

Hands-On Books-Closed: Integrating Core Subjects into Islamic Studies

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Abstract:

Recent studies and surveys have shown that hands-on activities enhance the learning abilities of students and improve their academic performance. In this workshop we discuss hands on, center based activities that integrate core subjects and Islamic Studies. Traditionally, teachers have taught Islamic Studies through direct instruction-by way of having students read from a text, listen to a lecture, or answer comprehension questions. In this workshop we not only adopt a new hands-on approach to teaching Islamic Studies but we also provide a starter kit to take back to your classroom.

About the Author:

Tatiana Coloso has been at Al-Iman School for the past three years. She has taught Islamic Studies from kindergarten through fourth grade. Her innovative teaching strategies have tremendously improved the Islamic Studies curriculum which has inspired her students. Tatiana has a passion for teaching, nurturing, and stimulating young minds. She does this in an extremely creative manner and by engaging students in innovative activities. This has created an enthusiastic environment within her classroom.

Since beginning her teaching career; eight years ago, Aishia Neal has taught students ranging in grades three to eight. Working in Islamic schools has encouraged her to explore ways to integrate and “islamify” the curriculum taught in her core content classes. Currently teaching 3rd grade at Al-Iman School, she is a Lead Teacher who strives to engage her students using the latest research based strategies, while creating a classroom environment that is safe, stimulating, and supportive to all learning styles.

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Introduction:

The mission of an Islamic Studies teacher is that of any other teacher; to give their students the tools they need to become successful citizens. However, the Islamic Studies teacher has an added objective; success in the Hereafter. In order to achieve this objective, the Islamic Studies teacher has to broaden their resources and instructional strategies in order to fully impact their students. This paper will explain how creating a solid instructional framework as well as using unconventional resources and center based activities to integrate core subjects into Islamic Studies, will lead to better student achievement.

Establishing a Framework:

“Effective framework in language, literature, and the content areas begins thoughtful, artful organization and planning” (Fountas and Pinnell, 2001)

Establishing a solid framework in which the routine is regular, students identify the expectations of the teacher. This allows the student the ability to focus on the content taught, not wondering “what comes next”. Setting up the routine early in the year, simplifies instruction and ensures unit objectives are the only changes made.

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

One suggested framework is initiating a workshop style environment. By organizing learning time in three parts (a mini lesson, independent/small group practice, and conclusion) the Islamic Studies teacher will be able to provide students with time to apply concepts learned as well as target areas of improvement/enrichment through small groups, and thus reaching all students.

Below Table 1 shows an example of a current lesson plan for an Islamic Studies teacher that also teaches Quran every day. Quran review is done as a whole class choral reading. The first two days of the week, lessons are conducted on the community carpet (picture #1). After mini lessons, students complete independent practice (picture #2 and #3) while the teacher works one on one or in small groups testing Quran or reviewing concepts taught (picture #3). Over the next two days students participate in self directed learning through center and group work. Fridays are for Quran practice and testing.

Table 1

1 st Grade	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
10 min.	Quran review	Quran review	Quran review	Quran review	Quran review
13 min	Read & Discuss Unit D: Chapter 1 D:2-D:5	Read & Discuss Unit D: Chapter 1 D:6-D10	*Introduce Center Sheet *Vocab. Practice *Coloring Sheet *Journal Entry *Workbook page *Quran Memorization 6 students	*Centers *Vocab. Practice *Center game *Journal Entry *Workbook page *Quran Memorization 6 students	Quiz
10 min	*Vocab. List in Journal Ummah, Akh, Ukht *Quran Memorization 5 students	Hadith in Journal D:10 *Quran Memorization 6 students			*Quran Memorization 6 students
7 min	Wrap-up/clean-	Wrap-up/clean-	Wrap-up/clean-	Wrap-up/clean-	Wrap-up/clean-

7 min	Memorization 5 students	Memorization 6 students	Memorization 6 students	Memorization 6 students	Memorization 6 students
	Wrap-up/clean-up/dua	Wrap-up/clean-up/dua	Wrap-up/clean-up/dua	Wrap-up/clean-up/dua	Wrap-up/clean-up/dua

Picture #1: Mini Lesson (community carpet)



Picture #2 and #3: Independent Practice



Unconventional Resources:

Instead of being limited to the Islamic sources, teachers can use resources such as websites, anthologies, novels, or various materials from other subjects to enhance the objectives taught.

Currently Islamic Studies resources are limited. With continuously changing standards and teaching demands, Islamic Studies teachers must begin to look beyond the traditional resources and branch out into other subject areas to enhance the effectiveness of their lessons. In addition to using Islamic text, teachers can enhance their lessons and activities by utilizing resources from other subjects, character trait material, and religions.

Since teaching Islamic Studies is like teaching Language Arts; Language Arts material is the best resource. Using the resources as a template is a great start to enhancing your Islamic Studies material. Whether you are creative or not; using already made material as a template is effortless for anyone.

For a listing of resources refer to Appendix 1.

Centered Based Activities:

“The student benefits from the center by becoming a more self-directed learner, and the teacher benefits from a classroom where she facilitates as a learning coach, rather than constantly giving direction and instruction to the group.” (Stover, 2011)

The final part of this paper discusses the creation, the implementation, and the assessing of center based activities. Center based activities are needed in order to incorporate critical thinking skills, creativity, and differentiated instruction. These activities also develop independence in students’ time management skills.

“When students worked on individual and cooperative projects in the centers, they were engaged with the content at deeper, more meaningful levels. The learning centers contained multisensory activities that allowed students to learn in different ways.”

When students worked on individual and cooperative projects in the centers, they were engaged with the content at deeper, more meaningful levels. The learning centers contained multisensory and differentiated activities that helped meet the diverse range of student interests, ability levels, and needs." (Moritz and Holmes, 2007)

Center based activities expand on multiple dimensions of learning by using, enhancing and connecting our student's skills and knowledge. Using center based activities in Islamic Studies will enable students to demonstrate all levels of thinking –remembering, describing, explaining, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. (Revised Bloom's Taxonomy)

Creating centers are not as difficult as it may seem. There are many resources available to teachers. Using Language Arts resources and changing the words to meet the Islamic Studies objectives is simple. For example in Picture #5, a Language Arts sequencing center was modified to sequence events in Islamic history. In Picture #6, a store bought pocket chart is used to create an objective based interactive game. The game integrates health, science, language arts, and Islamic etiquette. The pocket chart can easily be changed with weekly objectives. Centers such as these can also be used for students who complete class work early throughout the day.

Picture #5



Quran: Write the first 5 ayats of the surah you are memorizing in your journal.



Game: Complete the salat center game



Writing: Write in your journal why it is so important to follow the Sunnah. Hint: Use your textbook to refresh your memory.

Activity: Create a reference book to compare wudu and tayammum.

Picture #6



Math: Salat Math Worksheet



and review weekly center to take centers Check

Assessing center work can be simple too. Using a rubric to assess a part or whole of the center checklist is possible. Table 3 shows an example of a simple center rubric.

Table 3

- Student completed all 6 centers correctly, neatly and on 4 time.
- Student completed all 6 centers with some errors, neatly 3 and on time.
- Student completed some or all of centers, correctly or 2 with some errors, neatly and on time.
- Center work was not complete, neat or on time. 1

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(Wong and Wong 2009)

Conclusion:

With thoughtful planning and organization, teachers will discover that they too can enhance their lessons by creating an environment where students develop self directed skills and take ownership of their academic achievements. Students’ engagement and achievement increases when the Islamic Studies teacher approaches instruction as Literacy teachers. In using this method, students will discover how Islam is connected to their Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, and Science content.

References:

- Fountas, Irene and Pinnell, Guy Su. “Guiding Readers and Writers: Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy.” :Heinemann, 2001.
- Movitz, Allison P. and Kerry P. Holmes. "Finding Center: How Learning Centers Evolved in a Secondary, Student-Centered Classroom." *English Journal* 96.3 (January, 2007): 68-73
- Stover, Elizabeth. "What Are the Benefits of Classroom Literacy Learning Centers?" Waldenu. Web. 24 Jan. 2011. <<http://connected.waldenu.edu/curriculum-resources/teaching-methods/item/1310-what-are-benefits-of-classroom-literacy-learning-centers>>.
- Wong, Harry & Rosemary. “Effective Teaching.” 1 March 2009. Web. 24 Jan. 2011. <<http://teachers.net/wong/MAR09/>>.
- Wong, Harry & Rosemary. “Effective Teaching.” August 2006. Web. 24 Jan. 2011. <<http://teachers.net/wong/AUG06/>>.

Appendix 1

Additional Resources:

- <http://www.fcrr.org/curriculum/SCAindex.shtml>
- <http://www.learningroots.com/lr/>
- <http://talibiddeenjr.blogspot.com/>
- <http://twistynoodle.com/worksheets/>
- <http://www.spellingcity.com/spelling-list-search-results.html>

Workshop Outline

- . Introduction to the Speakers
 - a. Tatiana Coloso – K – 4 Islamic Studies Teacher –Al-Iman School, Raleigh NC
 - b. Aishia Neal – 3rd Grade Teacher – Al-Iman School, Raleigh NC
- . Introduction to Establishing a Framework
 - a. Example: workshop style teaching
 - b. Video - Example Lesson in an Islamic Studies Class
 - c. Research proving beneficial
- . Unconventional Resources
 - a. Character Trait Resources
 - b. People of the Book Materials
 - c. Core Subject Materials
- . Centered Based Activities
 - a. Creating
 - b. Utilizing
 - c. Hands On Activity for Participants
 - d. Formative Assessing
- . Conclusion
 - a. Contact info
 - b. Take Home Packet

- a. ~~Contracting~~
- b. Take Home Packet