

In The Name of God, The Compassionate, The Merciful

Effective Weekend School Administration

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Abstract

In spite of the increase in the number of full-time Islamic schools in the United States, the majority of Muslim children still get their religious education and learn the language of the Quran, Arabic, through the Weekend Schools. In order to preserve this legacy, we need to make sure that the Weekend Schools have effective administration. Through my vast experience I feel that only an effective administration can shape the future of the Weekend Schools and continue its progress.

This presentation will enable administrators to create successful mission statements and set effective goals for the Weekend Schools. It will address the effective ways and means of reaching these goals. It will also help administrators look at their organization and communication skills and deal with the challenges shaping the future of the Weekend Schools.

Author / Presenter Biography: Shahida Alikhan

Shahida Alikhan started her career as an elementary school teacher at Francis Parker in Chicago. With her move to Los Angeles she joined New Horizon School, which was in its first year of inception. With her innovative ideas and organizational skills she soon moved up to be the principal of the school.

Shahida Alikhan completed her BA degree majoring in Islamic History and B.Ed (Teaching Credentials) with Child Psychology from India. She completed Early Childhood Education units and 21 units in Supervision and Administration from UCLA, in California, equipping herself to be a school head.

Shahida is the principal of New Horizon School-Los Angeles for the last 24 years and the principal of The Sunday School at the Islamic Center of Southern California for the last 9 years. She is the Program Coordinator of Aldeen Foundation Professional Development Workshops for the last 22 years. She serves on the board of several organizations.

She is a member of several educational organizations and a dedicated community member. She has served on several visiting teams to accredit schools for CAIS and WASC. She has presented papers at different organizations including ISNA Education Forum in Chicago.

Effective Weekend School Administration

Effective administration is necessary to preserve the legacy of the weekend schools and to shape their future. In spite of the increase in the number of full time Islamic schools in the United States, the majority of Muslim children still get their religious education, learn Arabic, the language of the Quran, and get their association with their Muslim friends through the weekend school. Hence, it is imperative to have effective administration for the success of the weekend schools.

What is Effective Administration? An effective administration is the development of an understanding of human problems and processes, which affect successful task completion.

Effective administration depends on three basic skills, which for analytical purposes can be classified as technical, human, and conceptual. Technical skills include a proficiency in methods, processes, procedures, or techniques. Human skills are an ability to lead and work effectively in a group. Conceptual skills, critical for policy decision making, involve the ability to see the organization as a whole, recognize how various functions inter-relate, and understand how the organization is related to the community and nation. The three skill approach emphasizes that good administrators can be developed (Katz, 2009).

In order to have effective administration, a mission and vision statement for the institution needs to be created. To do this, stakeholders need to be invited to brainstorm ideas of what the weekend school should aim to achieve in the short- and long-term. These ideas must then be translated into a mission and vision statement. The following is an example of the mission and vision statements of the Sunday School of the Islamic Center of Southern California:

Mission

Founded by the Islamic Center of Southern California in 1957, the Sunday School is committed to teaching Arabic language and providing Islamic education to children of the Muslim community. The Sunday School is dedicated to nurturing spiritual growth and developing God consciousness through the teachings of Islam and the Quran.

Vision

The Sunday School aims to develop, for its students, self-assurance as American Muslims with a commitment to honoring family, community involvement, and respecting others. The Sunday School strives to instill ethical values in the students towards becoming productive and responsible members of our society.

Once the mission and vision is established, specific goals to reach the stated mission and vision must be identified and itemized. These goals will then become the weekend school's benchmarks. Curriculum and procedures must be created to meet these goals. The following is an example of the goals of the Sunday School of the Islamic Center of Southern California:

Goals

- Develop an American Muslim Identity;
- Develop an association between the students and the Islamic Center of Southern California;
- To provide basic knowledge of the five pillars of Islam;
- Teaching students the Arabic language as a means of communication and understanding the Quran;
- Guiding students to Quranic principles and moral strength in their daily lives;
- Developing God consciousness and using prophetic examples as a model to be emulated throughout life;
- Fostering responsibility to God, society, and the environment

Constant evaluation of the program is necessary to monitor the success of the weekend school and to assess the reaching of the benchmarks.

Organization is another important aspect of effective administration. Policies and procedures should be established for the management and knowledge of the parents and the faculty. Employee policies should include information on professional ethics, job duties and responsibilities, performance evaluation, termination, and discipline. There should be policies in place for wage and salary and different means of employee communication. Health and safety policies, standards of conduct including attendance, absences, dress, and personal appearance, etcetera, should also be established.

Parent policies should include information about the program, staff, and policies of operation, academic policies including class sizes and groupings, homework and testing. The establishment of discipline policies including general rules, offenses, and consequences is also important. Parent involvement with PTO, parent conferences, and communication needs to be established.

Another important aspect of effective administration is proper curriculum implementation. Once the curriculum is set, the teachers should be required to put together a yearlong plan to pace the curriculum and include student assessment through quizzes and tests.

In conclusion, for effective administration, Scott Norton of Arizona State University states, “one needs to think beyond management and learn how to lead and affect school culture, student achievement, and organizational issues” (2004).

References:

1. Katz, R.L. (2009). Skills of an Effective Administrator. Harvard Business Review. Boston.
2. Norton, M.S. (2004). Effective Leadership for Effective Administration. Allyn & Bacon.