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What Muslim Teachers Want You To Know About Their Engagement With Students

Mahasin D. Shamsid-Deen : 6-7 minutes

Muslim teachers who provide Islamic education at a full-time or weekend school initiative are invaluable members of the “village” that is engaged in raising Muslim children. They give Muslim children a perspective that enhances the religiosity of the home by promoting awareness about Islamic practices and beliefs and how these are synthesized into the individual, family, and community.

Strictly from a religious standpoint, Muslim teachers want students and parents to understand that as a teacher, their goal for Islamic education is to assist Muslim students in their connectedness and understanding of Islam as a belief system and way of life. Muslim teachers want their students to:

- Be ever aware that Allah is The Creator, and not part of creation
- Understand how to follow the example of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him
- Familiarize themselves and appreciate the Holy Quran

- Practice Islamic tenets as the norm and way of life
- Cultivate the habit and love of *Salah* (five daily prayers)
- Have a healthy sense of their Islamic self
- Recognize their role and contribution as Muslims to world history
- Explain, be comfortable with, and defend Islam
- Attend Masjid and Islamic events as natural part of life
- Be God-conscious and regardful to Allah

Muslim teachers are also aware that in their role as a teacher, they have the ability to clearly and specifically influence the physical and mental health of Muslim students – especially adolescents. An industry expert report from the International Journal of Children’s Mental Health found through research and controlled trials that there was a significant positive impact on adolescents when they received religious instruction. Muslim teachers realize that teaching Islam to students raises their standards of morality, reinforces their coping skills, and even creates a sense of connectedness to other Muslims. All of these have a profound impact on mental health and well-being.

Muslim teachers want to help Muslim children:

- Gain understanding and ability to practice self-control
- Refer to the Holy Quran and Sunnah as a guide for healthy eating habits by recognizing that their body has rights over them and should be taken care of
- Refer to the Quran and Sunnah for cleanliness habits
- Understand how Islam provides guidance that enhances and eases their interactions with each other, adults, seniors, neighbors, friends, and other people in the society

- Use Islam to stay away from peer pressure that encourages them to engage in sexual behavior, illegal drug use, or other harmful activities
- Rely on the Quran to give them solace in times of stress so they do not resort to violence or suicidal ideation
- Look at the examples of Muslim youth in history, especially those of the Prophetic age, and realize the stress of being an adolescent is a consistent and persistent human experience and thereby 'survivable' (*although this benefit is also for the parents [smile]*)

Along with the idea of surviving being a Muslim youth in the society, Muslim teachers can be instrumental in helping students deal with the stressful reality of being a minority - the reality that being part of the smaller group can be challenging for adolescents because of the feelings of wanting to be in the 'in crowd'. Muslim teachers are hyper-aware that Muslim students are sensitive to the sense of belonging in the society and culture that they live in. Therefore, Muslim teachers want parents and students to know that they are here to help with:

- Engaging Islamic principles of humanity in dealing with people of all ethnic groups
- Reminding students to refer to the Holy Quran, Sunnah and *Seerah* (biography of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him) in understanding the proper ways of handling oppression
- Finding comfort that being an ethnic or religious minority does not inherently mean that someone is inferior
- Developing positive feelings of themselves as practicing Muslims by openly engaging in religious activities and sharing this with others
- Accessing opportunities for social engagement through the school and school activities that highlight Islamic expression of thought, art, and ability
- Assisting with conflict resolution within their peer group
- Supporting and cultivating their need for positive reinforcement
- Creating opportunities for their concerns to not only be heard, but met and responded to by a caring community of adults
- Forbidding the development of cliques and racial stratification amongst Muslims by providing distinct consequences for the behavior
- Relieving the anxiety of not being accepted and instead, providing a supportive, inclusive network
- Reframing stressful events within the reference of how Allah, The Most High, tests the human being
- Resolving feelings of displacement or anxiety based on Islamophobic events
- Developing resilience in the face of challenges related to school, social relationships, and society in general
- Serving as a confidant to highlight their successes and guide them through negative situations

Lastly, Muslim Teachers want parents, students and the community to know that they need your Dua. There is a lot of responsibility being a Muslim teacher, which means there is a lot of pressure to make sure that the information provided is correct and the interaction between the teacher and the student is beneficial. Muslim teachers want everyone to know that they are fallible, but certainly have the intentions to provide the most enriching experience possible for Muslim students.