**Statement of Problem**

The modern world is experiencing a serious undeclared moral crisis. The souls that are meant to be united are disunited and the hearts that are meant to wish good to others are filled with selfishness, envy, hatred, betrayal, and hypocrisy. Allah (i.e., only God worthy of worship) has clearly stated in His final authentic book (i.e., Qur’an): “And if you obey most of those upon the earth, they will mislead you from the way of Allah…” (Qur’an 6:116). This versus suggests that most people suffer from one form or a combination of corruptions (e.g., economic, political, social, or cultural), which is rooted in a way or another in the spiritual corruption. The widespread of evil is announcing an alarming situation: our ethical values are endangered. “Muslim thinkers opine that most young Muslims have lost Islam and its values to a dangerous degree. In fact, many of them hardly know the basics of Allah’s Oneness and Muhammad’s Prophethood.” (Moes, n.d., p. 8). How can we, Muslims, not only protect our students from the destructive diseases of corruption, but also ensure that they are knowledgeable, noble, and righteousness promoters in the society they live in? A well-defined Islamic school mission and vision is imperative, so that American Muslims can preserve their Islamic principles and values, and also save other from falling in the Satanic traps by helping others find the right path, the path of Allah (i.e., only God worthy of worship), the path of real guidance, pure happiness, and true and eternal success while excelling in all fields of knowledge.

**Review of literature**

There are less than 300 Islamic schools in America. 85% of American Islamic schools are ten years old or younger and the average number of students per school is 121, and in 60% of the Islamic schools 80% of teachers are certified indicating a professionalism level higher than what is popularly held by a large segment of American Muslims (Keyworth, 2011). Others suggested “200-600 Islamic day schools in the United States serving approximately 30,000 students, (Strauss & Wax, 2002) (as cited in Moes, n.d., p. 3). Muslim parents are divided into 4 major categories: 1) Parents who were content with their children attending public schools, even if their children completely assimilated into the American culture and lost their Muslim identity or a significant portion of it. These parents do not offer their children any religious teaching. 2) Parents who are concerned about their children attending public schools that they would completely assimilate into the American culture at the cost of losing a portion of their Islamic personality, as the public school climate and curriculum are highly non-religious. These parents do not send their children to Islamic schools because they cannot afford the relatively high tuitions of private K-12 Islamic schools or simply because the Islamic schools do not exist where these families live, or due to social factors among others. The majority of these children receive after school hours in Arabic, Qur’an, and Islamic studies and/or weekend Islamic religious classes. 3) Parents who homeschool their children; and 4) Parents who actually enroll their children in Islamic schools. According to Ezzeldine (2016),

A mission statement must be clear, succinct and exclusive so that it does not appear to be everything for everyone…The simple question that can be answered to formulate a vision is “What is your final product?” For Islamic Schools, this requires leadership to project into the future and clearly describe their ideal graduate. This description must also be able to identify specific characteristics and once again use language that does not suggest a broad spectrum of ideas. [Furthermore,] Goals are the specific behaviors or qualities that make up the final product, the vision. In the case of Islamic Schools, goals are the major things students will be able to do or will have accomplished such that they can be living realizations of the vision statement. (p. 2-3)

American Muslims are struggling to prove to their fellow Americans that they are not violent creatures and that Islam is the religion of peace, mercy, respect, and collaboration. In this context, Elsegeiny (2005) noted that

The American Muslim community now receives a lot of attention from the American public, government, and media wanting to understand more about Muslims and Islam. The American Muslim community has a mission to fulfill which is to represent its perspective of the Islam religion and to defend its faith from a perceived assault. Islamic schools also should play an important role in relating the message that Islam is a peaceful religion. Islamic schools should defend their mission from the accusation of “raising little terrorists.” (p. 1)

Islamic schools play a vital role preparing American Muslim students to face major local and international political changes and deal with religious challenges in a country where all world religions are represented and all eyes are well focused on the Muslim community. Muslim students, teachers, school leaders, parents, and stakeholders have no choice but to unify their mission, vision, goals and interests to protect their Islamic values and keep an open bridge between their Muslim community and non-Muslim communities.

**Methods**

To ensure that our faith-based curriculum in our Islamic schools lead to the best graduates and assets for the society they live in, I am proposing that every Islamic school follow the following mission and vision cycle: 1) Familiarize and internalize your school’s mission and vision; 2) Understand and be able to explain the school’s mission and vision to students, parents, and stakeholders, if necessary; 3) Emulate and implement the mission and vision; and 4) Re-evaluate the mission and assess the goals. It takes a team, a dedicated team who genuinely understand and proactively share the common purpose of their team project, and who genuinely focus their efforts and collaborate to achieve their common objectives. In brief, a team who believes in their vision and that they can make it happen (Gabriel & Farmer, 2009). And although this paper’s recommendations can be extended to all subjects taught in Islamic schools, it is primarily meant to address Arabic and Islamic Studies teachers.So how can we, as everyday educators in the classroom, just one person who is part of a bigger, more dynamic team, make sure the Islamic school’s mission and vision is being implemented and applied at school?   
First and foremost, we should familiarize ourselves with the school’s goals. If you haven’t already, learn it and memorize it. Print it out and hang it in your classroom somewhere. Make sure we internalize our School’s Goals and Let it Show. After all, we are employees working for the school, so it is important to know what we are working for and why.

1. When we write our lesson plans, make sure it is reflected in your weekly lesson plans. *i.e. Today the students will begin the biography of the Caliph, Ali ibn Abi Talib. They will learn about his birth, parents, and upbringing. The students will be able to connect his life with their own and reflect upon how Allah guided him to Islam, at a time when the Qur’an was still being revealed. They will learn about his positive characters and manners and how this helped him become a strong Muslim later in life.*
2. Make sure to bring up your efforts with administration and if appropriate, in staff meetings and with your colleagues at work/school so you can brainstorm and share ideas. You may be able to start a weekly or monthly theme or concept that all teachers can use in their classrooms, including ELA (they can read stories, poems, or write about one of the characteristics discussed in the biography of Ali ibn Abi Talib), in Math (the students can be exposed to “Islamic” word problems with names from the Islamic history in their questions, and problems to solve that might actually relate to the history such as “Ali ibn Abu Talib is trying to build a new masjid for the growing population of believers in Baghdad. He needs the area of the masjid to be …. And the perimeter to be… what should each side measure ?).
3. Create a positive, enriching learning community for your colleagues and share strategies and ideas with each other. Join external groups such as the Arabic K-12 Teachers Network. They send weekly emails and have a WhatsApp group, a shared Google drive/folder with Arabic resources, and more! When we work as a group, it makes it easier for all of us to be successful and get more done. It makes the work bearable and fruitful.

Along with a Mission and Vision, schools usually set goals. The administration may create quarterly goals, annual goals, and a 3-year and/or 5-year goal. The School Goals and Our Road Map to Success!

* 1. Make sure we know and familiarize ourselves with our classes and the goals for each one. What are the class academic goals? – Is it ACT/SAT scores & prep? State exams? Proficiency levels? Fluency, literacy, etc.? *Make a list, my Arabic Level 1 class has monthly goals:….. has a mid-year goal…. And has an annual goal of…. By the end of year I hope the students can…..So that they are ready for Arabic Level 2.* For Islamic studies classes, maybe your goal is to cover a certain portion of the Seerah and to ensure the students memorize 6-8 Surahs by the end of the class. Of course, you probably also want to make sure they understand and master 1-2 characteristics or manners such as the manners of reciting the Qur’an or the manners of respecting the Masjid.
  2. What are your spiritual goals? To instill self-confidence in the students? To help them establish a connection with their Creator? What do you hope they learn from you as a role model? What are some qualities or traits you are good at that you can teach them? What are your social goals? Community service, volunteering, interfaith, sports, arts, activities, technology and enrichment! How can we make them understand and appreciate the body and life we are given and the world around us? How can we help students realize we are not alive only for our own selves and our own success but for all of mankind?

As educators, we must always take time for reflection. A successful educator takes frequent steps back, personal time, and gives themselves personal space to grow in order to reflect, analyze, and improve. We are NEVER going to be perfect. Our teaching style and instructional methodology will ALWAYS need improvement. There is no such thing as a “perfect teacher” and there is always a lesson to learn in our daily dealings with the students, the community, and our course materials. Reflect on things you can do better, praise yourself for the things you are already doing great at with the students, and come up with a plan. Ideally, it is good to do this AT LEAST every 9-weeks, definitely at the end of each school year, and prior to the start of a new year.

We must make sure we know the milestones that must be achieved at the end of each grade level based on our school’s curriculum map.

Did students memorize half of Juz Amma by 3rd grade? All of Juz Amma by 5th grade? Did they memorize the 29th Juz by 7th grade? Did they begin the 28th Juz in 9th grade?

What can we do to differentiate or “catch-up” students who need intervention? Will there be an alternative plan and set of goals for those who need accommodations and help reaching the school-wide goals? We must make individual student goals for those who are struggling a little, so instead of expecting them to memorize all of Juz Amma between 1st grade – 5th grade, you may expect this student to know at least HALF of Juz Amma or more to be promoted. We cannot be lax about the success of any classes, especially not our Islamic studies or Arabic courses. When students detect there is lack of planning, a lack of goals, a lack of expectations, they end up not taking the course seriously and they end up performing poorly, reflecting poorly on the school. We must remember that our Islamic Studies, Qur’an and Arabic classes are what make our schools unique and set them apart from other public, charter, or private schools. So, it is a heavy burden and responsibility – but a noble one indeed – to make sure that we take teaching these subjects seriously.

How many community service hours are students clocking each semester? Are there enough opportunities available? Chaperones, staff, and PTA involvement? What do student surveys show us, what can be improved? As teachers, you can survey your students, and it is a great way to improve our teaching and our courses. Do students like the projects better? Do they prefer having a video once in a while that ties into the curriculum? Asking them in an anonymous, voluntary, optional surveys that will not incur students any penalty or cause any negative repercussions for expressing themselves.

Another source of learning about the school’s current state and the established improvement plan is accessing reports from professional consultation companies. Most Islamic schools seek professional development services, have their facilities reviewed and evaluated, and many of them are accredited or in the process of becoming accredited by professional evaluators. You can probably publicly access the report or ask the administration for it, in order to align with the school’s improvement goals. This is a great way to make sure we are keeping our schools quality institutions that students can learn, thrive, and excel in.

So we spent most of the time discussing how we can make sure our students are knowledgeable from their educational experiences in our schools, but behavior management is the most important key to ensure that they have noble characteristics that they are encouraged and motivated to promote righteousness in society. This can easily be done by making sure our STUDENT BEHAVIOR expectations are uniform across the board. According to Moes (n.d.),

To be successful, the Islamic school must be clear about its agenda and the methodology it will use to achieve its aims…It is agreed that a complete curriculum overhaul is needed with Islamic concepts as a starting point in every subject. Balance and integration of subject matter is needed to particularly suit the Muslim in the American context. There is an even greater need for effective teachers in Islamic schools who exemplify the subject matter. (p. 24-25)

So, we, as Islamic school teachers, must instill in our students’ minds and hearts from pre-K to the 12th grade –in the smoothest, wisest, and kindest way– the important concepts Islamic character (see table below) that every Muslim teacher and student should be familiar with and would have no problem implementing them.

1. First step is to make sure Staff and Teachers emulate the behavior they wish to see in students. Sometimes, we want to joke with our students or create a friendly environment with them, but this can be counterproductive. Instead, we need to show that we can be serious about our profession and still smile once in a while. Not only that, when they see that their educators as punctual, caring, and well-prepared the students will most likely imitate the example of their teachers.
2. Another important step to implement in our classrooms and in our daily dealing with others in the school and in the community is speaking with respect: Spread “As’salaamu A’aykum”. This is done with staff among each other, with staff and students, with administration, with parents, with janitorial staff, with ALL people. Usually, even Islamic school staff of different faiths and different beliefs are open-minded and ready to use this greeting tool to further connect with their students and colleagues to foster an atmosphere of greater understanding, peace, respect, trust, and collaboration. If we notice a student has failed to initiate a conversation properly (by entering the classroom disrespectfully, or by pushing, shoving, or slamming, by laughing or carrying in conversation from the hallway or with other students, we should ask them to try it again and that they performed incorrectly).
3. We should address each person with proper titles and appropriate manners. Even our students, we should never use jokes or names they may not enjoy or appreciate.
4. As humans, we make mistakes. As an educator, we must show what an educated person does when they make a mistake. This is the difference between knowledge and ignorance. We show them that we are more than willing to apologize and correct our mistakes. If necessary, we make it right. This can also be demonstrated by case studies and examples showing what to do in certain situations: *Bilal was playing baseball outside with his friends and when it was his turn to swing the bat, he hit the ball so hard it hit the neighbor’s window and shattered it to pieces. Bilal felt bad, but scared and shrugged it off. He refused to take responsibility for his actions and he didn’t recall the Islamic principles of taking responsibility for our actions and correcting our mistakes. Bilal should immediately go to the neighbor house, knock on the door, and let the family know he is the one who caused the damage and that he is sincerely sorry. They may forgive him and feel relief and have good feelings and thoughts about him because he was so brave and so honest. They also may request partial or full payment for the damage – which is their right.*
5. Let’s make sure the students are interacting with each other properly. No student should put another student down. And us, as educators, just standing or sitting there and not doing anything about it are enabling it. We are just as guilty as the student who is doing the bullying. Allah can very well hold us accountable for bullying of that student. What is alarming is the amount of stories about students harming themselves – sometimes taking their lives – because of bullying. Would we also be responsible because we ignored it or acted like we didn’t hear it or acknowledge it? Of course we cannot do a miracle on our own, and for the school to combat bullying completely and effectively would need a strict zero tolerance policy. But can we at least make our classroom safe? Comfortable? A good place to learn? For our students to come in and feel comfortable and loved by us? Can we be a trusted individual that they can talk to if they have any problems?

I will leave you with this; “Be the change you wish to see.” As an educator, you hold a great deal of power – the education of the students (and who they teach or benefit because of you) is in your hands and in your scale of good deeds. Be proud of your role, your job, and what you can do and emulate it in your schools. Our jobs are not of a regular educator just teaching random students in a school – we are teaching the next generation of Muslims, the next wave from the Ummah of the Prophet Muhammad sallaAllahu alayhi wassalam. It is a form of dawah, it is a form of struggle, and it is a form of great reward that cannot be described or explained except by those who are in the field. They know the blessings, the barakah, and the greatness they are involved in. Stay in the field for at least 5 years and you will see your students graduating, going to college, getting married and bringing their kids to the same school. They will look at you with awe and admiration: that was my teacher, it is because of her/him I am who I am today. As in any profession, especially professions that deal with serving people, there will be difficult days and times when giving up seems like an easy way out – but just like when we pray 5 times a day.... We start the prayer standing straight, in front of Allah. Then, we kind of fall, we bow your heads from humiliation and hold our knees, glorifying Allah. Finally, we fall down to the ground, our forehead hits the ground, but we still glorify Allah and sit up, find strength and ask for forgiveness, and prostrate again. Humbling ourselves gives us strength and allows us to reflect and recuperate, where we stand in Qiyyaam and ask for guidance once more. This is a reflection of our life and how we handle our daily obstacles.

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| Concept | Meaning | Implementations | Goals |
| Khalqq | The Creator and creation. | Teach your students to contemplate the creation wonders, reflect on the amazing powers of the perfect Originator, and connect this with the purpose of creation.  Discuss with them the difference between the Creator and His creatures. | Your students grow with clear and sense-making belief, not confused between the Creator and the creatures.  Your students are fully persuaded that the Creator alone must be worshipped, not His creation. |
| Tawheed | To sincerely worship Allah alone without any partner by sincerely following the model of Prophet Muhammad, Salal’laahu A’layhi Wasal’lam. | The daily assembly Dua’a (daily reminder)  The Jumua’h khutbah (weekly reminder).  The congregational prayer (daily reminder).  The inspirational stories of Prophets and Sahaabah.  Eidul-Fitr and Eidul-Adh-haa, Ramadhaan, Hajj (seasonal reminders). | Students grow loyal to Allah and His final Messenger, Muhammad.  Students clearly understand the purpose of existence: to worship Allah alone as He required.  Students understand that every good action and every good word become E’baadah (act of worship) if it is purely for the sake of Allah.  Students understand that they live as practicing Muslims and die as strong believing Muslims. |
| Khuluqq | Character | Teach your students the importance of spreading “As’salaamu A’laykum” culture among students, teachers, administrators, parents, stakeholders, and community at large.  Teach your students how and why they should respect their teachers, administrators, parents, siblings, neighbors, friends, elders, guests, sick, dead, needy, poor, orphans, widows, and disabled.  Train your students to listen attentively and respectfully.  Use kind and gentle language and encourage your students to do same.  Teach your children to respect the Masdjid, school, house, and give every place its due right.  Inspire your students to be a giver, not a taker, to offer help to others, to give hope to others, to wish well to others. | You students grow peaceful, not violent.  They practice respect with everyone and promote it everywhere.  They become effective and respectful listeners and communicators.  Bullying becomes alien to your Islamic school.  Good character, behaviors, and manners will be seen by these students as the norms that every human should acquire.  These humble and well-mannered students become role models in their communities, the examples the next generations look up to.  They become the highly sought-after friends, spouses, business-partners, professionals, speakers, teachers, advisors, and leaders. |
| E’lm | Knowledge | Teach your students the important of learning, its value, and its Dunyaa and Aakhirah rewards.  Encourage your students to think creatively, discuss rationally and intellectually, and to analyze critically.  Encourage your students to read and critique useful books.  Make them enjoy learning Arabic and Islamic studies. Make them love and value these two subjects. | Your students grow respecting knowledge and people of knowledge.  They become critical thinkers and problem-solvers.  They continue to learn effectively and become themselves effective teachers, school leaders, and parents.  They become talented professional in their fields.  Your students will never cease seeking knowledge, sharpening their life-long skills, and enhancing their specialty competencies. |
| Itqaan | Perfection | Instill in your students the concept of perfecting their work.  Teach your students to pray to Allah, put their full trust in Him, and do their very best. | Your students will always challenge themselves and perform to their potential. |
| Taqwaa | Be mindful of Allah | Constantly remind your students that Allah always hears, sees, records, and controls everything.  Remind your students that everyone is accountable for our actions, and will hold us responsible for what we have committed. | Your students will grow watching Allah’s boundaries and make sure they do not violate them.  They will preach Taqwaa to all people they encounter, with knowledge, wisdom, and patience.  They will become blessings for their schools, families, job places, communities, and society at large. |
| Ikhlaas | Sincerity | Remind your students that only good acts done sincerely for the sake of Allah will benefit us in this life and be in the scales of our good deeds in the Here-After. | Your students will be fully aware of the importance of sincerity in academic, religious, social, and professional matters.  They understand and implement sincere intention into every act they do. |
| Ehsaan | Goodness | Teach your students that the best people are the best doers (Muhsinoon) who do good deeds to please Allah only.  Remind them the Muhsinoon’s qualities in the Quran and Sunnah and what Allah has prepared for them. | Your students grow caring for all beings, humans and non-humans.  They become humane, loving, and passionate.  People will turn to them because they are the best in the society. They have Ehsaan, the highest level of faith. |
| Sidqq | Truthfulness | Teach your students that the Muslim is not a liar, the Muslim is always truthful.  Over-praise your students when they say the truth.  Do not embrace students publicly.  Remind them about the importance pf truthfulness with stories from the Qur’an and the Sunnah. | Students will not make up stories against each other.  Students will not falsely testify against anyone.  Students grow worshipping Allah truthfully and behaving truthfully. |
| Hayaa | Modesty | Teach your students the humility and modesty in the way they speak, behave, dress, think, and deal with others. | Your students will make sure that their speech, behavior, clothing, thinking, and dealings are Hayaa-compliant.  Your students will have Hayaa in private as well as in public. |
| Amaanah | Trust | Teach your student the importance and rewards of being a trust-worthy Muslim and citizen. | Your trust-worthy students will be seen as noble Muslims, citizens, parents, employers, employees. |
| Rahmah | Mercy | Instill in your students the noble quality of being merciful, compassionate, and kind with everyone. | Your students will be living examples of showing mercy to others. |
| Maghfirah | Forgiveness | Forgive your students and encourage them to forgive one another. | Your students will become easy-going leaders, teachers, parents, and citizens.  They forgive others’ shortcomings and constantly ask Allah to forgive their own shortcomings.  Your students will be strongly attached to Allah. |
| Tawbah | Repentance | Teach your students that there is no unrepairable mistake if Tawbah is made.  Train your students that a sincere repentance requires: regret, asking Allah forgiveness, and giving people the rights your owe them.  Constantly remind your students how happy and joyful Allah is when people repent. | Your students grow having a great hope in the vast mercy of Allah.  They will repent all the time, even for the smallest sin.  They will remind others to repent to Allah. This will become one of their life-time noble tasks. |
| Sabr | Patience | Train your students that patience is a major key in the academic, social, and professional success. | Your students will grow practicing patience with their teachers, parents, siblings, colleagues, and other citizens.  They will also remind and encourage others to have patience. |
| Okhowwah | Brotherhood | Teach your students that all Muslims, regardless of their ethnic, political, Madh-hab, and economic backgrounds, are brothers and sisters in Islam.  Teach your students that all Prophets, Messengers and their sincere followers who died as true believers are brothers and sisters in Islam.  Constantly remind your students that the eternal homeland of all believers from all times is Jannah (Paradise) | Your students grow loving and caring about all Muslims.  They become pro-Muslim unity. They will advocate for unifying Muslim efforts to serve Muslims and non-Muslims alike.  Your students are well informed about the religion of all Prophets and Messengers.  Nobody can confuse them spiritually and theologically.  They grow strong in religiosity and religious history.  They are well immune to study, debate, and discuss comparative religion. |

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