) scores, however, were significantly higher than the national cohort mean. (See Table 1.)

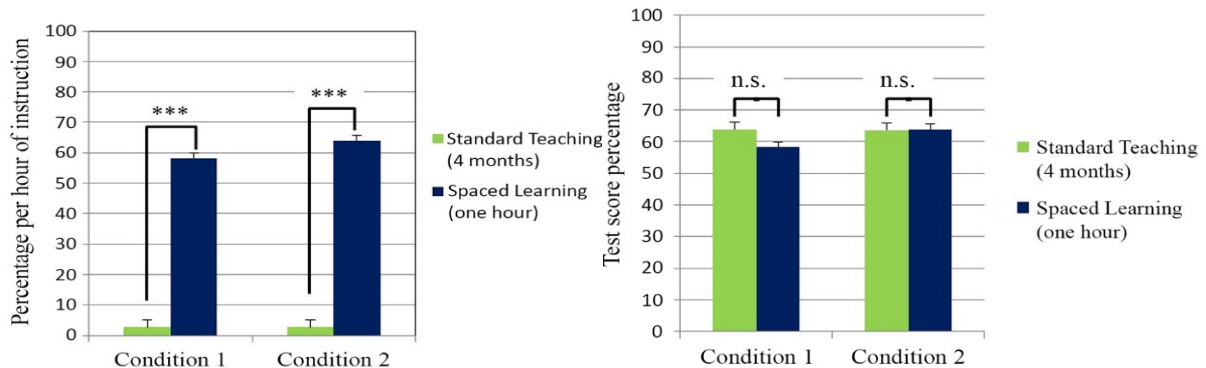


Table 1.

Percentage correct answers experimental vs. national cohort	Mean	Standard Error	Standard Deviation
Experimental subjects (N = 115)	62.84%***	1.44	15.47
National cohort subjects (N = 1,730)	55.24%	0.35	14.39

Test percentage of correct answers was significantly higher when Spaced Learning replaced intensive review teaching in Biology (N = 115) compared to a national cohort (N = 1,730).

****p < 0.00005, Cohen's d = 0.53; Two-sample t test with unequal variance. All data are means \pm SEM.*

Implications:

The authors stated that “If replicated consistently in further studies, this learning efficiency has significance in LTP/LTM encoding studies and significant implications for education in teaching, curriculum planning and learning resources.”

Feedback from a student in the study:

The lessons are very compressed. For example, the review of my whole Biology unit was completed in about 12 min. The nervous system, diet deficiencies, hormones and the menstrual cycle, drugs, and defence from pathogens all whiz by on slides shown at the dizzying rate of 7–8 per min. During the 10-min breaks we get physical, rather than mental, activities like basketball dribbling and teamwork games.

So what happens inside your head during Spaced Learning that is different from what happens during a Traditional lesson or review session? I can only answer for myself. I love rock climbing. You always have to be aware of what comes next, but you can't consciously think about it. For me, Spaced Learning is a bit like my climbing. I don't try to learn; I don't Write anything down, and I don't review. It just seems as if I am seeing a movie in my mind that I have already seen before, and my understanding of the information presented becomes more precise—clearer—when I see it again. In the end, I am left with a movie in my head of the lesson, just like my memory of a climb.

My first experience of Spaced Learning came in March 2007 when my class re-took our science exams from November 2006. We only had a one hour Spaced Learning review session (which had four months of work condensed in to it from the summer before). Most of us did better on

the exams after an hour of Spaced Learning review, even though we did no studying at all. I went from an A, B and C to straight A's and an A+. It was amazing.

Spaced Learning's Role in the Future?

It is still early to gauge the impact of Spaced Learning on education as a whole in schools. In my own experience, we were able to decrease the amount of homework, and increase the students' achievement as measured by test scores.

Beside the GCSE test and Biology 1 or 2 courses, other studies done with different academic subjects and age groups were reported (Gittner, 2010). Also, three repetitions spaced by five-minute intervals also showed some success in patients with multiple sclerosis (Goverover et al, 2011).

Spaced Learning testing and research sparked many other researches into other factors that might impact learning, such as sleep, time of learning, time of testing, and so on. Moreover, Wellcome Trust and Education Endowment Foundation funded in 2014 six separate projects researching the impact of various neuroscience based factors in learning.

The educational institution as a whole is a formidable bureaucracy, where teachers, despite professional development year-round, tend to teach a certain way and stick with it. Although Spaced Learning has now spread across the oceans and continents, it is still in its infancy, and yet practiced only by a handful of teachers. It might be decades before we see a significant impact on schools.

Not to be confused with Spaced Repetition:

A parting note: The method of Spaced Learning is not to be confused with various other learning methods grouped under the name of "Spaced Repetition". These include:

Practitioners of some type of spaced repetition include:

1. Paul Pimsleur (Pimsleur Learning System: The intervals published in Pimsleur's paper were: 5 seconds, 25 seconds, 2 minutes, 10 minutes, 1 hour, 5 hours, 1 day, 5 days, 25 days, 4 months, and 2 years.
2. Sebastian Leitner (Leitner system: flashcards in three boxes)

3. Piotr A. Woźniak (SuperMemo method)

Software that use some type of spaced repetition include:

Anki, Cerego, Course hero, Duolingo, Memrise, Mnemosyne, SuperMemo, Flashcards, WaniKani.

On-site trial

At the start of this lecture, the audience will be divided into two groups. Both groups will be given a 2-minute presentation (Stimulus 1) on material assumed to be not commonly known. The lecture will continue for ten minutes, after which the control group will be sent out of the room for a break while the experimental group will be exposed to 2 minutes of Stimulus 2. The control group will return to the room. After another ten minutes of lecture, the control group will again leave the room while the experimental group will be exposed to Stimulus 3. At the end of the lecture, both groups will take a test on the material and the results tallied.

Results will be discussed.

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Teaching Arabic Through Processing Instruction

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Two facts about SLA are theoretically sound and empirically well-documented: instruction can facilitate L2 acquisition and comprehensible input is essential for acquisition. A hot debate, however, remains over the question: what type of instruction is beneficial to L2 acquisition. Whatever the instruction is, it must account for what we know from psycholinguistic research: in other words, it must address how language is acquired, what processes and mechanisms are involved in forming an L2 implicit system from input (VanPatten 2004). One type of instruction that takes into account these processes and mechanisms is Processing Instruction (henceforth PI).

PI is a type of explicit grammar instruction that is based on VanPatten's model of Input Processing (PI) (VanPatten 2002, 2004). Processing, as defined by VanPatten (2004), occurs when second language (L2) learners assign a particular meaning or function to a form that they notice in an input string during online comprehension. PI addresses the questions: what, how, and why certain linguistic features are processed from input while others tend to be overlooked; i.e., it describes what mechanisms and strategies determine what forms L2 learners initially decode on the lexical and grammatical level. PI consists of two major principles and several sub-principles. The first major principle is the *primacy of meaning* (VanPatten, 2004, p. 13), which describes what linguistic items learners process first: Given learners' limited attentional resources on the one hand and their focus on extracting meaning on the other hand, learners process (1) lexical items before morphology, (2) more meaningful morphology before less meaningful morphology, and (3) non-redundant (whose meaning is not conveyed elsewhere in the sentence) meaningful morphology before redundant meaningful morphology. Under this principle is another sub-principle, the Sentence Location, which states that sentence initial items are processed before sentence final items, while sentence medial items are processed last, depending on the availability of attentional resources.

The second major principle of IP is the *first noun principle* (FNP). This principle describes a processing strategy that affects not how certain grammatical forms are processed. Precisely, learners tend to assign the role of the agent (or subject) to the first noun or pronoun they encounter in a sentence. This strategy poses a problem for acquisition when word order in L2 is OVS because it leads learners to make incorrect form-meaning connections by interpreting the preverbal object as the agent of the action. Examples of this phenomenon include Spanish OVS type sentences and French causative construction. VanPatten (2004) believes that this

principle holds regardless of the different (superficial) word orders in the learners' first language (L1) (P. 24).

VanPatten (2004) points out that empirical research has documented the use of the aforementioned strategies by L2 learners, especially in their early stages of acquisition (p. 34). But as we have seen above, these natural strategies that learners bring to the learning process often delay acquisition of certain features (e.g., low communicative forms, sentence medial items) or lead to incorrect form-meaning connections (e.g., proverbial nouns and pronouns in OVS word order). PI, whose goal is to optimize form-meaning connection, focuses on pushing learners away from these poor and faulty processing strategies towards more optimal ones. PI consists of three components.

1) Form-related explicit information:

The first step of PI is the presentation of a grammatical form or feature and its use, one form or feature time. If, for example, the target form is Spanish object pronouns in OVS sentences, information will focus on their form and position in such flexible word order.

2) Information about processing strategy

Next, learners are warned not to use their natural processing strategy as they attempt to understand input. For example, since the Spanish object pronouns in OVS sentences involve the FNP strategy, learners will be informed not to interpret the first noun or pronoun as the subject of the sentence.

3) Structured input activities

Immediately after receiving explicit information about the target and the processing strategy (or strategies), learners engage in SI input activities; as their name denotes, these are comprehension-based activities, in which input containing the target form is manipulated in such a way that privileges the target form to make it either the main source for meaning and/or by locating it in an optimal sentence position. During SI activities, Learners never practice producing the target form, but receive written and/or oral input and somehow demonstrate their understanding (e.g., matching utterances with corresponding visuals).

It is important to note that SI activities are not equivalent to comprehensible, meaning-based input, or input enhanced via visuals; for any input to qualify as SI, it must be based on IP and other psycholinguistic insights about language acquisition. VanPatten and Lee have developed specific guidelines to follow when developing SI activities. Listing these guidelines is beyond the scope of this paper, but to give one example: any SI activities must identify one (or more) of the processing strategies described earlier to be altered (see VanPatten 2002, 2004 for a comprehensive list).

To conclude this section, PI is a type of explicit grammar intervention whose goal is to facilitate form-meaning connections. It is based on (1) a fundamental fact about SLA, that is no L2 acquisition is possible without appropriate input in its initial stage and (2) what we know from research about how input is processed including learners' limited attentional resources and processing strategies. Therefore, PI focuses on enhancing the amount and the quality of linguistic data, to which learners attend and assign meaning. As such, PI is especially different from traditional grammar instruction (TI) in terms of its theoretical bases, and in turn, its techniques. Unlike PI, TI does not consider (1) or (2), and thus, gives little or no importance to input. Instead, TI focuses on altering learners' output via output production activities, which usually move from purely mechanical drills to controlled communicative interaction. One typical TI activity is sentence completion that asks learners to substitute or transform given forms. Since, TI is the dominant grammar teaching approach, numerous research studies on PI have compared the effects of the two types of instruction on the acquisition of several target forms. In the next section, I review some of these studies. I will look at their findings about the possible effects of PI per se, and the effects PI versus those of TI. Given the purpose of the present study, I will focus more on what previous research on PI has found about the generalizability of its effects to various forms in several languages.

VanPatten and Cadierno (1993) is the first study to empirically examine the possible effects of PI. The researchers in this study compared its impact on learners' ability to interpret and produce the Spanish accusative clitics to those of TI. Acquisition of this form is usually delayed as a result of (FNP), a faulty processing strategy based on which beginning learners of Spanish tend to attribute the role of the agent to the first noun or pronoun in a sentence including OVS sentences such as "lo asusta el perro." Based on VanPatten's principles (see above), PI would focus on pushing learners away from this faulty strategy toward more correct input

processing primarily via SI activities. TI, in contrast, would engage learners in output production practice of these forms, hoping that manipulating their output processing will affect their second language (L2) system and result in acquisition. This study examined whether altering learners' input processing will have more positive effects on learners' L2 developing system than altering their output processing, and if so, will PI improve only learners' ability to interpret Spanish OVS sentences or their ability to accurately produce this form as well.

VanPatten and Cadierno (1993) divided eighty subjects from six university–second-year Spanish classrooms into three groups: twenty-seven participants in the PI group, twenty-six in the TI group, and twenty-seven in a control group. The TI group received explanation about the form and use of direct object pronouns as well as information about their position. For the rest of the treatment period, learners in this group focused on accurately producing of OVS sentences through output production activities that progressed from form-focused mechanically based sentence formation, to meaningful drills, and finally communicative drills that elicited the production of the target form. The PI group received explanation about the function of object versus subject and was reminded about the flexible word order in Spanish and how it affects the position of the object. Unlike the TI group, the PI group did not practice producing the target form; instead, they focused on the interpretation of OVS sentences. i.e., they received SI activities, during which they listened to OVS sentences and were required to demonstrate that they correctly interpreted Spanish OVS sentences by, for example, matching the sentence they hear or read with the right picture. The control group received instruction on unrelated topic.

All groups took one posttest and two delayed posttests, which consisted of an interpretation task and a written production task. In the interpretation task, subjects were given fifteen sentences (ten OVS sentences and five SVO distracters). An example of the ten OVS sentences is *Al chico lo Saluda la chica* (the boy-object him-object pronoun greets the girl-subject). This sentence was accompanied by two pictures, in each of which the boy or the girl is doing “the greeting” respectively. Participants were asked to match each sentence with the corresponding picture. . On the production task, Participants were given five items, each consisting of a picture containing a scenario that elicits the use of an object pronoun and an incomplete sentence. The participants had to complete the sentence the appropriate pronoun in the appropriate position based on the picture. Two points were given for using the correct pronoun in the correct position, one point if the correct pronoun was used but in the incorrect position, and zero points if no direct pronoun was used.

Analysis of the test scores revealed that the PI group outperformed the traditional group and the control group on the interpretation task, while there were no significant differences between the TI and the control groups. The superiority of PI to TI on the interpretation task is expected because the subjects in the PI group were trained to interpret sentences containing the target form. What was interesting is the fact that the PI group made similar gains as the TI group on the production task although the PI group did not produce the target form at any time during the treatment group.

Based on these results, VanPatten and Cadierno conclude that the subjects in the TI group developed of an explicit knowledge that could only access to produce the target form, while they the improved the significant gains the PI group made on both interpretation and production is the result of real changes that occurred in subjects' developing system via enhancing their input processing. This, argue VanPatten and Cadierno, provided the subjects' with implicit knowledge that allows them to correctly interpret and accurately produce the target form.

In terms of L2 pedagogy, these findings meant several possible implications, the most important of which is that the output practice, especially mechanical drilling, does not have significant effects on acquisition. However, the same couldn't be said about the role of explicit information (EI) about grammar forms. Since EI and SI activities were combined in the same treatment in this study, it wasn't sure whether the observed positive effects of PI are attributable to SI, EI, or a combination of both. To examine what exactly is responsible for the observed improvement of learners' performance on interpretation and production tasks, VanPatten and Oikennon (1996) isolated SI from EI and compared the effects of each to regular PI on the same target form used in the original study, Spanish accusative clitics.

Fifty-nine high school fourth-semester Spanish students participated in this study and were split into 3 groups: an explicit information only group, a structured input activities only group, and a control group. The control group received a regular PI exactly the same as the one delivered in VanPatten and Cadierno, which consisted of (1) explicit information about object pronouns in Spanish and their position in Spanish OVS sentences plus (2) affective and referential activities. The EI only group received only (1) and the SI only group received only (2). As in VanPatten and Cadierno (1993), performance of the three groups was measured

according to interpretation and a sentence level production tasks. On the interpretation test, each correct answer was given a point and an incorrect answer, zero. On the production test, a correct answer scored two points, a partially correct answer received one point, and a totally incorrect answer, zero.

PI and SI groups significantly outperformed the EI group on the interpretation task, while all groups improved on the production task although the PI and SI only groups made higher gains than the EI only group. These results, first, confirm VanPatten and Cadierno's finding on the role of PI by altering learners processing strategies, that is: by altering learners' processing strategies, PI facilitated form-meaning connections and supplied learners' developing system with enough intake to improve on both the interpretation and the production of Spanish preverbal accusative clitics. Second, this study shows that the PI effects reported in VanPatten and Cadierno are due to the SI component of PI, not EI. In light of this finding, VanPatten and Oikennon argued that SI is sufficient for acquisition and that both output practice and explicit grammar explanation are necessary.

VanPatten and Oikennon (1996) confirmed the effectiveness of PI on facilitating acquisition of the accusative clitics via enhancing learners' processing strategies. However, the target forms used in the aforementioned studies are relatively simple, in that they have one function and carry one (obvious) meaning (Cheng 2002), and thus, facilitating their form-meaning connections, one could claim, is relatively easy. As these researchers stated in the discussion of their findings, they couldn't make claims about more complex Spanish forms. Cheng (2002) observed that it was not sure if the effects of PI on the Spanish accusative clitics are generalizable to more complex forms, or explicit grammar instruction would be more beneficial. Unlike the accusative clitics, *ser* and *estar* have low or no communicative value, and thus, learners must derive the semantic-grammatical meaning that they carry from the subtle distinctions between their accompanying adjectives or from the context where they occur (Cheng). As a result, learners tend to ignore *estar* and generalize *ser*, which is learned earlier, to all instances where a copula is required. Cheng conducted a study to examine if processing or TI will have an impact on learners' ability to correctly interpret and produce these two forms.

The 197 fourth semester-Spanish students, who participated in this study, were assigned to 3 groups: a PI group, a TI group, and a control group. As in VanPatten and Cadierno (1993), the TI, in this study, consisted of explicit presentation on *ser* and *estar* in two sections: first with

adjectives and second with present participles. Immediately following each presentation, learners in the TI group completed mechanical, meaningful and communicative activities, in which they practiced producing the correct copular verb. Learners in the PI group received information about the different functions of *ser* and *estar* and were warned not to neglect these two verbs in input. Next, they received structured input, referential and affective, activities that pushed them to attend to the different functions of *ser* and *estar* in relation to the adjectives and participials they co-occur with. Unlike learners in the traditional group, their counterparts in the PI group did not practice producing the target form during the treatment time. Instructional material was balanced between the two treatments, and hence, the only difference is that while the processing treatment was interpretation-based, the other was production-based. The control group did not receive any specific instruction on the target forms. All groups took the same three assessment tasks: the interpretation oral task that asked subjects to match four sentences containing *ser* and six containing *estar* with pictures and English equivalents. The sentence-level production task consisted of dialogues that learners had to read and, then, complete ten sentences, four of which required the use of *ser* and six required *estar*. In the guided composition production task, learners were given a sequence of pictures telling a story and a set of adjective requiring either *ser* or *estar* to use in telling the story.

A general analysis of Cheng's study showed that both instructional groups made significant gains in terms of interpretation, sentence completion and discourse level production. The control group only made gains on the guided composition from posttest to delayed posttest, which Cheng speculate to be due to familiarity with *ser* and *estar* that the learners in this group gained while taking posttest 1. However, analysis of *estar*-only data results reveals that the PI group outperformed the TI group on the interpretation task and performed equally well as the tradition group on the two production tasks.

Again, the results obtained from Cheng's study empirically confirms the positive effects found in the original study- that is PI is effective in not only improving learners' ability to interpret grammar forms but also their ability to access the knowledge that they developed as a result of optimal processing to accurately produce them. Furthermore, this study demonstrated that these positive impact is not limited to simple and high-communicative-value features such as the clitics but can apply to more complex and features that carry subtle semantic-grammatical meaning such as *ser* and *estar*.

Benati (2001) acknowledged the validity and consistency of the findings that VanPatten and his colleagues reported about PI effects on various Spanish features (101). However, it was necessary, warned Benati, to explore the effects of PI on another romance language morphology—that is the Italian future tense. Benati also wanted to contrast PI with a more meaning-based instruction than those used in the aforementioned research. In this study, Benati compared the effects of PI and an output-based instruction on learners' acquisition and retention of the Italian future tense. This form is chosen because it involves the lexical preference strategy that beginning learners of Italian tends to use to derive meaning of the tense from the temporal adverbials, and thus, overlook the verbal endings that signal the future tense. Benati hypothesized that the PI will push learners to derive information about tense, and thus, supply their developing system with enough intake to acquire this target form. As a result, predicts Benati, learners who receive PI will perform better not only in interpretation but also in production of the Italian future tense.

To test these hypotheses, Benati assigned thirty-nine beginning learners of Italian to two experimental groups: a PI group and an out-based instruction group; and a control group. The treatment lasted for two days, three hours a day and both treatments were similar in that they consisted of meaning-based instruction and used the same material. However, the PI treatment was comprehension-based and consisted of (1) presentation of future forms with one person a time and (2) structured input activities, during which subjects had to respond to input without producing the future tense form. For example, they had to listen to sentences and indicate whether the action they heard was done in the past or in the future, and since the temporal adverbials were removed, subjects had to rely completely on verbal inflections to interpret the tense. In the output-based group, after the future tense endings were presented in paradigms, learners completed activities, some of which were mechanical, to practice producing the correct future forms.

After the treatment, subjects took one immediate test and one delayed test. Both tests consisted of three assessment measures: an interpretation task, an oral production task, and a written sentence completion task. In the interpretation task, subjects listened to twenty sentences without temporal adverbials or subjects to prevent subjects from using them in the interpretation process. Ten of the sentences contained verbs in the future tense, while the other

served as distractors. Subjects had to determine the tense of each sentence. In the written production task, subjects had to complete a text by providing the correct form of the given verbs. Finally, the oral task was administered in a language laboratory where subjects studied five pictures representing a story and a set of vocabulary for five minutes, and, then, described each picture with one sentence containing a verb in the future tense.

The immediate posttest results revealed significant gains in interpretation for the PI group and the output-based group; both groups significantly outperformed the control group, but the gains of the PI group were significantly higher than the output-based group. Both groups retained their gains over the delayed posttest period. In terms of production, the two experimental groups made significant gains, which were quite equal. The control group did not make any notable gains. Again, the gains made by both groups held over the delayed posttest. Benati interprets the high scores that the output-based group achieved on the interpretation task as a real change in the learners' linguistic system, and not just practices because they weren't trained on interpretation. He dismisses, however, the possibility that output production is responsible for these change and attributes it, instead, to a sort of incidental input that emerged from the meaning-based output production (see Toth 2006, p. 116 for an opposing view of such interpretation).

At any rate, the results of Benati's study are very similar to VanPatten and Cadierno and, thus, provide more empirical evidence for the positive effects of PI on learners' developing system. This study demonstrated that PI has a stronger short term and long term effects on learners' ability to interpret the Italian future tense, and was equal effects on their ability to produce sentences containing this form. What is particularly relevant to the purpose of the prospective study is that these findings empirically prove that the positive effects of PI are not limited to Spanish linguistic features, but can apply, at least, to another romance language.

Allen 2000 conceptually replicated VanPatten and Cadierno to (1) confirm the effects of PI reported in VanPatten and Cadierno and (2) to test its generalizability to a different grammatical form (The French causative construction). Like VanPatten and Cadierno, Allen contrasted the effects of PI and TI on learner's ability to interpret and produce sentences containing the French causative construction. Learning this form involves the first noun principle, a faulty processing strategy whereby learners attribute the agent role to the first noun

or pronoun they encounter in a sentence. For example, in “le professeur fait corriger les fautes a ses eleves(the professor has his students correct the errors), learners tend to interpret that the professor who correct the errors instead of his students.140 high school students from nine 4th semester French classes were assigned to three groups: a PI group, a TI group, and control group that received no instruction. Unlike in Van Patten and Oikennon (1996), Allen used a much larger sample 140 after attrition, which makes the findings statistically more reliable.

The treatment, which included grammar explanation and practice, was delivered in two days and was balanced for both groups in terms of the vocabulary, the amount of explanation versus practice time, and the number of activities. In the first day, the PI group received input (thirteen sentences with the French causative) which the instructor produced orally and wrote on the board. Next, the PI group subjects received SI activities: instead of matching pictures with the sentences containing the target form as in VanPatten and Oikennon, participants in Allen listened to sentences containing causative construction and matched them with English equivalent sentences. Next, they listened to more sentences containing the target form and selected which of the two nouns in each sentence was doing the action. Similarly, participants in the TI group completed the same number of activities, which used the same vocabulary and the same number of tokens; however, subjects in this group practiced saying and writing the target group and concluded the first day by a sentence completion by combining given elements. The two treatments, then, differed in that participants in the TI group began producing the French causative orally and in written since the beginning of the activities while participants in the PI group, at no time, produced the target form. Also, only the PI group was informed about the word order. On the second day, explanation and practice focused on the French causative sentences that use the “preverbal pronoun me” (75). After exposure to input containing this pronoun, each group completed three activities similar to the ones they did on the first day. i.e., the PI group completed SI activities, the TI practiced production of the causative constructions.

One pretest and Three posttests were administered; each test consisted of three tasks: an interpretation task, which was based on VanPatten and Cadierno (1993): participants had to match two pictures displayed on the overboard with the corresponding sentence. Out of the fifteen sentences that were used, five were distractors. The same fifteen sentences were used in

all four tests, but were slightly changed and the subject and object on the pictures were changed too. The distractor task was conducted after the interpretation task to reduce the influence of interpretation task on the production task: subjects answered three short questions unrelated to the causative construction. Unlike the controlled production test in VanPatten and Cadierno, in which participants only had to fill in the blank with the a verb or an object pronoun, in Allen, the production assessment task was more open-ended; subjects had to write complete sentences describing what chores their parents have them do or what tasks their professors have them complete.

Allen found that both the PI and TI groups performed better than the control group in production and interpretation of the French causative constructions. However, the PI and TI made equal gains in interpretation from pretest to posttests, which is different from the findings in VanPatten and Cadierno (1993) and Benati (2004), where the PI group significantly outperformed the TI group. In terms of production, the TI performed significantly better, in this study, than the PI group, which is also different from VanPatten and Cadierno (1993) and Benati (2004), where the gains of both groups were equal. Based on these results, Allen concludes that the effects of PI reported in VanPatten and Cadierno are not generalizable to the French causative construction, “even though the instruction in both studies attempted to alter the same input processing strategy” (80).

Despite her claims about the fidelity of her design to the original study (72) and her identification of a problematic processing strategy, Allen did not adhere to what PI as outlined by VanPatten, especially in terms of SI activities. Wong identified several issues with how Allen SI activities, which may have defeated the goal of PI, that is relying solely on the target form or structure to extract meaning (see VanPatten, 2004, P.58 for a review of Allen’s study). This flaw notwithstanding, the results of Allen’s study do not refute the positive effects of PI, for even without the output production practice, the PI made significant gains in production and had equal effects on interpretation. Therefore, even if Allen legitimately found that PI is not superior to TI, the significant improvement that the PI group made on production and interpretation clearly demonstrates the generalizability of its effectiveness to the French causative construction.

Despite all the research on PI and TI, some questions are not settled yet including the role of explicit instruction. Fernandez (2008), for example found a positive role for EI in the

acquisition of more complex, less salient forms such as the subjunctive of doubt. However, some findings about PI have been consistently proven that one can make conclusive claims about them:

1. PI has positive effects on both learners' interpretation and production.

The studies above show that learners who receive PI always improve from in their ability to interpret sentences containing whatever target form they learned. If PI is well delivered, learners in PI groups always perform higher than those who receive other types of instruction. In addition, PI learners make equal gains on their ability to produce the target form as those made by learners who were trained to produce the target form.

2. The positive effects of PI are due real changes in learners developing system

The fact that PI improves learners' ability to produce the target form although they never practice this skill during treatment reveals an important aspect of PI: that is, it affects learners' L2 developing system. By altering learners' processing strategies, SI activities increase the amount of processed forms, and thus, increase the chance of converting input to intake, and in turn, accommodated to the L2 implicit system. Learners, then, can access this knowledge for production. The same cannot be said about learners who engage in output (at least, non-meaning based output) production activities; they only improve on the production performance, which suggests that develop a learner system, explicit knowledge used to produce accurate L2 forms, under certain controlled conditions.

3. The effects of PI are not limited to simple and salient features

As Cheng explains above, the Spanish accusative clitics used in early research on PI are simple; they carry a single direct relationship between form and meaning, and involve only one processing strategy, FNP. Her study found that PI, at least as a combination of EI and SI, have positive effects on the acquisition of *ser* and *estar*, which are as seen earlier are quite complex. Other studies such as Fernandez (2008) found similar effects on the acquisition of Spanish subjunctive of doubt, which underlies at least three problematic processing strategies: lexical preference, non-redundancy of meaning, and sentence location.

1. The effects of PI are not limited to the Spanish language

Research on PI has also ruled out the possibility that PI is Spanish-specific. Two of the studies reviewed above confirm the effectiveness of PI on improving learners' ability to interpret and produce various features in other romance languages including Italian and French. However, since romance languages are similar in many aspects, it is still not sure whether the observed positive effects of PI are generalizable to non-romance languages. Research has not investigated this question (see Nagata 1998 for an exception). The prospective study will attempt to extend the research on PI by examining the effects of PI on the acquisition of Arabic past tense, which is marked by word-final morphology. Most of the time, this form is accompanied by an adverbial of time as in: الامس، ذهبتُ إلى الشاطئ (yesterday, I went to the beach).

The last sound on the bolded word ([tu]) is the past tense suffix for the first singular person and the underlined word means yesterday. From my experience teaching this tense, learners have hard time learning this past tense ending partly because it is not so salient, but more importantly because they don't have to rely on it to interpret tense. This study will attempt to overcome FNP, which leads learner to derive meaning from the lexical item الامس (or yesterday) and skip over the target form. This study will contrast the effects of PI and TI, since the latter is almost the only approach to Arabic grammar teaching.

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