

**TOWARDS ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE IN
STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT FOR
WEEKEND ISLAMIC SCHOOLS**

**A Case Study of Dayton Islamic School Part-
Time Program**

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to bring to you the standards that have been developed for professional and effective teaching in weekend Islamic schools. A case study of Dayton Islamic School Part-Time Program has been presented. Standards development requires a clearly stated mission and program of study. In class education and activity based teaching require effective teaching tools and techniques; record keeping tools such as attendance books, lesson plan books, classroom management techniques, teacher training workshops. These have been prepared especially with weekend Islamic schools in mind. Therefore, these methods and tools are very easily adaptable to all weekend Islamic schools.

About Your Presenter

Sr. Ruqiyah Islam is currently the Principal of Dayton Islamic School Part-Time Program. She has held this position for the past eight years before which she has been teaching at the same school since 1989. Sr. Ruqiyah Islam has a Masters degree in Geography from Carleton University, Ontario, Canada

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

TOWARDS ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE IN STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT FOR WEEKEND ISLAMIC SCHOOLS

A Case Study of Dayton Islamic School Part-Time Program

INTRODUCTION:

For a true Muslim there is no room to do less than his or her best in any Islamic activity he or she undertakes. One of these activities is sharing Islamic knowledge with our youngsters in Weekend Islamic Schools. In Surah **Al-Ma'idah (5:3)** Allah (swt) has said, **"...Today I have perfected your religious law for you and bestowed upon you the full measure of my blessings** (Muhammad Asad)." When Allah (swt) has perfected the guidance he has given us, is there any room for us to disseminate this same guidance to our youngsters in a less than perfect way? The answer clearly is NO! Hence the extremely important need to develop well tested standards to which administrators, educators, and teachers need to conform to teach our children better. Each year we need to set some goals and standards, and then attempt to improve on these, depending on the community and resources that we have.

In the work of better teaching in Weekend Islamic Schools we are behind in many different ways. In most cases, our teachers are parents who are not trained with degrees in Education, our boards are bogged down with paying the building off, or with full time school issues and problems, or some other community problems and more often than not they have very little time that they can offer to part-time or weekend Islamic schools. The total amount of work needed to make Weekend Islamic Schools achieve excellence in teaching its students is tremendous. We must all work very hard to make our Weekend schools succeed. We must share the work do so we can learn from the different experiences we have and use the knowledge we have gained. The reward for all this work is certainly with Allah (swt). In Surah **Al-Zumar (39:18)**, Allah (swt) says to Prophet Muhammad (sm) **"...Give glad tidings to (those of) my servants who listen (closely) to all that is said, and follow the best of it (people who examine every religious proposition with reasoning), for it is they whom God has graced with His guidance, and it is they who are truly endowed with insight** (Muhammad Asad)." With Allah's (swt) guidance and grace in mind, and with a lot of sincere effort, excellence in teaching in weekend Islamic schools is a guarantee.

This paper is about the many different methods and techniques that we have developed over the past several years at Dayton Islamic School Part-Time Program. The goal has

been to teach effectively, and also make learning fun and challenging. Both in class education and applications through activity based education are emphasized. re

DAYTON ISLAMIC SCHOOL PART-TIME PROGRAM **(DIS PTP): A CASE STUDY**

1. MISSION STATEMENT:

The Dayton Islamic School Part - Time Program (DIS PTP) is committed to the mission of providing a nourishing and caring environment that draws from the rich heritage of Islam and Islamic traditions in preparing its students as responsible and respectable citizens of the community, the nation, and the world at large.

CLASSES:

Classes are offered twice a week, on Sundays and on Wednesdays. The hours for these two days are:

SUNDAY HOURS

Sundays: 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY HOURS

Wednesdays: 5:00 pm – 7:00 p.m.

2. SUNDAY PROGRAM OUTLINE

ISLAMIC STUDIES:

Islamic education is offered from preschool to high school levels. The goal is to expand our knowledge of the basics of Islam, Islamic history, and Seerah of the Prophet Muhammad (sm). We learn about the many diverse and interesting aspects of Islam and focus on applying Islam to our daily lives. Classes begin at the Preschool level where our theme is “play and learn Islam.” As we move up through the different grade levels into the high school levels, more and more in-depth level classes are offered.

QUR’ANIC STUDIES:

In the Qur’anic Studies program our goal is to read the Qur’an fluently with Tajweed, i.e. proper pronunciation and rules of recitation, and to increase comprehension of the Qur’an in Arabic by learning meanings of Qur’anic vocabulary and grammar. All students are also learning to memorize with Tajweed.

Qur'anic Arabic classes are offered from the preschool to high school levels at six different levels of difficulty.

LANGUAGES:

Language classes are offered in ARABIC, BANGLA, and URDU. The goal is to teach children to speak, read, and write in the language of their choice.

3. WEDNESDAY ARABIC ENRICHMENT CLASSES

These classes are offered every Wednesday to enhance learning in Qur'an and Arabic language.

4. Activities

Rather than focusing on in-class teaching only at DIS PTP, we have developed a variety of Islamic activities. The goal is to encourage students to become thinking and practicing Muslims and to enjoy religion for the love of Allah (swt). The learning that goes on inside the classrooms is reinforced by these activities.

Afternoon School and Family Iftar in Ramadan:

Every Ramadan, DIS PTP has been meeting in the afternoon so that its students and their families can break their fasts together with their peers at school. All PTP families share in cooking iftar.

Ramadan Surah Memorization and Recitation Contest:

This is an in-school competition during Ramadan where students are encouraged to memorize a new surah or a part of it, and recite it in a contest showcase. All participating students receive prizes and winners receive special cash awards.

Annual Eid ul Fitr Celebrations:

Instead of keeping the Sunday after Eid closed, students do presentations on how Eid ul Fitr is celebrated in different Muslim countries of the world. Selected countries are presented to inform everyone about the location, population, and ways of celebrating Eid. This includes Eid dresses, food, and cultural practices of these countries.

Annual Practice Hajj Performance:

All students at our school--preschool to high school-- perform a practice Hajj by going through all the steps of Hajj in order of performance like wearing Ihraam, doing Tawaf, going to Mina, going to Arafat, and throwing stones at the Shaitaan, making animal piñatas for sacrifice and using the candy inside as Qurbani meat. Parents are invited to watch the program. The geographical orientation of Hajj is maintained as much as

possible. This is a very special event that is giving practice to all students on how to perform Hajj and is presented as the EID-UL-ADHA celebrations on the Sunday following Eid-ul-Adha.

Participation in Islamic Center of Greater Cincinnati Islamic Weekend School (ICGC IWS) Surah Recitation and Basketball Tournaments:

DIS PTP has been regularly participating in the inter school surah recitation competitions and basketball tournament where teams of students compete against each other in basketball. The tournament is designed to stimulate healthy activity and create bonds between young Muslims. These events are hosted by the Islamic Weekend School of Greater Cincinnati.

Islamic Quiz Bowl and Islamic Essay Competition:

An annual event sponsored and hosted by the DIS PTP in which Islamic part-time schools from in and around Ohio (for example Indiana, Michigan, and Kentucky) participate. Many part-time /weekend schools within two to two and half hour driving distance are invited to come to Dayton and participate in a quiz competition. This is a very healthy competition for which students are preparing through the year in order to be ready for competitions that are held in April. This year will be our 7th year that we will be holding and hosting these competitions. Participating schools from the surrounding areas in the past have been: Al-Ilm Weekend school (Indianapolis), Al Bayan Weekend school (Columbus), Dayton Islamic School Part-Time Program (Dayton), Masjid al-Madina Islamic Weekend School (Springfield), Al Noor Islamic Weekend School (Fisher), ICGC Islamic Weekend School (West Chester), ICGC Islamic Weekend School (Clifton), Islamic Foundation of Columbus Islamic Weekend School (Columbus), Islamic Center of Greater Toledo Islamic Weekend School (Toledo), and Feisal Mosque Islamic Weekend School, (Essay contest only—Louisville, KY). Participating students are usually between grades 5 to 12.

The quiz bowl is a Jeopardy type competition on general knowledge in all areas of Islam, and points are awarded for answering questions correctly. The team with the most points after three rounds wins the Quiz Bowl. Winning teams are awarded with cash prizes and medals, while all participating members are awarded plaques.

The essay competition invites all participating school students to write essays on Islamic issues. Topics are provided and mailed to the schools towards the end of January each year. Students from 6th to 8th grades (Group A) and 9th to 12th grades (Group B), attending part-time Islamic school or weekend Islamic school write the essays and send these to DIS PTP. Upon receipt of the essays, they are read by our judges. All essay contest participants are encouraged to attend the Awards Ceremony held after the Quiz Competition. Certificates of recognition and participation prizes are given to all participants. Great cash prizes are given to the winners.

Big Brother Big Sister Day:

Big Brother Big Sister Day is held every year on the Sunday in April while the quiz bowl is being held for 5th to 12th grade students. All stories written by the big brothers and big sisters from 2nd grade to 5th grade are read to the little brothers and little sisters in preschool to 1st grade. Selected stories are also published in the annual magazine.

Annual Magazine:

Students of DIS PTP have been publishing an annual magazine in which they write Islamic articles and draw illustrations. This magazine is a wonderful work of creativity performed by our students. The students express their thoughts in many different ways through this magazine. It is produced more in the form of a yearbook magazine and includes information on the year's activities, the award winning essays of the previous year, and stories and poems written by our students. It has class pictures as well as activity pictures.

Annual Calendar:

An annual lunar calendar is prepared using the Islamic year, months, and days. An Islamic theme is selected and students brainstorm the many aspects of this theme in order to draw pictures pertaining to each aspect of the theme. The best artwork is selected in a contest format by judges to represent each of the months of the calendar. The Islamic months are given the main emphasis and Gregorian calendar dates and months are also provided. This year's calendar also includes prayer times for Dayton, OH to make the calendar more useful to people.

Service Activities:

Students in the senior classes organize and participate in many charitable giving activities. These include fundraising to help the poor financially, in kind donations of food and clothing, service activities at the Ronald McDonalds House, the House of Bread, and at home in our own Muslim Community Center. Our students have also participated in making financial donations at a hospital overseas.

Scholarships:

Scholarships are given to graduating seniors who plan to attend a college or technical school. Scholarships are awarded based on merit, leadership, and service done through the years at DIS PTP.

End of Year Program: A showcase of the hard work done by students during the school year. Students are recognized by giving certificates, awards, and prizes.

5. ADULT PROGRAMS

Adult Forum:

This is an excellent opportunity for all parents and community members to learn and share Islamic knowledge. This forum is presented in a seminar format. Every Sunday morning this forum starts with tafseer of the Holy Qur'an and parent presentations and discussions follow.

Adult Classes:

Adult classes are offered in Qur'aic recitation (Tajweed) and grammar in a class format. All parents and adults in the community are encouraged to participate in these classes. These classes are offered as a service to the community and there is **no cost** involved.

Parent-Child Service Club:

In order to give our younger children an early head start in becoming giving individuals we plan and participate in a parent-child service club. In the past parents and children made blankets (no sewing involved), donated tooth brushing kits, and crocheted baby hats to be donated to the needy families in our area. These are usually one day activities and whatever we make is usually distributed immediately.

6. DEVELOPING STANDARDS AND INCREASING ACCOUNTABILITY

In order to develop standards and increase accountability a multi faceted approach has been taken many new things have been introduced both for teachers and students.

PARENT – STUDENT GUIDE BOOK

A detailed parent-student guide book has been developed to familiarize the parents and students about the school. All of the above activities, schedule of class times, activity dates, tuition due dates, tuition and sibling discounts in tuition, Sunday Yearly calendars with tuition dates, quiz dates, and activity dates are provided, codes of conduct and consequences, dress codes for students are all provided..

1. Mission Statement and Principal's Message
2. Sunday Calendar for 2006-2007
3. Program Outline
4. School Activities
5. Tuition
6. Schedule of Classes
7. Homework
8. Quizzes

9. Progress Reports
10. Parent Teacher Conferences
11. Code of Conduct
12. Dress Code
13. Calendar of Events
14. Books and Costs -- Islamic Studies
15. Books and Costs -- Languages – Arabic, Bangla, Urdu
16. Books and Costs – Qur’anic Studies
17. PTO Information Flyer

Show sample page of yearly Sunday calendar on overhead.

HOMEWORK BOOKS

A customized home work book has been developed for use by students from KG to Grade 12. Space is provided to write down homework in all three areas of in class learning –Islamic studies, Qur’anic studies, and languages. All students need to write down their homework and it should be initialed by the teacher or a classroom parent volunteer. All parents are requested to initial the homework books on a regular basis. All quiz dates are marked on the Sunday prior to as well as on the Sunday of the quiz. The yearly Sunday calendar is printed on the first page of the homework book. In order to address the problem of absent students not knowing the homework or some students missing something, all homework is also e-mailed to parents in the following format.

Sample section from homework book shows a reminder for all students of the upcoming quiz the following Sunday.

QUIZ 3: ALL SUBJECTS NEXT SUNDAY HOMEWORK DATE: 11/13/05

STUDENT NAME: _____

LEVELS: Islamic Studies _____ Qur’an _____ Arabic /Bengali/ Urdu: _____

A sample homework book page is presented on the next page.

Sample homework book page:

HOMEWORK DATE: 11/20/05 QUIZ 3: ALL SUBJECTS

STUDENT NAME: _____

LEVELS: Islamic Studies _____ Qur'an _____ Arabic /Bengali/ Urdu: _____

ARABIC / BENGALI / URDU: ___/___/___

PARENT'S SIGN _____ **TEACHERS INITIAL** _____

QUR'ANIC STUDIES: DUE BY ___/___/___

PARENT'S SIGN _____ **TEACHERS INITIAL** _____

ISLAMIC STUDIES: DUE BY: ___/___/___

PARENT'S SIGN _____ **TEACHERS INITIAL** _____

PARENT'S INITIAL FOR 10 MINUTES OF READING EACH DAY _____

DAYS	ISLAMIC STUDIES	QUR'ANIC STUDIES	ARABIC	BENGALI	URDU
MONDAY					
TUESDAY					
WEDNESDAY					
THURSDAY					
FRIDAY					
SATURDAY					
TEACHER'S INITIAL					

HOMEWORK E-MAIL: ISLAMIC STUDIES

Home work for the week of -- 02/18/2006 Due by: **02/25/07** Quizzes in all classes

Preschool:	<p>Begin class with Surah al Fatiha; review Surah al Ikhlass and Surah al-Kauser; Dua before eating—photocopy sent home</p> <p>Song on Muslim manners; Learning names of Prophets—1st Prophet and last Prophet (SM)</p>
Kindergarten:	Check your child's Homework book or please call Sr. Shireen Husain
1 st . Grade:	<p>Review lesson 8 in class, Lesson 9 in class</p> <p>HW: Review prior lessons, Do workbook pages up to lesson 9</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Review and practice 5 names of Allah learned so far</p>
2 nd and 3 rd Grades	Check your child's Homework book or please call Sr. Durdana 000-0000
4 th and 5 th Grades	<p>Group 2: Chapter 26 discussion, Quiz/Test—chapters 23-26; Discuss Chapter 27 on 2/25</p> <p>Group 1: Chapter 10 discussion, Quiz/Test -- chapters 8—10; ; Discuss Chapter 11 and other pages assigned</p> <p>Calculate Islamic Year</p>
Middle School	<p>Essay due on 2/25/07; Will count for one test grade; all students must write:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I Know Allah (swt) Loves Me Because! Discuss in the Light of the Loving And Merciful Attributes of Allah(sw) and the Acts You Perform that Enable You to Attain the Love of Allah(sw). (Length: 700 to 800 words)</p> <p>Read surah Al Zilzal and Al Asr; Surah Naziat studied on 2/18/07. All worksheets on all surahs need to be saved in folder provided and a complete folder with all worksheets will need to be turned in for a test grade</p>
High School	<p>Essay due on 2/25/07; Will count for one test grade; all students must write:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Difficulties I Face and the Choices I Make Because My Guidance Comes Straight from Allah(sw) in the Holy Qur'an. (Length: 900 to 1000 words)</p> <p>Topic discussed: Accusations against Prophet Muhammad (SM)—analysis of many common accusatons by others.</p> <p>HW: Read pp. 46-49, prepare for Quiz; complete pages 50-51</p>

7. TOOLS TO AID THE TEACHERS

Teachers need help in bringing about professionalism in all aspects of their performance as teachers in weekend Islamic schools -- getting started, knowing their responsibilities, curriculum, classroom management techniques, following schedules, doing volunteer work and more. We provide our teachers with a teacher's manual, a detailed lesson plan book, an attendance, grading, lesson plan, and lesson report book, as well workshops on effective teaching and classroom technique, and child development workshops. All these materials are custom made to meet the needs of weekend schools. These are also very easily adaptable to all weekend Islamic schools. In this section a summary of what each of these books have is provided.

TEACHER'S MANNUAL

The teacher's manual summarizes information that parents receive in the Parent-Student Guide book so they already know what the parents have been informed. In addition teachers are provided information on policy and procedures, codes of conduct for students, timely arrival and departures, dress codes for students and teachers, quiz and test policy, and record keeping.

TEACHER'S DETAILED LESSON PLAN BOOK

Up until now there are plenty of text books available in the market. There are no books available written for weekend Islamic schools. Therefore, textbooks are carefully selected so that the books are considered to be the syllabus for the year. Teachers need to make the plans on how to cover the chapters, what teaching methods and strategies to use and any good of deficient areas faced while teaching the classes and covering the material. Teachers are provided a Sunday Calendar for the year that covers all meeting dates, special event dates, and test and quiz dates in this calendar. Teachers are also provided with student information pages (phone numbers and e-mail) in this book so they can contact the students and parents during the week if there is a need. Teachers are allowed to keep this book with them at all times, turning these in periodically for review by the education committee.

ATTENDANCE, GRADING, LESSON PLAN, AND LESSON REPORT BOOKS

A custom made Attendance book is provided for use by teachers. Teachers mark attendance, if home work has been turned in, homework given, homework grade, quiz grade, lesson taught and lesson plan for the following week. Students are required to write this homework in their homework books. Homework is also e-mailed to parents from these books. All grades are recorded in these books so the teacher is very well prepared when it is time to send progress reports home and have parent-teacher conferences.

TEACHER TRAINING WORKSHOPS

Teacher training workshops are provided in the form of in service training to teachers to familiarize them with effective teaching and classroom management techniques. Two classes were offered in the past on assertive discipline and interactive teaching techniques—teaching classes more in the pattern of discussions, rather than lectures. A smaller workshop is held each year to familiarize teachers on policy and procedures, class assignments, syllabus, teaching methods.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

Public Television Station in OHIO (Think TV 16/14) provides a federally funded program. This is a **Child Development Workshop** that offered 7 classes on child development. These classes were offered to teachers and parents of the Part-Time school. Topics covered were:

Help me be happy

Help me grow

Help me work it out (dealing with anger)

Help me be healthy (cleanliness, sanitation)

Help me be safe (Child proofing your preschool rooms, house, Child care center)

This program and was offered absolutely FREE OF COST at the Muslim Community Center. LOTS OF MATERIALS AND INFORMATION WERE PROVIDED to all program participants. All weekend Islamic schools can benefit from these programs. You may want to contact PBS of your own area to find what is being offered.

CONCLUSION

We have been making very serious efforts to provide Islamic education to our students at our Part-Time Islamic school effectively. Our attempt is to provide Islamic education in a fun, practical, thought provoking, and applied way to our children. Our goal is to make our children love Allah (swt), love Islam, and to be knowledgeable, thinking and doing Muslims. In doing so setting goals and developing standards is essential. Our humble efforts in Dayton, Ohio are presented. I hope all of you have gained something from this paper. Please look at all inadvertent mistakes remaining in this paper with forgiving eyes. All success coming out of this paper is due to Allah (swt).

Show samples of Homework book, Attendance book, other books, Calendars, Magazines.

