

ISNA Education Forum 2008

Sustaining Progress: Cultivating Stewardship

(Track: Curriculum and Standards)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

(ولتكن منكم امة يدعون الى الخير ويأمرون بالمعروف وينهون عن المنكر وأولئك هم المفلحون)

(آل عمران 104)

Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong: they are the ones to attain felicity.

(Al-Imran/104)

Islamic Studies Curriculum for 8th-12th grade

By :

Fathi Fadhli, Ph.D
Curriculum and Instruction

Abstract

An Islamic Studies Curriculum based on standards interpreted from the Quran, the Sunnah of Prophet Mohammad (pbuh), and the current situation of Muslim world is developed for 8th to 12th grade students. This curriculum aims at producing high-quality Muslim youth leaders who are equipped with quality leadership skills and who vision Islam as a dynamic religion. This Curriculum connects Islamic Studies classrooms to students' life and to the real world through interaction with current events and issues. It develops a student who assumes the sharing of the message of Islam with others, individuals and society at large, and realizes that this is a duty, not a choice. In addition, it motivates and encourages students to be an active part of society without compromising their identity.

The Problem

Muslim educators, teachers, leaders, and parents are facing difficulty determining what exactly should be the final Islamic Education outcome. There is no conscious decision regarding the type, nature, or characteristics we want the Muslim youth to carry upon graduation from an Islamic School.

As a result, Muslim educators, from area to area, school to school, have embraced a wide range of Islamic Studies goals. These goals range from *preparing a well behaving citizen to bringing the Ummah together*. This wide spectrum of Islamic education goals has resulted in implementing various Islamic Studies curriculums. Each of these curriculums intended to achieve their own goal(s). This eventually will produce a Muslim generation with a vast difference in understanding and realizing their role in the society and in the world at large. In addition, the *majority* of educators, parents, guardians, Muslim leaders, and communities are all in agreement upon one popular goal, which is *the production of a well-behaved young Muslim, who has acquired basic Islamic knowledge, and practices basic obligatory Islamic worshipping acts*.

This popular goal is usually achieved through an Islamic studies curriculum

centralized around basic worshipping acts, manners, Tahdib and Akhlaq. This popular goal rose up as a result of the pressure imposed on Muslim youth by the nature of the non-Islamic society they have been raised in. The worry about the possibility of losing our youth in the western society, and the need to protect them, has caused the majority of us to accept and be satisfied with the *minimum outcome* of Islamic education processes (*a well-behaved young Muslim, who has acquired basic Islamic knowledge, and practices basic obligatory Islamic worshipping acts*).

This popular goal, and hence the nature of the curriculum needed to achieve it, is not adequate enough to produce an effective Muslim youth who is able to maintain or carry the message of Islam in this society. In other words, no quality leadership will be produced by holding to or through the minimum standards. A solely well behaved Muslim, in spite of its importance, is not the needed model for the spreading of the message of Islam in western societies. We unfortunately assume that raising a good, pious young Muslim will automatically make him/her aware of the world around him, aware of his/her role in it, and will also motivate him/her to be a productive citizen and automatically be a leader. Ironically, the spirit of Islam had never been satisfied with the *minimum*, on the contrary, Islam urges each Muslim to strive for the best.

What make the problem worse are the lack of *major* opportunities and the lack of a proper environment to achieve even these minimum standards. Our children in Islamic schools are rarely provided with opportunities to apply whatever they have learned. Islamic studies classrooms are rarely connected to students' real life. Islamic studies is usually limited to the sole verbal delivering of Islamic concepts, facts, instructions, and commands, with no opportunity of practicing or translating them into actions. A Muslim student may not have a problem getting her "A+" in Islamic studies course (s), but likely will not have an opportunity to apply what she learned. Application is not enforced as major component of our curriculum(s). Scattered opportunities may available, but only in the form of extra curricular activities, or as an independent effort, or maybe through another sitting outside the school, such as in Masjeds, youth centers, or clubs. The application phase is crucial to producing quality leadership in our youth.

The Needed Curriculum

Based on the previous discussion, this 8th-12th grade Islamic Studies Curriculum aims at and is expected to overcome the previous shortcomings and problems in our curricula, and as a result, produce the quality Muslim leadership desired. This curriculum:

- Exposes students to a comprehensive picture of Islam and Muslims.
- Presents Islam as more than sole acts of worship.
- Connects Islamic Studies classrooms to students' lives, localities, and the world at large.
- Is a balanced curriculum between traditional Islamic Studies curricula, which may ignore local and world wide current events and issues, and the needed curriculum in this society.
- Exposes students to the positives and negatives of the non -Islamic society.
- Shows the valuable contribution of Islam and Muslims towards other nations and civilizations.
- Is a balanced curriculum between common Islamic Studies curricula, some of which focus only on the concepts and practices which characterize a western non -Islamic society, and others which focus on only the concepts and practices of the eastern societies.
- Does not aim towards putting Islam on defense, but aims towards educating our students to present Islam in the right way by clearing some of the misconceptions and doubts about Islam.

Goals, Objectives, and Characteristics of this Curriculum:

This curriculum aims and expected to produce quality Muslim youth leaders who:

- Are equipped with basic Islamic knowledge.
- Are equipped with quality leadership skills.
- Are equipped with quality manners and Adhab and Akhlaq principles.
- Are aware of the purpose of mankind's creation.
- View Islam as a dynamic way of life.

- Enjoin right and forbid wrong.
- Work to be successful citizens, in this life and the Akhirah.
- Strive for the best.
- Are aware of their responsibilities and duties towards self, society, and Ummah.
- Are aware of their responsibilities towards mankind.
- Actively share the message of Islam with others (individuals and society).
- Believe that sharing the message of Islam with others is a duty, not a choice.
- Strive to be an active part of society without compromising identity, traditions, or practice.
- Aware of the forces and schools of thought working against Islam.
- Expect failure, hardships, and defeat, and envision them as wake up calls.
- Are able to respond to challenges, changes, hardships, and prosperity in a proper, positive way with no compromise of values or identity.
- Fight for justice
- Are aware of the past and the present of the Muslim world, and have a vision about the future of Islam.

The Curriculum at a Glance:

The attached table (pg 6) shows the entire curriculum (8th through 12th grade) including grade levels, subjects taught at each grade level, and a brief description of each subject. The table helps build a general background about the curriculum, in brief.

	8 th	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th
1	Aqidah The 6 Pillars of Eman (in Brief)	Aqidah The 1 st and 2 nd Pillars of Eman (in Detail)	Aqidah The 3 rd and 4 th Pillars of Eman (in Detail)	Aqidah The 5 th and 6 th Pillars of Eman (in Detail)	Sects and Schools of Thoughts Against Islam Liberalism, Secularism, Masons, Sects, etc
2	Sierah The Entire Sierah (in Brief)	Sierah The Makkan Era (in Detail) + 10 Sahabas From Makkah	Sierah The Madinan Era (in Detail) + 10 Sahabas From Madinah	Muslim World History From the Four Rightly Guided Khalifahs to the Othman Empire.	Muslim World History From the Collapse of the Othman Empire to Present
3	Hadith Selected 12 to 15 Hadiths Suitable for the Grade	Hadith Selected 12 to 15 Hadiths Suitable for the Grade	Hadith Selected 12 to 15 Hadith Suitable for the Grade	Hadith Selected 12 to 15 Hadiths Suitable for the Grade	Hadith Selected 12 to 15 th Hadiths Suitable for the Grade
4	Tahdib and Akhlaq Selected Manners and Behaviors Important to the Grade Level	Tahdib and Akhlaq Selected Manners and Behaviors Important to the Grade Level.	Tahdib and Akhlaq Selected Manners and Behaviors Important to the Grade Level.	Dawa (Theoretical and Application) Specific Characters, Skills, and Manners Essential to Developing a Daiya.	Dawa Practice and Application Practical (Real) Dawa Program and Activities, in and out of School
5	Fiqh Purification, Salat, Zakat, Sawm, and Hajj (in Brief)	Fiqh Purification and Salat Including Supererogatory Prayers (in Detail).	Fiqh Sawm and Hajj (Optional: Can be in Detail or in Brief)	Usul al Fiqh (Jurisprudence) Ijtihad, Taqlid, Sources of Islamic Laws, the Schools of Thoughts, etc.	Fiqh Muamalat (Daily Jurisprudence) Fiqh Muamalat, Financial Wealth, and Transactions
6		Recent Muslim Leaders Biographies of 3 to 4 Recent Muslim Leaders	Recent Muslim Leaders Biographies of 3 to 4 Recent Muslim Leaders	Recent Muslim Leaders Biographies of 3 to 4 Recent Muslim Leaders	Recent Muslim Leaders Biographies of 3 to 4 Recent Muslim Leaders
7				The Science of Hadith Types, Classification, Preserve, Position of Hadith in Islamic Shariaa, etc	Islam and Muslims in America History of Islam, Identity, Challenge, Islam and the West, Dawa in America
8					Misconceptions about Islam Human Rights, Democracy, Status of Women, Peace, Hudod, Apostasy, Slavery, etc

A Subject by Subject Brief Description of the Curriculum:

In the following section a brief, subject by subject description of the curriculum is presented.

Aqidah

The Aqidah course is centered on the six Pillars of Eman: Belief in Allah swt, His Angels, His Books, His Prophets, The Day of Judgment, and Destiny (the good and the bad). All of the pillars of Eman are *briefly* offered to 8th grade, and are offered in detail to 9th through 11th grades; two pillars for each grade. During the senior year, students will be exposed to sects, schools of thought, and concepts involving the Aqidah of Islam, such as Secularism, Liberalism, Quranioons, Evolution, Missionary efforts in Muslim countries, Masson, etc.

Sierah

This subject covers the life of Prophet Muhammad PBUH. It will be offered entirely to 8th grade in *brief*. The Sierah is offered in detail for the 9th and the 10th grades. The Makkan era will be covered in 9th grade, along with the biographies of at least ten Sahibs and Sahabiat whose lives are connected to the *Makkan* era. The *Madinan* era will be covered in 10th grade in detail, along with the biographies of at least ten Sahaba and Sahabiat whose lives are connected to the *Madinan* era.

Muslim World History

Briefly covers the eras of the Four Rightly Guided Khalifas until the present. The era from the Four Rightly Guided Khalifas to the Othman Empire is covered during 11th grade. This includes the brief covering of Islam in Andulus, and the Fatimid, Murabitun, Muwahhidun, Aghlabid, Safadi and Moguls eras. The recent Muslim World History from the collapse of the Khalifat System to the present is covered during 12th grade.

The 12th grade Muslim World History course focuses on crucial political events and issues such as Imperialism, Colonialism early Islamic Movements, the Disintegration of the Othman Empire, Recent Islamic Movements, the Sykes Picot Treaty, etc. In

addition, it specifically focuses on four major current sensitive Islamic issues: Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq, and the creation of Pakistan, including the issue of Kashmir.

Recent Muslim Leaders

The purpose of this course is to introduce our students to a variety of current Muslim leaders. This course covers the biographies of the most influential Recent Muslims Leaders and Figures, who influenced the Muslim world during various times, incidents, and events. Our students are either aware of leaders from the far past (Sahabi, Tabi, or heroes who died centuries ago) or they are aware of two or three Muslim personalities, such as Malcolm X or some Muslims sports champion in USA. A list of recent leaders and figures our students should know about is presented in this curriculum.

Hadith of the Prophet PBUH

The Hadith course covers about 75 selected Hadiths of the Prophet Mohammad PBUH. Each Hadith addresses an issue, behavior, or problem that is needed by students during specific grades. The 75 Hadiths are selected out of about 500 Hadiths from the “Commentary on the Riyad –us- Saliheen” compiled by Al-Imam An-Nawawi. Each grade level (8th - 12th) will be offered about 15 Hadiths suitable for their grades. The most subjective Hadiths are offered to higher grades, and Hadiths that require more concrete thinking are offered to lower grades.

Fiqh

This subject covers the Fiqh of Taharah, Salah, Zakat, Sawm, Hajj, and Fiqh Muamalat. The entire Fiqh of Taharah, Salah, Zakat, Sawm, and Hajj are covered in *brief* during 8th grade. The purpose of this course is to prepare students to cover the same topics during higher grade levels. The Fiqh of Taharah (purification), Salat (including the supererogatory prayers), and other topics such as actions invalidate Salat, actions disliked during Salat, actions allowed during Salat, and miscellaneous Adhab and etiquettes of the Mosque are covered during 9th grade. The Fiqh of Sawm, Hajj, and Ummrah are covered during 10th grade.

Usul al Fiqh (Jurisprudence)

This course is offered to 11th grade instead of a Fiqh course. It covers topics such as ijtiḥād, madḥab, taqlid, fatwa, sources of Islamic laws, ḥalāl and ḥaram, muṣṭaḥab, the four schools of thought, etc.

Fiqh Muamalat

This course is offered for 12th grade as a Fiqh course. It covers various matters involving financial transactions and issues on individual, group, and business levels, the Qurānic view of wealth, Usury (Riba), Inheritance, Loan, Gambling, Luqṭah (lost and found), Bribery, Approved and Disapproved Business Conduct, Trade, etc.

Tahdib and Akhlaq

This course covers a *selected* group of characters and manners, which are needed by 8th -12th graders. During each grade level a group of manners and characteristics suitable for their grades, or needed for a specific school, will be covered. These characters and manners are selected based on our experience with students' behavior during each specific grade.

Islam and Muslims in America

This course is designed for seniors. The purpose of this course is to connect students to their society and provide them with materials relevant to them. It deals with topics and issues such as the history of Islam in America, demography of Muslims in America, Muslim immigrants in the United States, Muslim population and professions, America as a melting pot, problems Muslims face in America, identity problems, and problems raised after 9/11. Also included will be the integration, assimilation, and contribution of Muslims towards the west and towards the USA, Muslim organizations in the USA, how to respond properly to the challenge facing Muslims in America, the future of Islam in the USA, and Dawa in America. This course can be offered as conventional classroom course or as an intensive two to three week course.

Misconceptions about Islam

This course is designed for seniors. It prepares students for campus life among non Muslims. In addition, it exposes our students to the nature of misconceptions and doubts raised against Islam in various campuses, so that they can be prepared to deal with and clarify them in the proper intellectual, academic, and peaceful way. This course deals with several topics and issues, such as Human Rights in Islam, Democracy in Islam, Status of Women in Islam, Hudud in Islam, Apostasy, Slavery in Islam, Polygamy, Adultery, Boyfriends and Girlfriends, Divorce, Marriage, Hijab, Homosexuality, Lesbians, Same Sex Marriage, Biomedical Ethics in Islam, Music, and Drugs. This course also can be offered as a conventional classroom course, or as an intensive two to three weeks course.

Dawa

This course is offered for two years, during the 11th and 12th grades. The 11th grade Dawa course is more theoretical than practical; it focuses on specific characters, skills, and manners that are essential to develop a Daiya. This course will simply prepare the 11th graders to practically perform Dawa (among Muslims and non-Muslims) during their senior year. The senior year Dawa course is an application course. Seniors should be given diverse opportunities to apply skills, etiquettes, and manners they learned during previous school years, especially what they learned during the 11th grade Dawa course. Carefully designed, developed, or selected practical (real) Dawa programs should be provided for the seniors, in and out of the school, among *Muslims and non-Muslims*.

Application:

Students in 8th -12th grade should be provided with opportunities to practice Islam and perform Dawa on *a daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly basis* (See the handout about suggested in and out of School Dawa Program).

Conclusion

An Islamic Studies Curriculum is designed to produce a quality Muslim leadership. This curriculum is developed as a response to shortcomings and problems experienced by Muslim educators such as the lack of relevancy, the lack of application aspects, and the lack of conscious decisions regarding the type, nature, or characteristics a Muslim youth should carry upon graduation from an Islamic school. These problems and shortcomings may result in producing a Muslim generation with conflicted points of view regarding Dawa, the role of Muslim youth, and the future of Islam. As a result, a generation carrying these differences may not be able to carry or present the message of Islam the way it should be presented.

Handouts

For teachers, to be used directly or as a guide in their classrooms.

- The description of the curriculum ***Grade by Grade*** (8th -12th).
- The Scope and Sequence of the following Subjects:
 - Dawa Course.
 - Islam in America Course.
 - Islam and Contemporary Issues.
 - Recent Muslim World History.
 - Sects, Schools of thought, and concepts encountered Islam.
- The Scope and Sequence for ***any subject*** upon request.
- List of Muslim Figures and Leaders (including Recent Muslim Leaders).
- Practical Dawa programs and activities on a daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly basis that are in and out of school.
- A list of recommended various Islamic Books used to construct the curriculum.

References

- Yahiya Emerick (1996). How to Tell Others about Islam. International Books and Tapes Supply, NY.
- Dr. Muhammad Naim Yasin (2003). The Book of Emann. Al-Firdous Ltd., London.
- Khuram Murad (1996). Dawa among Non-Muslims in the West. Islamic Foundation, UK.
- Pinar F. Willimas, Reynolds M. William, Slattery Patrick, & Taubman M. Peter (1995). Understanding Curriculum, Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., NY.
- Niaz Erfan & Zahid A.Valie (Editors) (19995). Recommendations of the Four World Conferences on Islamic Education: Education and the Muslim World: Challenge and Response. Islamic Foundation/Institute of Policy Studies, UK.

Biography:

- Fathi Ali Fadhli
- Received his B.Sc. from the College of Science, University of Libya at Tripoli (1975).
- Received a Masters of Science from Ohio University, Ohio, United States of America (November, 1986).
- Received a Masters of Science in Education from University of Missouri at Columbia, Missouri (May, 1985).
- Received his Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Missouri, at Columbia- Missouri, United States of America (2000).
- Worked as a principal of a weekend school for three years (1989-1993).
- Works as a teacher in Universal School Bridgeview, IL for eight years, during which he taught Physical Science, Geology, Physics, environmental science, computers, and Islamic Studies.
- Presented at ISNA Education Forum 2006.
- Developed an Islamic Studies Curriculum for 8th -12th grade level.
- Currently working on a book entitled “Philosophy of Islamic Education’. Expecting to be ready (Insha Allah) by the spring of 2008.