

Tarbiya Plan for Islamic Schools

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I. Motivation:

It is true that sincere and painstaking efforts are made by Islamic Studies committees to identify the standards for Islamic content knowledge and skills, which students should master upon graduation from the school. However, Islamic Studies instruction in many schools is largely academic and focuses on information, with the text as the main resource. Certainly, as we interact each day with our students at school, and notice less-than-Islamic patterns in their discourse and behavior--with us, and amongst themselves-- it is glaringly apparent that the Islamic Studies pedagogy, followed by many schools, is inadequate to achieve our collective goal for our students to “live Islam as a way of life”.

It was narrated that a student came to his Sheikh announcing happily that he completed the memorization of Sahih Al-Bukhari. To his surprise, his sheikh replied, “Oh, now we have one more copy of Al-Bukhari in town!!! This story reminds us of how ironic it is when our students are able to regurgitate learned Islamic teachings, but do not practice them.

Achieving the goal for Islamic school students to live Islam as a way of life, entails, not only that they study and understand the concepts, information, principles and skills taught in the course, but that they *internalize* them in their personal lives, to the point that these teachings guide their actions and judgment, *away from school*, and permeate their interactions with others. This requires that schools move away from the “information dump” to the “hands on” approach in teaching Islamic studies—an approach that has more meaning and relevance to the student’s own life, interests and frame of reference.

Examining our students and interacting with them more closely proves that this is an area of improvement for a majority of Islamic schools. Conversations with the parents that enroll their children in our schools, reflect their desire and expectation for their sons and daughters to appreciate, embrace and practice their faith, as a result of their enrollment. Parents anticipate a reshaping—and sometimes, even a complete transformation--of their children’s Islamic characters. Achieving this, is what will justify their investment in Islamic education, more so than the mere cramming of religious rules and histories into their children’s brains.

II. Plan

In order for the tarbiya plan to be effective and fruitful, it should target the following key participants. Their roles are described below:

1. Teachers
2. Parents
3. Students
 - a. Student body (as a whole)
 - b. Selected individual students

1. Teacher:

Clearly, the teacher plays a very important role in molding the character of the student. A simple survey can prove that student spends more “quality” time with his/her teacher than his/her own parents. Accordingly, elevating the spiritual and religious status of the teacher should be given due attention from school administration and board. The following are some suggested activities to help in this effort:

1. In the hiring process, try to attract the religious staff (without compromising the teaching quality of course).
2. Dedicating a segment in every in-service which reminds teachers about their role Islamically toward their students.
3. A weekly or monthly Halaqa for teachers.

2. Home/Parents

It is very important that the school and home work in sync to develop the desired Muslim character. Muslims in the west have more reasons to bring their kids to Islamic schools mainly because of all the perceived and real dangers that exist in public schools. These dangers prompt many families, who may themselves not show the ideal level of commitment to the Deen, to bring their kids to the Islamic school, imagining it to be the panacea for all moral ills. Unfortunately, these families, if weak in their practical commitment to the daily enforcement of Islamic teachings, most likely will not maintain an Islamic environment (with regard to dress code, television viewing, music, internet access, social mixing etc.) at home, that mirrors that found within the walls of the school.. This reality no doubt weakens the school’s Tarbiya efforts, and success rates. For this reason, school administrations need to invest time and strategies to reach out to parents in order to make them partners in these Tarbiya efforts. The following are few suggested activities to this end:

1. Send a monthly tarbiya-focused written message/ publication.
2. Have frequent meetings or conferences with parents with Tarbiya being the topic of discussion.
3. Arrange Parent Tarbiya workshops or seminars during the school year.

3. Students

Working with students should be divided into two areas of focus: the whole student body and individual students, who have leadership potential.

3.1 The Student Body:

The following school-wide activities target all students:

1. **Monthly themes:**
Establish monthly themes to help focus on certain and character traits which students may lack e.g. *Responsibility, Honesty, Modesty*.
See appendix A for suggested themes, main points, and suggested activities.
2. **Tarbiya period:**
This is a weekly period (one of the existing Islamic studies periods), which is to be student-centered and interactive. This period is not intended to be text or lecture-based, but rather, a discussion-based one, where students feel more comfortable to speak their minds and open up with their teacher. This period is more beneficial for students in grade 4 and up and becomes more needed in upper grades.

Topics to be handled during these periods can be pre-planned by teacher, but should ideally be driven by the interests of the students themselves. (A student questionnaire at the beginning of the school year may help generate topics.) Considering the maturity level of the students, they may not always suggest topics, but the following can be used to fill in these periods:

- a. Topics revolving around the current Tarbiya theme.
- b. Following topics can be used as well:
 - i. Relationship with parents
 - ii. Ethics of using Internet, chatting...etc
 - iii. TV
 - iv. Who is real role model: movie stars or who?
 - v. Choosing the right friends
 - vi. How to be a good friend.
 - vii. Time management
 - viii. Islamic identity
 - ix. Living in the west as a Muslim.
 - x. Role of Muslim in this life
 - xi. Purpose of life
 - xii. Music
 - xiii. Dating
 - xiv. Dress code. Clothing selection.
 - xv. Marriage
 - xvi. Dawa to make up the Muslim Ummah
 - xvii. Celebrating Western Holidays
 - xviii. Relationship with siblings

3. **Sleepover:**

Twice a year, a sleepover can be organized (for boys and girls separately). In addition to its obvious social and recreational benefits, the Sleepover should have a theme and clear objective which should be targeted through the different activities.

4. **Camp or Retreat:**

The camp can be utilized to instill values of love of Allah, feeling the majesty of Allah through the contemplation in his creation.

3.2 Individual Students

A more focused effort should be directed toward students with leadership potential. For that purpose, a special “Dawa & Activism” extra-curricular (after-school) club can be established for such students:

1. This club focus should be advancing Islamic values into the school through activities.
2. An eligibility criteria should be established for participation in the club:
 - a. Student should be a role model and mentor for other students, e.g. exhibiting characteristics of being disciplined, personally motivated to do good deeds/ avoid bad deeds.
 - b. Attending and participating in all meetings and planned activities.
3. For this club to be attractive to students, its members should have some kind of privileges and visibility within the school. It should be presented to students as an elite club. E.g. students may be distinguished from their classmates by a special badge .
4. A teacher advisor should be assigned to meet with these students on a weekly basis to:
 - a. Lead a Halaqa
 - b. Monitor their progress

5. Club members can have their own leadership structure and can also meet independently without their mentor.
6. This club can be utilized in helping in monthly theme preparations and activities.
7. Members can also participate in the Muslim Speakers' Bureau, to visit other schools and speak to non-Muslim students about Islam. Student speakers should be trained on how to present Islamic concepts, traditions, stereotypes, frequently-asked questions about Islam and the proper responses.
8. Conflict resolution among students

Potential Activities:

- Trip to Leadership Conferences.
- Trip to Omra

III. Conclusion

It is very critical for Islamic schools to invest into their Tarbiya program, in order not to turn into *Muslims'* school. This is why it is justified to hire a part-time or full-time personnel to manage the suggested Tarbiya activities, in spite of the financial struggles that most Islamic schools face.

Appendix A

Monthly themes

Theme	Main points	Possible activities	Comments
Happiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you happy? • How to be Happy? • What is the real happiness? • How to make others happy? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mini workshop at class to discuss “are you happy?” • Morning assembly talks • Examples of happy people who were not rich • Posters on the walls. • Survey about happiness. 	
Ramadhan	The month of worship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small booklet on various worship activities during Ramadhan • Distribute worship schedule which is followed on by teacher. Follow up on weekly basis. Make it reward based 	
	The month of Sadaqa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather donations and send it to needy people. 	
	The month of Quran	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quran contests among students. • Increase Quran reading sessions during school hours. Will replace the 10 mins school wide reading into Quran reading. 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	
Salat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of Salat in our life • Salah is my passport to Jannah • I will perfect My Wudu/Salat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posters on the walls • Morning assembly • Salat festival • Salat workshops for all ages • Salah perfection competitions 	

Modesty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The concept of Iffa. • The concept of Hayaa • Observing hijab inside and outside school • Using proper language • Humility • Awra definition. • Hayaa is part of the beauty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students sell hijabs and other Islamic attire • Workshops on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ proper Islamic Hijab ➤ why wearing Hijab ➤ proper gender interaction • Hijab festival <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Honoring all students who start observing hijab outside school during that year. ➤ Some Anasheed around that meaning 	
Arabic Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why learn Arabic? • Language of the Quran • Language of Jannah • Unity • Role of non Arabs in Arabic language service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitions in Arabic Language • Morning assembly • Workshops on importance of Arabic language • Arabic language exhibit 	
Islamic civilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instill pride in Muslim identity • Muslims contribution to civilization 	Islamic civilization fair	
I shall be responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instilling the feeling of responsibility in students minds • Work ethics (dedication, hardwork) 	Place older students in administrative positions for one day	
Hajj	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of workshop in the first 10 days of thu-Hijja • Muslim unity exhibit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wall posters • School wide fasting the day of Arafat 	

<p>Brotherhood/Sisterhood One Ummah</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believing men and believing women are allies of each other • Love to your brother what you love to yourself • Modeling the quality of “Ethar” altruism • Cooperation. • Inform students about struggling Muslims around the world. • Importance of Masjid Aqsa for Muslims. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dividing the school into Muhajireen and Ansar and joining them into brothers/sisters. • Gift exchange • Lunch sharing • Workshops about struggling Muslims around the world • Aqsa Day: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ History of Aqsa ➤ Why we care about it? • Muslim rights in Jerusalem 	
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Appendix B Monthly Theme Checklist

Theme:		Time Period:	
Objective(s)			
Team Members			

Item	Details	Requirements	Owner
Inauguration activities			
Hands on Activities			
Wall Posters			
Assembly topics			
Rewards /Incentives			
Classrooms activities			
Islamic Studies Workshop			
Guest speaker			
Tarbiya parents' publication			