

# **IQRA' Preschool Curriculum**

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University of Minnesota

Revised Second Edition

 **IQRA'**  
International Educational Foundation  
Chicago

**Part of a Comprehensive  
and Systematic Program  
of Islamic Studies**

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## IQRA'S NOTE

We at Iqra' International Educational Foundation are grateful to Allah (SWT) for enabling us to present the first volume of its integrated Islamic curriculum.

The present volume of Iqra' Curriculum (Preschool) represents four years of painstaking research, study, writing and field testing by Dr. Tasneema Ghazi, Iqra's director of curriculum. She was assisted by our able team members of the Program Development Committee, innumerable educators, teachers, community workers, and concerned parents.

Iqra' is pleased to announce that its plans to develop, field test and publish an integrated curriculum for Islamic schools from preschool to high school within the next five years (by July 1997) are well underway.

Within the next six months the teachers will, *InshaAllah*, receive two curricula at the Kindergarten level: i) *Islamic Studies*, and ii) *Social Studies*.

The development and production of this curriculum is part of Iqra's vision of a comprehensive system of Islamic education. This covers:

1. **An integrated curriculum from preschool to high school.**
2. **A comprehensive program of Islamic Studies at all levels which will include ten basic Islamic subjects and cover graded *text books, workbooks, enrichment literature, parent/teacher manuals and educational aids.***
3. **An open university and home-based education.**

In each area Iqra's work is progressing in a planned way and we hope that within this decade (before we enter the year 2000) Iqra's vision will become a reality, *InshaAllah*.

This kind of effort needs various things: i) a commitment to make Islamic education our foremost priority, ii) mobilization of different communities human and financial resources, iii) institutionalization of efforts and iv) coordination with other organizations.

We urge all concerned Muslims and Islamic organizations to cooperate with Iqra' and become *Ansar* of its Educational Program.

Let us together establish Iqra' International Educational Foundation as the finest institution of Islamic educational research and development. It would be the best gift we North American Muslims can give to our children and to the *Ummah* as a whole.

Dedicated To:

**SHEIKH SALEH KAMEL**  
*Saudi Philanthropist*

Who

In Response to the Basic Need of Islamic Education  
Created a Chair of Curriculum with  
IQRA' International Educational Foundation  
And Supported its Educational Vision

**Introduction  
of the  
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Ever since her arrival in the U.S.A. in 1968 she has been involved with the establishment and organization of schools of Islamic Studies in the United States. Working with children and for children is her main interest.

Dr. Tasneema Ghazi and her husband, Dr. Abidullah Ghazi are co-founders of IQRA' International. They have given up their professional careers and have committed their lives to develop an *integrated curriculum* and produce a *comprehensive system of Islamic Studies*. They have produced the first model program of *Sirah*. It is in use in most of Islamic schools and is being translated into major world languages.

Helped by a team of co-workers, their life goal is to establish IQRA' International Educational Foundation as a foremost Islamic Educational Research Institution of the Western World.

They have five children. Their children provided them with their first educational experimental lab. They are also their co-workers and contribute creatively to IQRA's educational endeavors.

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## **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM IN AN ISLAMIC SCHOOL**

### **PHILOSOPHY:**

The goal of the Early Childhood Program in an Islamic school is to provide opportunities for active involvement of children and their parents in a continual process of education based on the knowledge of the Qur'an and Sunnah. This includes a deep and firm belief in Allah (SWT), His Mercy and His Guidance. Involvement of Muslim parents in the education of their children is especially important due to the many non-Islamic influences of Western American culture and environment upon them.

When a child enters school, both he and his parents begin a far-reaching experience. This is the time for building a sound relationship between school and home. Once established, this relationship provides solid grounds for cooperation and coordination between these two significant institutions in the child's life.

The preschool years play a unique role in the total growth and development of a child. Preschool programs are designed to help the children direct their energies to learning about and being aware of their environment. If the environment provided is Islamic, the children will be aware of their Islamic heritage and learn about their religion. A specifically Islamic preschool program also provides the children many opportunities to interact with the Islamic environment in a positive and constructive way. The program should also help them to develop feelings of self-worth and adequacy about themselves, their families and their religion.

In order to be successful, the program needs parental cooperation and participation. Home involvement in the Islamic education and training of Muslim children cannot be overemphasized. Thus, the program should include a parent education component. The program should provide opportunities for the parents to do the following:

- a) Realize their long-term responsibility as the primary educators and counselors of their children.
- b) Participate in the preschool program and develop better understanding of the basic concepts of child growth and development. This participation will provide them better understanding of and deeper insight into human behavior.

- c) Progress more comfortably in their relationships with their children and accept and enjoy them as they are.
- d) Develop strong bonds with the Muslim community. These bonds will provide families with the needed support system which in the past was so often provided by extended family and neighbors.

To achieve these goals, the program will provide for the child, *InshaAllah*, the following:

- 1) Opportunities for physical, social, cognitive, emotional and moral development to the extent of his capabilities and at the rate of his own growth.
- 2) An Islamic environment so that the moral and spiritual self of the child can develop under the teaching of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*.
- 3) A secure and safe environment so that the child will not be afraid of new experiences.
- 4) Varied experiences for learning and completing developmental tasks.
- 5) Warm and supportive adults to guide and encourage both individual and group activities and to act as suitable Muslim role models for the children.
- 6) Freedom, opportunity and encouragement towards developing responsibility, self control and independence while maintaining respect for adults.
- 7) Loving, clear and intelligent beginning lessons in Qur'an and Hadith recitation and memorization, which will provide a foundation for a lifetime of study.



## **CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUNG CHILDREN BETWEEN THE AGES OF THREE & FOUR YEARS**

### **PHYSICAL:**

The child between the ages of three and four years manages her body movements more skillfully than the toddler. This means smoother movements in walking, running and climbing. She enjoys physical activity for its own sake and may incorporate a specific mastered skill in other kinds of play.

The child of three or four is also physically characterized by the fact that she is:

Interested in exploring the world by *doing* rather than *listening*; she wants to touch, move, taste and smell.

Gaining in ability to manipulate smaller objects and perform finer motor skills; she can pour from a pitcher, unbutton clothes, lace shoes, etc., with some difficulty.

Enjoys the physical aspects of using materials rather than accomplishing a feat; for example, she enjoys making large strokes with paint brush rather than painting a picture, she likes to move large blocks around rather than build a building, etc.

Getting better in performing routines such as toileting and washing her hands with soap. However, completion of these routines still takes time and reminding.

### **SOCIAL:**

Children between the ages of three and four still like to play alone but close to other children, (parallel play). At this stage they move closer to cooperative play, which when it begins occurs mostly in small groups (two or three children). If an appropriate social environment is provided, the children at this age begin to learn the social behaviors of sharing and awaiting their turns, not only as a behavior but as an accepted concept. They willingly share their toys with some close friends.

### **EMOTIONAL:**

The child at this stage is egocentric; his own needs and desires are more important than those of others.

Children develop very concrete fears at this stage and need adults to comfort and support them in each situation.

They become rule conscious and begin to accept some rules and regulations.

They begin to understand reasoning and participate in some arguments.

### **COGNITIVE:**

*Curiosity:* A child at this stage is very curious and wants to find out about everything.

*Language development:* Language develops rapidly, resulting in attempts to express ideas and ask for things. He also likes to play with words.

*Self-evaluation:* Evaluation of self is not learned yet, and the child is not able to evaluate his own behavior. He cannot stand off and view himself from another point of view.

*Egocentrism:* Egocentrism is reflected in his speech and thinking.

*Fantasy:* The child at this stage uses fantasy and dramatic play to pull together and give meaning to persons and events around him.

*Numbers:* He may be able to memorize and count up to 5, but the concept of numbers higher than two or three is not understood at this stage. He has the ability to learn colors and distinguish between them. [this has nothing to do with numbers]

### **GENERAL COMMENTS:**

This is a period of rapid change for most children as they are busy in learning new skills and reaching new levels of independence.

Socially they are very cooperative and conforming to adult standards of behavior. They usually want to do what adults ask them to do.

Teachers and parents should be aware of the feelings and emotions of the children, whether expressed or not. Children at this stage are just learning to control and direct their feelings. It is difficult for children at this stage to keep up with their own pace. For example, the child will strive to do many things by himself but when things become too much to handle, the teachers and parents

should give a helping hand. The child has to understand that it is o.k. to be dependent upon someone for a while.

*Attention span:* Children's attention spans may be short in certain types of situations such as in adult-directed activities, where they have to adjust their behavior to adult expectations. However, when involved in an activity, they can concentrate for a substantial length of time.

Classroom activities should be planned keeping in mind the above characteristics of the children.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUNG CHILDREN BETWEEN THE AGES OF FOUR AND FIVE YEARS**

### **PHYSICAL:**

Children at this age use basic motor skills (running, walking and jumping etc.) as part of their play. They are still very active but more for specific purposes and less for the sake of activity alone.

They usually have mastered new skills like skipping and hopping on one foot.

They still enjoy learning things by doing them themselves.

They show definite improvements in fine motor coordination, can handle scissors with more ease than before, and even small beads and pins are handled fairly easily.

Most are able to dress and undress themselves except for shoes.

They can complete daily routines quickly.

They are willing to take risks to achieve their goals, such as trying to walk up the slide, jump from the swing or ride a two-wheeler.

### **SOCIAL:**

An increase in cooperative play takes place at this stage. Children play together, giving and taking directions. Even though the number of children playing in a group may still remain small they are better able to communicate with each other and add new numbers with ease and comfort.

This is the age when they enjoy dramatic play more, imitating "true-to-life" situations.

Feelings of empathy and sympathy towards friends develop as children begin to share and take turns on their own initiative. The child has become a more social, less egocentric being.

### **EMOTIONAL:**

The child at this age is still quite egocentric; his or her own needs and wants take

precedence over those of others.

The child between four and five is better able to substitute language for direct physical action in conflict situations.

He or she shows greater awareness of rules, often demands that others also follow the rules and states them for others while at the same time not following them himself.

Behavior is not as impulsive as before and certain feelings may not diffuse as rapidly as before.

The child is beginning to find support in his peer group and friends. He is no longer wholly dependent upon adults for approval and recognition as before.

### **COGNITIVE:**

There is a continuous growth in language ability. The children deal more effectively with ideas through language and can begin to grasp some abstract concepts. They enjoy playing with words as they learn their meanings and impact.

Children at this age begin to ask many more questions. "Why" and "how" become very important at this stage. They need answers and explanations for putting ideas and information together.

Their schemata of objects and ideas grow bigger and richer as they gain new experiences and develop new ideas. They are constantly adjusting and changing their concepts. For example, their concept of "time" becomes larger as it encompasses seasons, days of the week and even months. It has more meaning for the child than before.

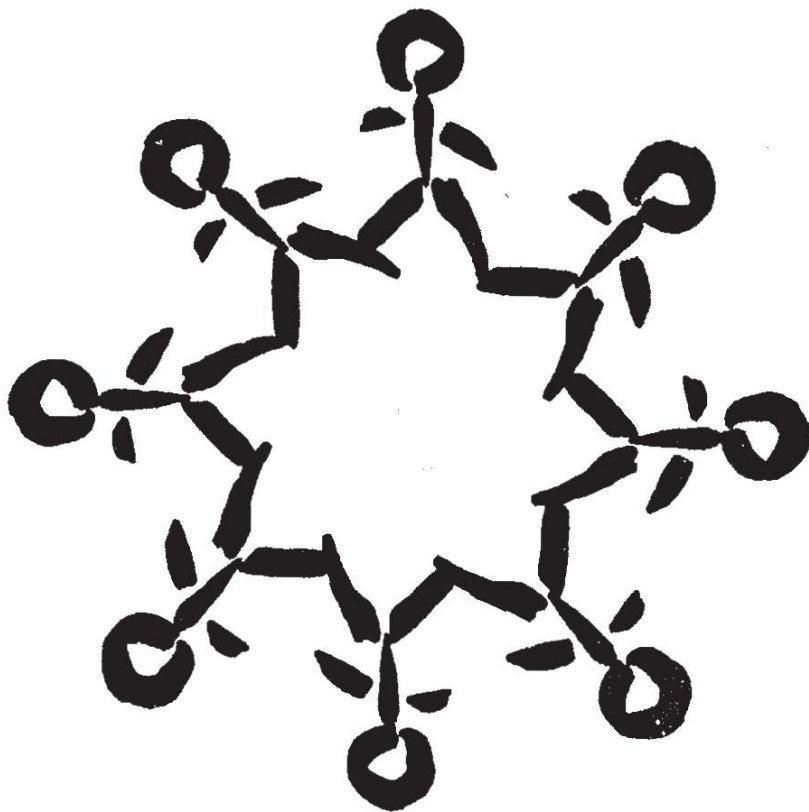
### **NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS:**

The children between the ages of four and five years are described as the "sports model" of what they were at three: fast, smooth, showy and with moving gadgets.

They need more space and more freedom to test and try their new skills and capabilities, and adults should help them in their attempts to try out new avenues and support them through the process.

# Experiencing Social Studies

During the Preschool Years



## **PHILOSOPHY:**

The Social Studies Curriculum in an Islamic school should attempt to provide experiences to the children which will integrate human knowledge and experiences for the purpose of Islamic living and citizenship education. This implies membership in the Islamic, American and other communities and a commitment to work effectively with diverse people (within the framework of Islamic laws and principles) and to understand the differences in cultures, in values and in responses to various social, political and religious issues in the light of the Qur'an and *Sunnah*.

On the preschool level this teaching takes place in a very basic way, focused on direct interactions within the classroom. The preschool is generally the first social experience for the child outside the home.

## **OBJECTIVES:**

The entire program of preschool (nursery and kindergarten) is actually a study in social living. At this stage, emphasis should be placed upon the skills and attitudes of working and playing with each other and upon such Islamic social learning as:

### **1. Sharing with others:**

- Show-and-tell activity during group time.
- Sharing a story or an incident at home.
- Visiting a place of interest.
- Describing the birth of a new sibling.
- Sharing the desk, crayons, paper, and toys in the classroom.

The teacher can tell the stories of the *Ansar* sharing their houses and belongings with the *Muhajirin* in Madina.<sup>1</sup>

### **2. Turn-taking and waiting for turns:**

- Sharing days in being the teacher's helpers, messengers, line leaders, etc.
- Taking turns in feeding the classroom pets.
- Taking turns in using the easel and other pieces of equipment and in using shared toys.
- Waiting for their turns to talk during circle time.

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<sup>1</sup> Please see Bibliography.

The teacher should pay special attention to helping children develop these necessary habits and skills during classroom activities and also in the playground where children have to share certain equipment.

### **3. Respecting the Rights of others:**

- Keeping the classroom clean as it belongs to everyone in the class.
- Keeping the noise level down so as not to disturb others.
- Being willing to share the teacher's time and attention as she is there for everyone.
- Taking care of the property of other children.
- Respecting others' points of view.
- Avoiding pushing and pulling while lining up for prayers.
- Making room for others to join the line for prayers.

The teacher can tell some stories from the life of Rasulullah (S) and the Sahabah (R) that deal with this subject.

### **4. Accepting the Authority of Adults:**

- Listening to the teacher and following her directions.
- Understanding and following the routines of the class willingly.
- Seeking teacher's approval when not sure of the established rule of the class for some activity or for the use of certain equipment.

Teachers and parents should make every attempt to teach the children respect for adults as necessary Islamic behavior. They should avoid confrontation and arguing back and forth with the children.

Stories from the life of Rasulullah (S), the Sahaba (R) and other Muslim leaders should be told to the children to inculcate respect for the authority of adults.

### **5. Caring for Self, for example:**

Children should be taught that our bodies and souls are a gift from Allah (SWT) and we have to take care of ourselves in order to please Allah (SWT). We should also take care of ourselves so that we can live a happy and healthy life.

- Cleanliness of clothes and body.
- Taking showers and performing *wudu*.
- Eating right food, with explanations of halal and haram food.
- Exercising and resting on time.
- Being able to dress and undress themselves.



Wearing proper clothes for different seasons.

The teacher can tell children stories from the *shama'il* of Rasulullah (S) to show the children how he took care of himself.

**6. Caring for personal and group property:**

- Putting away papers, pencils and toys, etc., after using them.
- Keeping the house corner clean.
- Taking care of equipment in the classroom.
- Keeping one's own cubby neat and tidy.
- Keeping the clothes neat and clean.
- Avoiding writing on the desks and walls of the classroom or hallways.
- Throwing garbage in the trash basket, not on the floor.

**7. Understanding the interdependence of people:**

- Living in the family: roles of mother, father, grandparents, brothers and sisters, cousins and other relatives.
- Relating with *neighbors*: seeing Muslims and their neighbors living and sharing together in a peaceful and harmonious community.
- Relating with *community workers*: seeing how we depend on each other in our community and appreciating the roles of mailwoman, milkman, garbageman, policeman, fireman, judge, nurse, schoolteacher and others.

Teachers should remember to include role models from both sexes.

**8. Taking responsibility to complete an assignment:**

- Completing tasks during art work.
- Taking time to finish a puzzle and put it away.
- Communicating in complete sentences.
- Finishing the food on the plate, milk in the cup.
- Washing their hands with soap after using the washroom and drying them with a paper towel.
- Putting on coats, gloves and hats before going out in winter.

The teachers should allow enough time for children to complete their work efficiently and properly. Teachers should constantly reinforce these behaviors as it will take constant drilling for the children to learn.

**9. Helping others:**

Children should be taught the Islamic concept of helping others, including

concepts of *sadaqa* and *zakat*, as their Islamic duty.

Doing small deeds of kindness such as collecting money for the victims of some natural disaster.

Helping the poor and the needy of their neighborhood through a food and clothing distribution program.

Learning the different ways of helping others: through money, labor and sharing our belongings

Helping our friends when they need help in doing something.

Helping our parents by doing some chores around the house.

Helping the teachers in the classroom by taking up the responsibility of some chores.

The teacher should use stories from the life of Rasulullah and the Sahabah. He or she should show that they were the model helpers, and explain why the Muslims of Medina were called *Ansar*.

#### **10. Developing a positive self-image:**

Parents and teachers should make every effort to help the child in developing a positive self-image. He has to be proud of his Islamic heritage and his family background.

Drawing posters of "Me, My Family, My School" and "Things I Like to Eat."

Learning to write names in English and Arabic.

Recognizing his own name and names of some friends.

Participating in the "Helper of the Week" program, where every child gets a chance to be the helper.

Cutting out figures of each child on newsprint, drawn and cut by the children with the help of the teacher.

Sharing favorite toys.

Writing stories told by the children and displaying them in the classroom.

#### **11. Respecting parents, teachers and other elders:**

Talking to adults with respect .

Not raising the voice or whining.

Accepting their advice.

Using proper language and expression while conversing with adults.

Teachers and parents should co-operate in inculcating respect for adults. Stories from the "Shamail-e-Nabawi" should be read and told to the children to present the model.

## **12. Being proud of their Islamic heritage:**

One of the main goals of an Islamic school is to develop a pride in the children of their Islamic heritage.

Singing songs about Islam and Muslims.

Telling the children stories of the great Muslims in history, ancient and recent.

Helping them to develop the confidence that our religion is the best and the right way to live in this world.

Helping children realize that in many ways we are different than most of other children, yet in many other ways we are similar.

Reminding them how Muslims behave in their every-day living, such as telling the truth, sharing, helping others, praying five times a day etc.

Helping them to feel proud of some of the things Muslims do not do (which they may have seen on TV) such as hurting people, being rude to adults etc.

## **13. Realizing the world *ummah*:**

One of the goals is to help children develop a sense of belonging to the worldwide Muslim *ummah*. Activities should at first be based on the nationalities of the students in the class.

Inviting the parents or grandparents of the children who were born in other Muslim countries to share their experiences with the children.

Talking about foods cooked by Muslims in different parts of the world.

Talking about the costumes of Muslim children from different Muslim countries.

## **A NOTE TO THE TEACHERS:**

It is important that certain opportunities and experiences be provided for the development of the above concepts. It must be realized that no formal teaching in the social sciences should be imposed upon young children. Only activities and experiences within the realm of their understanding may be used.

The environment of the classroom itself will cause their awareness of social issues to increase. Costumes, samples of food and music and pictures from different lands all serve to interest the imaginative minds of young children in other people and places. Big maps and globes can be placed in the classroom. A large inflatable globe ball provides a good introduction to the earth: the children can be told what continent or sea their hands are on.

## HISTORY

### SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

Young children at this age do not have a clear concept of time line in historical events. However, the teacher can teach them history just in the form of stories somehow connected and related to each other.

Stories of the Prophets:

Adam, Nuh, Ibrahim, and Isma'il (ASW)

Stories of some great Muslims:

Abu Bakr, 'Ali, Bilal and Salman al-Farisi (R)

Stories of great Muslim kings and khalifas:

'Umar ibn 'Abd al- 'Aziz, Haroon al-Rashid and Humayun

Site visits:

Visiting the museums to see the relics of the past and viewing historical films which show little girls and boys of long ago.

Acting out:

Providing old-fashioned clothes for children to dress up in, in the House corner.

Leading the class in listening to and acting out fairy tales.

Songs and games:

Singing songs and playing games which children (Muslim children especially) of the past enjoyed.

Teaching and singing songs in other languages.

Picture books:

Looking at and discussing old family albums and picture books about past peoples.

Autobiographies:

Encouraging children to listen to adults and senior citizens talk about their childhoods.

Pictures on the walls:

Hanging pictures of *masajid*, the Ka'bah and other famous places on the walls, changing them often and talking about each one.

## GEOGRAPHY

### SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

The preschool child is in the midst of the *pre-operational* stage. This means that she is prevented from thinking logically due to significant characteristics of pre-operational thought: *egocentrism*, *finalism* and *centration*. Her judgments are *perception-bound*, which means that she makes judgments based on her perception of an object or situation while ignoring related cues.

For this reason, a lesson in geography for the preschoolers has to be concrete, using objects and materials which are tangible and observable, which are present in their immediate environment and which attract their attention. The teacher may do the following:

Walking through the school building and pointing out the locations of various classrooms, the dining hall, the principal's office, etc.

Finding the location of various items in the classroom.

Taking a trip to the local *masjid*.

Looking around and taking a walk around the school's neighborhood (assuming the neighborhood is safe):

Observing the sun, feeling its heat.

Feeling the direction of the wind.

Talking about far-away places far away such as Makkah and Madinah.

Talking about places close by (eg, towns and cities from which children in the school come).

Discussing the national/ethnic origins of children in the class.

Using clay and blocks, rocks and stones, and sand and water to design different landscapes: mountains, lakes, hills and forests.

Showing pictures of other lands, reading their stories and tasting their food.

## ECONOMICS

### SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

Young children should be made aware that all *rizq* (sustenance) comes from Allah (SWT), and that we should spend in His way from what He has given us. There are certain economic concepts which the children should be taught along with applicable ethical precepts, such as the following facts:

- \* Money is needed to buy goods (eg, milk money).
- \* One has to work hard to earn money; this means respecting father and mother.
- \* The amount of something you can get depends upon the availability of money.

The following activities will help children understand these ideas:

Playing "store" in the classroom using pennies, empty cans and cartons, etc.

Taking walking tours to stores or market.

Riding the train or bus.

Caring for school property and property at home.

Playing "house" with father and/or mother working hard to earn money and take care of the family.

Sharing with others who do not have enough (generosity, *zakat*).

Talking about different kinds of money: gold, brass, silver and paper, etc.

Collect money to give to someone who needs it.

Playing trading and barter games.

## A NOTE TO THE TEACHERS OF SOCIAL STUDIES IN PRESCHOOL

### **On economics:**

Muslim teachers and parents have to make sure that our children do not get caught in the race for making, spending and saving more and more money. As parents and teachers we should be the models of Islamic values in terms of earning and spending money. We should know and convey to our children that *rizq* is destined from Allah (SWT). He gives us different ways to get it. Some people work on the land, and they are called farmers or hunters or foresters. Some people build buildings and houses, and they are called architects, engineers, contractors, and bricklayers. Some people work in offices. Some buy and sell things. People used to trade things with each other. Then they invented different kinds of money with things they valued because trading with things was sometimes difficult (what if you only have a cow and you want a sweater?).

It is also important to give the children some conception of *halal* and *haram* earnings. Muslims are given very clear directives about earning our livelihoods.

### **On history:**

It is important to remember that the two very common themes of progress and evolution run through almost all science and educational literature. Most of the films children will see, and many books they will be read to will assume biological and social evolution. Remember to point out to the children that the first conscious human being Adam (ASW) knew more than anyone knows today about truth and reality. Also remind them that the best society that ever will be existed in Madinah 1400 years ago. Point out that the best among us are those who obey Allah(SWT) and follow the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*.

# Experiencing Science

During the Preschool Years





## PHILOSOPHY:

For a Muslim teacher *science is the careful study of the signs of Allah (SWT)*. To the young child, every day is a wonderful new experience. He gains experience while looking at and feeling the rain, the sun, sand and water, by questioning light, darkness, shadows, animals and sounds. "To all this and more, the child reacts with joy or fear or excitement or simple curiosity, and with the help of a perceptive adult, begins to understand what is happening and why."<sup>2</sup> In all this and much more "there are signs for the Believers." (Quran) He wonders who is the Creator of this wonderful phenomena of nature. If guided properly, the child will learn to relate these experiences to more distant and complex phenomena of nature.

Children at this age should be provided experiences in science through various activities inside the classroom and outdoors in nature. The ultimate aim of Islamic education is the affirmation of the Divine Unity. Through science education, the teacher should hope to develop in the children an awareness that :

- \* The world is the creation of Allah (SWT).
- \* Every creation of Allah (SWT), including human beings, has a role to play as wished by Allah (SWT).
- \* Nothing happens without His will.
- \* Human beings have a special place in Allah's creation because He gave us understanding of the names and nature of things. We can understand how things work and how things grow, change and die.

According to Donald B. Neuman, "science is both information about the natural and man-made world and skill in discovering that information." (Experiences in Science for Young Children, p. 4).

Science experiences at the preschool level should be creative, interesting and discovery/learning oriented. Children need an opportunity to experience, touch, feel, explore and discover some aspects of an object and guess about some other aspects just as adult scientists do.

During preschool days a foundation for exploration and discovery is laid where each experience leads to an new one, expanding the child's range of awareness. These experiences should be directed towards helping the child understand and appreciate Allah's gifts to man in terms of bounties of nature.

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<sup>2</sup> The author of this is unknown to me now.

Experiences provided in preschool programs should encourage the natural inquisitiveness in children so that basic scientific understanding can be achieved. Science programs at this level should emphasize the ability of the child to process science-related information rather than the information itself. For example, steps involved in growing a plant are more important than an actual grown plant. Children want to know about themselves and the world around them. They should be guided to discover the science in their environment. Thus they can enjoy and benefit from the opportunities to inquire, discover and explore. The science curriculum should help children to develop skills in observing, describing, classifying, measuring, problem solving, inferring, predicting relationships. Following are some of the objectives of providing experiences in science to the children.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

The Science program at the preschool level should be geared towards laying foundations for exploration, discovery and expansion of the child's range of awareness. The program should help the child to understand and appreciate Allah's gifts in terms of bounties of nature.

#### **1. Islamic perspective and attitude:**

Children should be able to believe and realize the following:

- \* Every one is created by Allah (SWT) alone.
- \* Allah (SWT) takes care of every one: humans, animals and plants.
- \* We should thank Allah (SWT) for His blessings.
- \* We should take care of Allah's creations.
- \* Allah (SWT) has given us senses to observe, a mind to think and a heart to love.
- \* We should enjoy, cherish and appreciate the world created by Allah (SWT) and not pollute or destroy it.
- \* Allah (SWT) has made the Creation for our use and has put many signs in it to remind us of Him.

#### **2. Observation:**

Children will develop these capabilities:

- a. The ability to observe similarities and differences in the creations of nature on the basis of their attributes and characteristics by:

Feeling and examining water when it is hot and cold, solid and liquid, clean and polluted, etc.

Looking at and talking about plants, their varieties and sizes (tall and short, small and large), the fruits they grow, shapes and colors of the leaves. Learning about animals and animal families, whether they are safe or dangerous to people (wild or tame), their sizes, color, eating habits and habitats.

b. The ability to observe by using one or more senses through:

Planting seeds and bulbs

Touching and feeling the texture of the dirt and the seeds

Observing the sizes and shapes of the seeds and the bulbs

Feeling the difference between hot and cold

Touching and experimenting with magnetic attraction.

Doing art projects with rough and smooth materials

Feeling, observing and tasting different fruits. For example, contrasting the outer surfaces of a watermelon and a canteloupe, or discovering the similarity between mangoes and avocados (they both have large seeds).

c. A willingness and enthusiasm for observation. Children are born observers: they love to touch, feel and handle things. The teacher should encourage this innate curiosity and provide many opportunities for observation and experimentation in her lessons. Some of the following activities can be incorporated into lesson plans to encourage children to explore and observe:

Taking nature walks.

Visiting the museum, zoo and animal farm/pet shop.

Feeding and taking care of classroom pets.

Going to parks during spring, fall and winter seasons to observe, feel and even smell the changing seasons and their effects on the landscape and environment.

Growing plants from seeds in the classroom windows.

### **3. Communication:**

Children will be provided experiences in order to develop:

a. The ability to describe and relate observations orally and visually by:

Participating in language experience stories (told by the children and written by the teacher on a big poster board.

Discussing the similarities and differences between different objects.

Depicting a trip or an outdoor experience through drawings, and later

telling the teacher about the drawing.

Playing the blind teacher game. In this activity children find ways to describe objects to a "blindfolded" teacher and she tries to guess the object. Describing the physical world. For example, the teacher shows pictures of animals to the children and asks: In what ways are they similar/different? Making charts of the senses used in the observation of different objects or pictures.

- b. The ability to communicate their inquisitiveness to the adults and peers by asking simple questions:

Asking observation-related questions which the teacher tries to answer. Asking each other questions during discussions. This encourages peer interaction and communication.

- c. New vocabulary. Here, the teacher should specially plan activities for the growth of vocabulary. For example:

Labeling various objects, pictures and charts in the classroom.

Using flash cards.

Writing language experience stories.

Helping each child make and keep her own word book, where she draws a picture, or pastes the picture of any new word she learns. The teacher writes the names of the objects on the page.

Making "my word of the day" cards for each child every day and allowing him to read and carry the card with him. After every three or four days teacher and the child can try to read the words from the cards.

Making a bulletin board of "Story Tellers" on which are displayed the stories told and illustrated by each child and recorded by the teacher.

- d. The ability to use representational symbols to communicate:

Putting up various signs in the immediate surroundings of the child such as Stop signs, McDonald's signs, Pepsi signs, etc.

Making various pictures and drawings to illustrate his stories and ideas.

#### **4. Measuring and Experimenting:**

Children will develop the following:

- a. The ability to describe length and weight comparatively by using appropriate vocabulary (more vs. less, heavy vs. light, heavier than, lighter than, small and smaller). The teacher should provide various opportunities to experiment with these concepts.

- b. The ability to compare lengths by putting two objects next to or near each other.
- c. The willingness to measure length by using hands.
- d. The ability to conceptualize "heaviness" and "lightness."
- e. A concept of capacity through seeing the relation between liquid and containers. This concept can be explained during water play.
- f. The ability to use a balance and visualize the differences in weights.

**5. Investigating, Experimenting and Hypothesizing:**

Children will learn the following:

- a. Hypothesizing. For example:

- Predicting objects which will float in whater, using a paper boat, a plastic boat, rubber duckie, paper clips, etc.
  - Predicting that seeds need sun and water to grow.
  - Predicting that ice will melt if kept outside the freezer.

- b. Investigation of hypothesis. The teacher will help the student determine the truth of statements such as:

- "Leaves change color in the fall."
  - "It is a cold day today."
  - "It is starting to rain/snow."
  - "Ahmad is taller than Majid."

- c. Asking simple questions regarding certain objects and phenomena of nature.

**6. Sorting and Recording:**

Children will acquire these skills:

- a. Sorting objects according to various attributes (color, shape, size, length, etc. -- see math curriculum).
- b. Differentiation between various materials (plastic, metal, cloth, sand, wood, etc.).
- c. Recording of experiences through pictures, signs and symbols.

d. Oral description of certain objects in sequence.

We have suggested a few activities for the teachers but they are expected to use their imaginations and experience to plan other stimulating activities for the children.

## SCIENCE

### SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

Children's involvement with science begins from the moment they start interacting with and exploring their environment. Their innate curiosity leads them to make assumptions, predict outcomes and try to test their predictions. It is the responsibility of teachers and parents to provide a rich environment for inquiry and exploration where children can experience and enjoy doing science.

#### 1. Life science

**A. Animals:** Teachers should plan activities which will give the children exposure to all animals accessible in their immediate environment such as ants, goldfish, butterflies, moths, cocoons, crickets, grasshoppers, squirrels and hamsters. The teacher should also include discussion of other animals (*zoo animals*) through:

- Talking about some of the zoo animals, taking a trip to the zoo.
- Read stories about animals to them.
- Sharing picture books, showing movies of the zoo animals.
- Coloring pictures of animals.

Teachers and parents should make sure and explain to the children that a zoo is not a natural habitat of these animals.

The following concepts should be understood after the class has studied and taken care of some of the above-mentioned animals:

- \* All animals are created by Allah (SWT).
- \* All animals have basic needs of food, shelter and warmth.
- \* Animals have specific behavior.
- \* Animals make different sounds and communicate with each other.
- \* Animals have different colors and sizes.
- \* Kindness to animals is required from the Muslims.
- \* Some animals feed us and some work for us.

**B. Plants:** Every classroom should have many real plants. Children should plant different kinds of seeds (bird seeds, avocado seed, sweet potato seeds, bulbs, etc.) and watch them grow.

The following concepts should be introduced during the lessons:

- \* All plants are created and sustained by Allah (SWT).
- \* There are many kinds of plants.
- \* Plants can be kept at home and at school.
- \* Plants need food, water and light to grow.
- \* Plants grow from seeds and bulbs.
- \* Plants breath out what we breath in, *subhanAllah*.
- \* People need plants for air, for beauty, for food and shelter.
- \* Some plants feed us and some do not.
- \* Some plants that help us are trees, grass, all food plants and herbs.

## **2. Physical science:**

Children should be provided experiences in some of the very basic phenomena of physical science such as:

*Temperature* : hot, warm and cold (water, food or an object)

*Seasons* : Fall, winter, spring and summer

*Daily cycles:* Day and night

*States of matter:* Solid, liquid and gas.

## **3. Health science and safety**

Children should be made aware of the relationship between health, nutrition and safety from a very young age, so that they learn to eat and live healthily and safely. As Muslims we have an added responsibility of educating our children about *halal* and *haram* foods and practices.

- a. Food we eat: *halal* and *haram* food, healthy food, junk food.
- b. Water: need to drink water, clean water, from where do we get water?
- c. Safety at home and at school: objects children are not supposed to play with, electric wires, electric outlets, oven doors, cooking range, iron etc.
- d. When and how to take medicine (only when the parents give it to you).
- e. Rules of crossing the street.
- f. Cleanliness and rules of personal hygiene: toilet habits, hand washing, tooth brushing (miswak), clean clothes, putting on the shoes and taking them off.

Teachers should emphasize that Allah (SWT) loves cleanliness.



## A NOTE TO THE TEACHERS OF SCIENCE IN PRESCHOOL

As stated in the goals of this curriculum, the running theme of all activities will be *iman* and Islamic values. Thus, we encourage the teachers of Science to remember these guidelines:

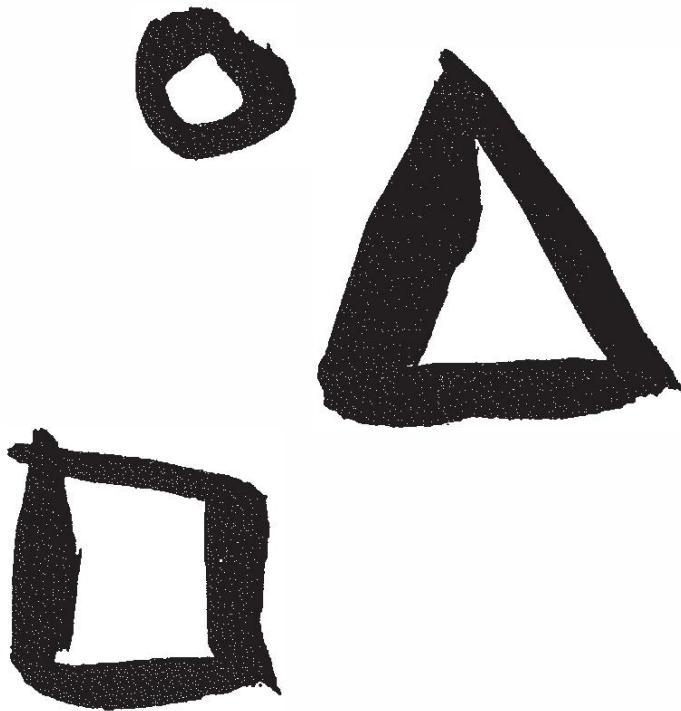
- a. When their students begin to observe and appreciate the world of nature, they should be reminded that it is the creation of Allah (SWT). He is the only Creator; no man, jinn or angel can ever create the universe. We, as people, can make things out of materials provided by Allah.
- b. Allah (SWT) has manifested Himself through His many and varied creations. Children should be encouraged to use their senses in observing, feeling, smelling, touching and listening to these varied creations of Allah (SWT).
- c. Children should be allowed to actively observe and interact with natural objects while keeping safety in mind. Their inquisitiveness should be encouraged and guided by the teachers and parents.
- d. Their observations, questions and experimentations should lead them to the realization that nothing in Allah's creation is haphazard and without order. Nature is orderly, balanced and finely proportionate.
- e. As they grow and move from the pre-kindergarten to the kindergarten classroom, they should be encouraged to ask questions, experiment and evaluate. Opportunities should also be provided for them to develop their ability for critical thinking and prediction.
- f. Children should be guided to believe that Allah (SWT) is not only the Creator of the biological and physical world but also the Provider and Sustainer of every living creature. He has blessed animals and humans with special senses and capabilities so they can look for and gather food, protect themselves from dangers, and take care of their young ones. He has endowed man with rational and intellectual capabilities, thus making human beings superior to animals and all other of His creations.
- g. As children watch the change of seasons, the blooming and withering of flowers and plants, they realize that everything in this world has only a limited life span, and that nothing and no one except Allah (SWT) is permanent. Everything in this world changes with time, and time is also created by Allah (SWT); however, He Himself is beyond the limits of time. Every living thing and creature is born, lives and then dies. He said, "I am Time." (Hadith Qudsi)

Every creation of Allah (SWT) is His gift and must be handled with care and compassion by us. Teasing or torturing animals or destroying and polluting the natural environment is showing lack of concern for Allah (SWT). Children should develop an awareness of the need for the preservation of nature. Children should understand that even our own lives are a gift from Allah (SWT). We must take care of ourselves by keeping our bodies clean, eating healthy food and using proper language.

Children should realize that the perfect order of natural phenomena is the work of Allah (SWT) and they, as the superior creation of Allah (SWT), should live in harmony with nature, nurturing and supporting each other.

# Experiencing Math

During the Preschool Years



## PHILOSOPHY :

Math includes all those ideas and skills which help people in organizing their world. These ideas and skills for young children include matching, classifying, ordering, counting, sorting, measuring and comparing. Children also learn through experimenting with shapes, sizes, space, number and number symbols. Mathematical growth begins in infancy and continues as children develop mentally, physically and socially. Consequently, their concepts and skills in math grow and develop.

Awareness of mathematical concepts is present in children from a very young age. Long before they formally use numbers, children are aware of them through their daily experiences. They are able to differentiate between "one," "few" and "many," long and short, and so on. The teacher should demonstrate the meaning of these words and develop concepts by using them often in the daily vocabulary.

Islamic concepts of Allah (SWT) as the only Creator, Adam and Muhammad (AS) as the first and last Prophets of Allah (SWT), and of Muslim prayer five times a day should be presented to the children through various activities and in many different ways.

Investigation of and exposure to mathematical ideas and concepts, rather than mastery of facts, is the goal of the preschool math program. In fact, it is more a readiness program than actual formal teaching of numbers. Mathematical concepts in preschool should be presented in three ways:

- a. *through naturalistic learning experiences* provided in a well-planned enriched environment at home and in school. Some examples are counting out the number of plates on the table, counting how many dolls there are, measuring how tall the child is, etc.
- b. *through informal learning experiences* which are initiated by the adult but not pre-planned. They occur when the teacher's or mother's intuition tells her that it is time to intervene and use the situation as a teaching/learning situation. Such a situation may arise when the child has a question, is puzzled, is having difficulty or is on the right track in solving a problem but needs a little help. Some examples are counting how many potatoes should be peeled, finding the fourth book on the shelf, etc.
- c. *through structural learning experiences*. These are pre-planned learning activities which the teacher and other adults find significant enough to be taught to the children in groups or individually at a particular point in their

development. These involve formal teaching situations. For example, the adult may sing counting songs, play finger games with countin, work with manipulatives, measure with tape or sticks, etc.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

Below are some of the objectives of providing experiences in mathematics to the young children:

#### **1. Gaining an Islamic perspective:**

The child should be aware of these facts:

- \* There is only one Allah (SWT).
- \* Allah (SWT) have given five senses with which to observe and learn.
- \* Allah (SWT) has sent many Prophets to teach us and Muhammad (S) was the last Prophet of Allah (SWT).
- \* There are many Muslims in the world.

Children should also be taught any other numerical elements of Islam : 2 Eids and 1 Ramadan every year, 5 prayers a day, 12 months in the lunar year, etc.

#### **2. Building mathematical vocabulary:**

The child will be helped to acquire a vocabulary of numerals and quantitative words through naturalistic and planned activities:

1. big and little	2. long and short	3. far and near	4. wide and
5. late and early	6. first and last	7. highest and lowest	8. tall and short
9. light and heavy	10. thick and thin	11. once and twice	12. high and
13. middle	14. few	15. first	16. pair
17. more	18. most	19. second	20. top

The child will be provided explanations and meaning of above vocabulary words, so that he will develop a conceptual framework for the vocabulary used. The

teacher will provide enough exposure to these words by using them many times in her daily activities with the children.

**3. Awareness of sound and sequence of numbers:**

The child will achieve the following:

- a. The ability to count up to 20 in proper order (rote counting).
- b. The ability to understand the numerals as they stand for a sequence of objects.
- c. The ability to understand that each numeral represents the position of an object in sequence (for example, ball 1, ball 2, ball 3, ball 4 and so on).

**4. Understanding meaning behind numbers:**

The child will develop an understanding of the following:

- a. The meaning of numbers.
- b. The meaning of one-to-one correspondence between number and object.

**5. Recognizing numerical symbols:**

This entails the following:

- a. Developing a concept of the sequence of number as it is related to one-to-one correspondence between object and number.
- b. Mastering recognition of the symbols which represent the numbers.
- c. Matching sets of objects.
- d. Associating the numeral with the number in the set.

**6. Ordering of numerals and sets:**

The child will acquire the following abilities:

- a. Ordering numerals by sequence instead of just randomly, simple and limited capability only.
- b. Putting objects in a certain order, such as from those with the fewest number to those with the greater number, or the other way around, beginning capability.

**7. Directional positioning of numerals:**

The child will also gain experience in the following:

- a. Placing the numerals in the appropriate sequence and order.

- b. Putting the numerals in the correct position (not upside down) , particularly the numbers 9 and 6.

**8. Understanding size and seriation:**

The child will gain experience in:

- a. Comparing the sizes of any two or more objects.
- b. Ordering objects of different size from smallest to largest or visa versa.
- c. Understanding that size is relative.
- d. Using relative size vocabulary, such as larger than, smaller than, bigger than, taller than, etc.

**9. Exploring shape and form:**

The children will gain expertise in:

- a. Recognizing basic shapes of circle, square, triangle, rectangle and oval.
- b. Perceiving many other geometrical shapes in their environment.
- c. Differentiating between shapes.
- d. Classifying according to size and shape.
- e. Conceptualizing space, shape and size.

**10. Understanding parts and whole:**

The teacher will guide the children in the following:

- a. Learning that whole consists of parts.
- b. Learning the relationship between the parts and the whole.
- c. Finding missing parts of a whole.
- d. Putting together and mastering simple puzzles.

**11. Conceptualizing measurement:**

The children will be provided with the experiences to explore these concepts:

the measurement of *volume*  
the measurement of *weight*  
the measurement of *length*  
the measurement of *height*

## MATHEMATICS

### SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

Children during these years learn through different types of learning experiences:

*naturalistic* learning experiences  
*informal* learning experiences  
*structured* learning experiences

Preschool teachers should plan to provide math experiences to the children in all three settings.

#### 1. Matching:

This is a necessary skill for cognitive growth. It also provides a good opportunity to foster visual discrimination. Matching activities would be based on the following:

sameness and difference  
color, sizes, numbers and sides  
objects and materials  
musical notes, sounds

Examples of some *naturalistic* activities:

Counting body parts and the related clothing: two hands, two mittens, two sleeves, two legs, two feet, two shoes, two socks.

Counting in the physical environment: chairs in the classroom, cubbies in the classroom.

Learning one-to-one correspondence:

One person fits in one chair.  
One mitten goes in each hand (right and left difference).  
One shoe goes in each foot (right and left shoe).  
One plate goes in front of each person at the dining table.

Examples of *informal* activities:

Practicing one-to-one correspondence in a group during art and craft activity:

One pair of scissors for every child.  
One box of crayons for each child.



One sheet of paper in front of each child.

Practicing matching during lunch and snack time:

Matching napkins, paper towels.

Matching colors of paper.

Matching each paper cup to each plate.

Examples of *structured* matching activities:

Matching perceptual characteristics (real objects):

pens and ink pots, dishes and spoons.

shoes and socks, paper and pencil.

Matching real objects: persons and animals, different and similar

Matching pictures: different and similar

Matching slides: different and similar

Grouping same and different numbers.

Grouping objects that are physically joined and that are not physically joined.

Perceptual and tactical matching: doing puzzles -- matching pieces to fit in the appropriate frame.

## **2. Numbers and Counting:**

To understand the concept of number means to understand the oneness of "one" and the twoness of "two" and so on. However, preschoolers have difficulty thinking of numbers as having specific values. They can count and assign number to an object in some cases. One-to-one correspondence is not completely understood until age 6 or 7.

Two operations, *role counting* and *rational counting* are involved in counting.

### **Naturalistic Activities**

Counting (role first) while going up and down the stairs.

Counting the number of cookies wanted or eaten.

Counting the number of children in the class.

Counting the number of siblings at home.

Counting the number of shoes, socks, tables, chairs, crayon boxes etc.

Singing number songs.

Role counting (in groups).

Counting numbers with objects.

Recognizing written numbers.

Labeling objects with numbers.

Listening to the teacher read number books such as The Very Hungry

Caterpillar, Pokey Little Puppy, etc.

## Number Groups

*Number groups* refer to groups of one, groups of two, groups of three and so on.

Children will be guided in counting and in perceptual recognition of the fact that four is more than one or two or three.

### 3. Sets and Classifying

Children need to develop an understanding of classification/sets, including the characteristics upon which sets are based.

- a. Children should have some concept of *sets*. They should be provided opportunities and experiences to realize that several things put together form one group.
- b. Some time should also be spent on the concept of *zero*, the empty set. This is a difficult idea for children at this age.
- c. Children should also be taught the idea of *classification* through sorting (separating) and joining (grouping). Classification can be based on different attributes:

*shape*: things can be grouped as round, square, circle, triangle, diamond, etc.

*color*: things may go together because of their color.

*pattern*: things have different designs and patterns such as floral, dots, strips, or they may have no design, just solid colors.

*function*: things may be used to do the same kind of jobs, for example pots, pans and teakettles, or pen, pencil and crayon.

*material*: things may be grouped according to the material out of which they are made, such as plastic, iron, wood, glass, cloth, paper, clay, etc.

*texture*: things feel different because of their different materials.

*relatedness* (association): some things go together or work together, for example, pants and top, shoe and foot, ring and finger, ball and bat, pen and ink, glass and water, fork and knife, lock and key, etc.

*common features*: things may share certain features, for example, all cars have wheels, all doors have knobs, and all airplanes have wings.

*number*: refer to section on numbers.

NOTE: The teacher may present the children with a tray of objects and let them find their own sets and explain why their grouping is a set. It is a good game and children find surprising relationships.

#### 4. Comparison:

Comparing involves finding a relationship between two things, objects, or persons based on some specific characteristic or attribute. These attributes can be informal measurement, a comparison of numbers, or a comparison of weight, color size and shape.

Attributes of *measurement*:      long/short      above/below      large/small  
   little/big      higher/lower      fat/skinny  
   near/far      loud/soft      cold/hot

Attributes of *numbers*:    even    odd    more    less    many    few

Attributes of *weight*:    heavy    light

#### 5. Shapes:

The child at this stage should begin to understand that there are some basic shapes (geometric shapes) with specific names, such as the circle, square, triangle and rectangle.

Naming basic shapes of circle, square, and triangle.  
Discriminating between shapes.  
Labeling shapes: associating a shape with its name.  
Classifying objects in groups according to their shapes.  
Recognizing shapes in the environment.

#### 6. Space:

Children need experiences in developing concepts of the following:

- a. Relationships of *position*.
- b. Usage of space in terms of *organization*, *patterns* and *construction*.
- c. *Organization*: arranging objects until they fit in space in the desired way, for example:

Arranging chairs around a table.  
Setting up the table for an activity  
Putting blocks on a shelf  
Hanging pictures on a particular wall  
Putting belongings in the cubbie or locker  
Using puzzle boards, geoboards and geometrical wooden shapes to organize things.

- d. *Patterns*: organizing and arranging certain objects in a given space in a neat and beautiful way. For example, making patterns with geoboard, parquetry, pattern blocks and colored cubes.
- e. Relationships of *position* by including activities related to "where," showing examples of on-off, under-over, top-bottom, in front of-behind, between and next to.
- f. Relationships of *direction* by asking "which way" and utilizing expressions like front, behind, etc.
- g. *Distance, relative distance*: near, close by, far away, one block, far from and close to.

### 8. Ordering:

Ordering involves comparing more than two objects or sets. It involves *seriation*, or putting things in order from the first to the last. Children should learn bases of seriation as well as terminology.

ordering by *size*  
 ordering by *shades of colors*  
 ordering by *texture* (roughness, smoothness).

Vocabulary of seriation for 4-5 years-olds:    first and last  
    thin and thick        soft and hard  
    short and tall

NOTE: Children at this stage are still at the *formal operational stage* and cannot see the relationship between more than two elements at one time.

### 9. Measurement:

Measurement is a very useful math skill which involves assigning numbers to objects so that they can be compared according to the same attributes. These attributes are volume, length, weight and temperature.

The young child at play is always developing concepts for measurement by making comparisons between bigger and smaller, heavier and lighter, hotter and colder. Between the ages of four and five years the child uses anything he finds as a unit of measure, such as a paper cup, a milk carton, toothpick, or spoon. Children at this age should be given opportunity to explore and experiment in the measurement of the above attributes. Feet and hands make good units of measurement, as do cups and boxes.

For *volume/mass*:  
 Measuring water in the water tray with cups of different sizes.

Measuring sand in the sandbox with cups and cans.  
Measuring amount of cereal in differently sized cereal boxes.  
Measuring the volume of different containers (in water, in sand).

For *heavy/light*:

Pouring water or juice from a pitcher into cups (how many cups per pitcher?).

For *length*:

Measuring tables of students and teacher.  
Comparing pencils and pens of different sizes.  
Comparing differently-sized boxes.

For *temperature*:

Comparing hot and cold food.  
Comparing hot and cold days.  
Feeling the cold ice in the ice tray.

## 10. Symbols:

The young child sees numbers all around himself. He develops some idea of what they are and tries to use them. The following number symbol skills should be planned for preschool children:

Recognizing number symbols.

Associating the name of each symbol to the shape of the symbol.

Numerical serial ordering of the number symbols from one to ten (though it may be only rote memorization and recognition at this stage).

Associating numerals with sets. For example, "1" goes with one object, "2" goes with two objects and so on.

## NOTE TO THE TEACHERS OF MATHEMATICS IN PRESCHOOL

Preschoolers are very aware of the numbers and mathematical concepts present in their environment. In these early years, the child's understanding of mathematical concepts follows the same general-to-specific pattern of growth as his physical development. That is, during preschool years, children have a very general understanding which will lead to a more specific understanding as the process of development continues. Thus, a general idea of the sizes of people, animals and objects proceeds the more specific understanding of measurements, or a general understanding of time (it is time for *dhuhr salah*) develops in a gradual process of more specific understanding of time (one-thirty is *dhuhr* time). The child in time begins to associate one-thirty as the time for *dhuhr* prayers. It is teachers' responsibility to provide varied experiences to the preschoolers to help their mathematical concepts.

From rote counting to rational counting, from the repetition of the sounds of the numbers to the understanding of the meaning and the recognition of the numeral symbols, the child needs intelligently planned educational environments to nurture his mathematical conceptual growth.

Islamic concepts should be integrated in providing a mathematically rich environment for children. For example, while providing experiences in seriation (which is relative), the steps of *wudu* or steps in *salah* can be used for practice. Sorting and grouping activities can include many different colors of flowers, vegetables and fruits, reminding the child that all are created by Allah (SWT). Concepts of volume and comparison can be developed through experiencing various sizes, number of pages (more vs. fewer) and thickness of different copies of the Qur'an.

Teachers should also encourage the parents to help their children in the development of mathematical concepts by providing mathematically rich experiences and planning educational activities at home.

# Experiencing Language Arts (English)

During the Preschool Years



read

## **PHILOSOPHY:**

The basis of the language arts program in an Islamic school should be the belief that language is a special gift of Allah (SWT) to human beings. We, as Muslims are responsible to use it to the best of our abilities in glorifying Allah (SWT) and spreading His Message, *InshaAllah*.

The language arts program in an Islamic preschool should include all experiences in the areas of speaking, listening, reading with comprehension) and writing. Each of above areas has its own pattern of development and the teacher has to provide experiences for growth of each area.

## **OBJECTIVES:**

The child should be helped to experience and understand that:

- \* Language is a special gift from Allah (SWT) to human beings.
- \* Language is essential for communication.
- \* Language has oral and written forms.
- \* The facility with language gives a special joy and feeling of accomplishment.
- \* As Muslims, it is incumbent upon all of us to learn to read and write and acquire knowledge.

The Language Arts program for young children should include experiences in all four areas of language: *speaking, listening, reading and writing*.

## **SPEAKING AND LISTENING:**

This is the time to capitalize on the child's immense capability and readiness to learn languages. Full-time schools should concentrate on developing and establishing good English and Arabic language programs where emphasis would be on providing experiences in oral communication and language development.

### **Speaking (Oral communication):**

Speech is a form of language in which words or sounds are used to convey meaning. At first, the child's speech consists of vague and difficult to understand sounds. The development of speech gradually progresses to clear and distinct



words that carry specific meaning and messages, resulting in controlled verbal communication. Children's vocabulary begins to grow at a rapid pace from the age of three, and by the early elementary years they have gotten better and more mature in their oral communication.

They should be provided with opportunities to interact with the teachers and with other children freely. They should be encouraged to explore verbally and ask questions. Although children in preschool should be encouraged to express themselves in complete sentences, they should not be continually criticized and corrected.

A good way to encourage oral interaction is to provide the children opportunities to talk about and share the things they value (e.g. to bring a toy and talk about it). They should be encouraged to interact with other children through role playing, classroom discussions, sharing and group play. The goals are to increase oral language facility (pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and meaning), and to nurture an appreciation of language (rhyming, chanting, singing, repetition and creating sound effects).

Children should be encouraged to participate actively during discussion, choral singing, finger plays, show-and-tell and sharing time. Through the speaking component of the language arts curriculum, children should be exposed to the following experiences:

- a. Participation in group discussions, where Islamic topics should be included.
- b. Carrying on a conversation with the teacher or other adults, peers, make-believe persons or animals on the telephone.
- c. Following directions and giving very simple one-step directions.
- d. Giving a connected account of some experience.
- e. Attending to small but important details
- f. Expressing emotions verbally.

### **Listening:**

The children should be engaged in the following activities:

- a. Listening for imaginative details.

- b. Listening to a speaker attentively.
- c. Listening to simple oral directions.
- d. Listening to and repeating rhymes.
- e. Listening to and singing songs while performing finger plays.
- f. Listening for textual details.
- g. Listening for sequence.
- h. Listening and recalling.
- i. Being listened to with patience and understanding.

The children should be encouraged to listen to a speaker with attention. In turn, the speaker should be aware of the short attention span of the three- to four-year-olds. The children should be encouraged to repeat sound patterns and sequences orally. They should be encouraged to repeat the stories they hear and to fill in details and parts that the teacher pretends to have forgotten or leaves out on purpose. The stories of the Prophets are perfect for this.

### **READING:**

Children today learn a lot about printed words and symbols from a very young age. They are interested in decoding and knowing the meaning of these symbols. Early experiences at home and in preschool programs influence a child's readiness for reading. Early Childhood programs should influence a child's readiness for reading by carefully planning a comprehensive language arts curriculum which enriches every child's experiences in oral and written language. Children should be provided with ample experiences with written words. The classroom and school environment should be rich in literacy experiences.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

#### **1. Motivating children to want to learn to read:**

a. Read to the children at least once every day from carefully selected books. Children should be helped to understand that:

\* books are meant to be read, not manipulated.

- \* the books themselves -- not the reader or the listener -- determine what happens in the plot of the story.
- \* the illustrations and pictures represent some things and they are only symbolic, not real.
- \* the pictures in the books can be named and talked about.
- \* the pictures in the books can represent events.
- \* the events in the books may or may not be real.
- \* some stories in the books are fictional: they represent a world that exists outside the world of the listener but he may enter that world and enjoy it.

b. Write language experience stories, dictated by the children:

Write experience stories dictated and illustrated by the children.  
Provide opportunities for children to dictate experiences or stories in group sessions.

Make story books from the children's stories. Read the stories with the children at least on two or three occasions.

Make greeting cards on special occasions such as Eid, Ramadan etc.

Write each child's message to the addressee on the cards.

c. Label several objects in the classroom for the children to decode and read, such as cubbies, chair, table, water tray, toys, corner, etc.

**2. Personalizing instruction:**

Children are interested in learning and knowing about persons, things and animals close to them. One way of creating interest in a literacy project is to relate the activities to their personal experiences:

- a. teach identification of the child's first name.
- b. teach identification of the last name.
- c. teach identification of a friend's first name.
- d. introduce school with a personal emphasis.
- e. introduce families of the children, talk about families, share photographs of the family members, make books and bulletin boards of "Our Families," "My House," "My Friend," "My Pet," etc.

f. talk about and then write about the likes and dislikes of the children ("Food We Like to Eat," "Things We Like to Do", "Places We Like to Visit," etc.). Bulletin boards and story books can be developed on these topics.

**3. Teaching about the left to right, top to bottom orientation of written English**

- a. Make sure that children notice the hand movement from left to right while writing dictated stories on a poster board or large sheets of writing paper.
- b. Remember to point to each word (from left to right) as you go along reading while reading the dictated story with the children.
- c. Point left to right of the word during practice of initial sound of a word.

**4. Helping children understand the meaning of word and the function of space in establishing word boundaries**

Children in preschool and even during kindergarten years do not have a clear understanding of the meaning of "word," many times confusing it with "letters." Preschool teachers should do the following and ask the children to follow suit when possible:

- a. Saying each word while writing a dictated story.
- b. Reading entire dictation in natural speaking voice, pointing to each word.
- c. Encouraging children to read the story also (reading along with them slowly while moving the pointer from left to right, and top to bottom).
- d. Pointing out and emphasizing words which appear more than once after reading the story with the children.
- e. Making comments like, "Oh, how many words are here?" Counting them with the children, pointing to each one and highlighting the space between words.
- f. Pointing to first and last names of children while writing them, while also emphasizing the space in between them.

**5. Helping Children Understand that End of a line does not always Mean "End of Thought".**

## 6. Developing Vocabulary

- a. Words should be selected from natural situations such as the following:

discussion and conversation  
story reading  
arts and crafts activities  
preparation for a special event, holidays, school days etc.  
some special circumstances (a child's visit to some special place, some special experience etc.)  
through teaching and talking about natural phenomenon, eg. spring, fall, winter, rain, sun, and snow  
learning and discussing about certain objects, natural and man-made  
planned science activities.  
planned social studies lessons

- b. A teacher can help the children learn word meaning through question and answer sessions. Questions can simultaneously build different skills:

Imaginative questions like:

"What would happen if . . .  
. . . everyone forgot to come to school one day?"  
. . . everyone brought his and her pet to school?"  
. . . everyone forgot his or her name?"  
. . . an angel came into the room?"

Questions of comparison, such as:

"Are you taller when you stand up or when you lie down?"  
"It is raining and not snowing to day because it is warm or cold outside?"  
"Will a paper clip float or drown in water?"

Questions and discussions about sets of real objects and pictures of real objects:

"How do a cup, spoon, glass, and bowl go together?"  
"How do pants, shirt, tie and pin go together?"  
"Can bird, boy, house, and nest be grouped into matching pairs?"

Questions about combinations of pictures and objects to teach "alike" and "different":

"How are mittens and gloves alike?"  
"How are a baseball and a basketball different?"  
"What do red and golden apples have in common?"

"What is the difference between a pen and pencil?"

c. Meaning can also be taught through visual aids. Teachers of young children need to pay special attention in selecting visual stimuli to provide experiences. If chosen carefully they can contribute extensively to vocabulary development. Here are some ways visual aids can be used:

Show large detailed pictures and let children pick out objects they know.  
[need more examples]

d. Meaning is also taught by reading to children: [rework this as an intro?]

provides enjoyment to children  
develops a positive feeling about books  
motivates children to want to read  
develops vocabulary  
helps build schema  
expands children's experience base  
develops their imagination  
helps them understand that written words have meaning.

### **7. Visual Discrimination:**

Ability to discriminate between different shapes and forms is a necessary readiness skill for reading. Improving this skill will help young children to recognize different forms and symbols of the written language. Help the children to discriminate visually by having them:

Providing opportunities in reading pictures.  
Finding something hidden in a picture.  
Pointing out what is different between two pictures.  
Describing what is happening in a picture.  
Recognizing the shapes of letters and forms of words.

Teachers should use illustrations of a story to help children recall the episodes in the story and relate them in their own words. [who? teacher or child?]

### **EXPERIENCES IN WRITING**

During preschool years a young child is working on and developing his fine motor skills, needed for writing later in elementary grades. The goal of preschool writing activities is not to teach children fine writing skills, but to provide

opportunities for children to practice eye-hand coordination and small muscle coordination essential for later writing skills.

Children's own attempts at writing should be encouraged even if they seem like scribbles.

Experiences in writing the shapes of letters with index finger in sand, salt, or flour should be provided. These are some activities:

- Tracing over his own name written by the teacher
- Coloring between lines
- Shaping letters with pipe cleaners, play dough, etc.
- Finger painting and letter tracing

In these activities, left to right movement in writing should be encouraged. Games which develop finger dexterity such as beads should be encouraged and readily available.

## NOTE TO THE TEACHERS OF LANGUAGE ARTS (ENGLISH)

The primary goal of the Language Arts program in a preschool is to provide rich literacy experiences to the children. Each child should experience as much as possible in the areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing the language as possible.

The Language Arts curriculum in a preschool should emphasize helping each child in the following:

- \* Understanding that his name can be said and written down.
- \* Realizing that there are many letters in his name.
- \* Discovering that sometimes he shares a letter(s) of his name with another child in the class.
- \* Realizing that whatever is said can be written down and then read and shared with others. And that whatever is said today can be written down by the teacher and read again after many days, weeks and even months. The Qur'an was written down 1400 years ago and we have it now exactly as it was given to the Prophet (S).
- \* Discovering that there are symbols of different shapes, words and colors and each symbol has its own significance.
- \* Knowing that through words we can tell others about our feelings and thoughts.
- \* Knowing that Qur'an is the word of Allah (SWT) written down in Arabic.
- \* Knowing that words in English flow from left to right and from top to bottom.
- \* Discovering that listening to others helps learn new words.
- \* Realizing that teachers are willing to listen to him and will help him to achieve a certain goal.
- \* Seeing sequences of events in the stories and in the real life situations.
- \* Discovering that there is a beginning and an end to a story.
- \* Knowing that the words and pictures in the books tell him about many things he wants to know and also about many things he had never seen or thought of before.
- \* Knowing and understand that language is a gift from Allah (SWT) and we have to use it with care and to serve His Will and spread His Words, *InshaAllah*.



# Experiencing Art

During the Preschool Years



## **PHILOSOPHY:**

Art experiences are an integral part of every Early Childhood curriculum. They provide the children with an opportunity to work with many different kinds of materials and express themselves creatively in various ways.

## **OBJECTIVES:**

Preschool teachers should realize that at this age the process of making something is more important than the end product. Arts experiences in a preschool classroom should aim to do certain things:

- a. Provide opportunities for self expression through creative activities.
- b. Provide satisfying experiences for children.
- c. Be planned so that some art activities will provide opportunities for social interaction and growth and some will allow the child to work quietly on his own at his own speed and in his own time.
- d. Provide opportunities for fine motor coordination and growth.
- e. Help develop creative thinking in children.
- f. Be designed to allow for each individual child to progress at his own rate.
- g. Help children to work independently.

Art activities can be used in other areas of the Early Childhood curriculum in the following ways:

### **1. Art activities for science**

Painting pictures of plants with roots, stems, leaves and flowers.

Coloring or making designs of sun, moon and stars.

Collecting seeds and gluing them on paper.

Collecting and drying flowers and leaves.

Bringing objects from the garden during fall and exhibiting them with labels in the classroom.

Creating an environmental assemblage with objects from the natural environment.

Cutting, pasting, coloring and drawing animal pictures to create a zoo.  
Drawing and painting animal families.  
Drawing and painting ecological scenarios.

## **2. Art activities for social studies:**

Drawing with crayons and painting themes like "My Neighborhood," "Our Family," "My Classroom," "The Fire Station," or "Our Masjid."  
Building houses with shoe boxes or other cartons.  
Making dioramas showing helpers in the community and their jobs (fireman, mailman, policeman, etc.).  
Drawing and painting a Muslim family in another country, then painting and cutting out their costumes.  
Using papier-mache to construct a Mexican pinata.  
Using boxes and other materials to make houses, apartment buildings and even a village.  
Fashioning puppets and dramatizing the roles of family members.  
Cutting and pasting pictures about how we play and work together.  
Making clay models and paper models of cars, trains and buses to show ways of transportation.  
Constructing a native American village, a modern city or other types of communities, in paper sculpture.

## **3. Art activities for reading readiness:**

Children can do the following activities to prepare them for reading:

Coloring, cutting and pasting pictures of animals, fruits and other objects which begin with a specific sound or letter.  
Making scrapbooks of favorite pictures, writing the name of each picture next to it.  
Illustrating a story or an experience and telling the story to the teacher while she writes it down on a sheet of paper, next to the picture.  
Drawing and painting portraits of storybook characters.  
Making puppets or masks of storybook characters for dramatization.  
Putting together "My Own Dictionary of Favorite Words" with labeled illustrations by the children.  
Writing letters to friends, teachers and parents and drawing pictures.  
Drawing pictures and scenes and using them in a roller movie.

#### **4. Art activities for Islamic studies:**

Coloring the dresses of Muslim children.  
Dressing up Muslim dolls.  
Coloring pictures of Muslim families.  
Coloring pictures of animals whose meat is *halal*.  
Coloring between the lines of their names written in Arabic. (The teacher should watch for right to left hand movement.)  
Color and pasting pictures of animals created by Allah (SWT).  
Coloring pictures of famous *masajid*.  
Coloring patterns and prints scarves for girls.  
Color and painting pictures of boys and girls doing the steps of *wudu*.  
Coloring some of the flags of Muslim countries.  
Cutting and pasting Arabic letters and numbers.  
Drawing a vase with flowers and writing the names of *Rasulullah's* sons and daughters on each flower. Let children color each flower while the teacher reads the names.  
Drawing a family tree of *Rasulullah (S)* and asking children to color it in.  
Making an Islamic calendar with the help of the children and every day talking about the dates and the days. Special projects should be arranged for special dates.  
Make *tasbeehs* with colored macaroni, beads or colored Cheerios.

#### **5. Integrating Mathematics with Art activities:**

To drill numbers and counting, various objects can be colored and painted to represent numbers, for example :

Coloring and painting various counted objects: two butterflies, three flowers, four baby chickens, five little kittens, etc. Children can color or cut and paste these pictures and count them.

Cutting and pasting numerals to a collage of magazine pictures, for example one car, two houses, three radios, and four cameras.

To review shapes and sizes, children can do these activities:

Making clay models of different shapes and sizes.

Coloring pictures of different shapes and sizes.

Coloring and stringing necklaces from macaroni of different sizes.

Making collages of different colored materials and papers.

Making different shaped houses from cardboard boxes.

Tracing children's bodies, hand and feet.

Making plaster plates of hand prints.

## **6. Art activities for perception and sensitivity :**

Learning different colors:

Learning the names of colors during a tie dye activity

Coloring different objects in a given color.

Playing with different colored playdough.

Making "shrinky dink" figures and see the colors after baking them.

Talking about the colors of many leaves and flowers picked from the garden for pasting and pressing.

Seeing how many shades of green and you can see in the garden or blue in the sky.

Working with one or two colors at a time starting with the primary colors and learning how to mix other colors.

Playing with different transparent colored cellophane on the windows to see how colors mix.

The teacher may want to let the children paint while playing sweet music or listening to the recitation of Qur'an. They must be very silent to do this and will develop a sensitivity to sounds of the Qur'an.

## **NOTE TO THE TEACHERS OF ART IN PRESCHOOL**

The art program in the Early Childhood curriculum provides an opportunity for children to work with many different kinds of materials and techniques and create something original. It provides them an opportunity to put together their thoughts, ideas, feelings and abilities in creating something on their own. The role of the teachers in providing successful art experiences to preschool children is important. They should choose the right materials and know appropriate ways to set up and use these art material for each activity. They should have many materials for artistic expression available in the classroom at all times.

The experience of art, if given time and space and not over-directed by the teacher, can allow the child a chance to go into himself, to touch base with his soul, which is after all one of the primary goal of Islamic education.

Teachers should not force the children to always draw or paint about things, or within lines. They should give them some opportunities to express themselves with clay, with watercolor, and with pencil simply to discover the medium or expressions of they feel. They can make stormy pictures or happy ones, without objects in them at all.

Teachers should make special efforts to display children's artistic work in the classroom. These displays should be regularly changed and replaced with the new ones.

# Experiencing Language Arts (Arabic)

During the Preschool Years



read - قرأ

## **PHILOSOPHY:**

Arabic is the language of the Qur'an and Hadith, and much of Islamic literature is written and preserved in Arabic. Every Islamic school curriculum should include the teaching of Arabic as a second language (for children whose first language is not Arabic).

Usually the teaching of a second language does not start until third or even fifth and sixth grades in an elementary school. However, since our goals are different than those of a public elementary school in teaching a second language, we will start providing experiences in Arabic language as early as preschool (*InshaAllah*).

## **Listening and Oral communication:**

The first step in learning Arabic is being able to perceive and distinguish between different Arabic sounds. Therefore children should be provided opportunities of listening to Arabic language in different natural settings. Besides developing auditory acuity for the sounds of the language, listening to Arabic will also serve to develop stimulate an interest in Arabic words and vocabulary specifically, and in rhythm and words generally. The children will begin to reproduce the sounds, words and sentences like native speakers, especially in the repetition of small Islamic expressions in Arabic (e.g. *al-Hamdu lillah*, *InshaAllah*, and so on), and of short *surahs* and *du'as*. They will develop the concept that things have names in Arabic as well as in English.

At some points, the teacher should see that they children are exposed to the fact that Arabic script progresses from right to left.

## **OBJECTIVES:**

### **1. Discriminating between the sounds of the Arabic language**

The teacher can do the following to help the children achieve this:

- Reciting *Surah al-Fatiha* and other short *surahs* to the children.
- Saying children's name in correct Arabic pronunciation (most Muslim children have Arabic and Qur'anic names).
- Discussing the meaning of each child's name.
- Singing some short and simple songs in Arabic with the children.
- Helping children memorize *Surah al-Fatiha* and other short *surahs* with correct pronunciation. (If the teacher cannot pronounce correctly, she can



use cassette tapes to help.)

## **2. Developing auditory acuity for the sounds of Arabic language.**

Some activities for the teacher to do are the following:

Taping one's own Arabic speech and songs and playing them on different occasions for the children to listen to.

Carrying on conversation in Arabic as much as possible.

Making children listen to tapes of *qira'at* of the learned *surahs*.

Pointing to certain objects used by the children and naming them in Arabic.

Using Islamic expressions of "*Al-Hamdu lillah*," "*Subhan Allah*," "*Masha Allah*," etc., on appropriate occasions.

Singing short Arabic songs of different moods, rhythms and tempos with the children.

Fingerplaying in Arabic.

## **3. Stimulating children's interest in Arabic words (vocabulary)**

The teacher may try the following:

Talking to the children with expressions.

Naming various objects (in which child is interested) in Arabic.

Naming close family members in Arabic (mother, father, brother and sister).

Talking about home and things at home in Arabic (house, door, window, table, chair, bed, bathroom etc.).

Talking about a food each child likes and naming it in Arabic.

## **4. Developing the concept that things have names in Arabic as in English.**

Some activities are:

Talking about things in child's immediate environment and telling children their names in Arabic.

Showing pictures of objects and saying their names in Arabic.

Asking children to repeat words.

Naming a part of the body and then encouraging each child to repeat and point to that part of the body.

Showing a picture of a boy and pointing to a part of his body and asking its name. (Use only the most familiar parts like hand, foot, head, mouth, eyes

and ears as children at this age have limited vocabulary.)

**5. Expanding vocabulary and laying the foundation for later production of sentences in Arabic.**

Some activities are the following:

Acting out familiar verbs (come, go, walk, talk, read, eat, sleep, etc.).  
Using short sentences in conversation.  
Reading stories with few words but more illustrations.

**6. Encouraging repetition, sequencing and rhythm.**

The teacher can engage the children by:

Playing counting games.  
Singing songs.  
Telling and retelling familiar stories.  
Reciting a *surah* with the children -- emphasizing rhyming patterns -- and practicing it until they have learned it by heart, especially *surahs* like *Surah al-Nas* for rhythm.

**7. Stimulating conversation.**

The teacher can stimulate conversation by:

Involving the children in an art activity (in small groups).  
Involving children in baking or cooking activities (small group).  
Acting with children in some make-believe drama.

**9. Helping children to understand, remember and use words in simple sentences.**

The teacher can aid children's remembrance of words by:

Repeating simple sentences (two, three or four words) after teacher.  
Singing songs learned in the class.  
Asking simple questions and giving simple answers.

## **ARABIC LANGUAGE ARTS EXPERIENCES IN READING**

The objective of the Arabic readiness program at this stage is not to begin formal teaching of reading or even decoding of Arabic letters but just to acquaint the children with Arabic symbols. Some of the objectives in providing experiences in reading Arabic language are to help the children do the following:

- a. To discover that, like English, Arabic sounds can also be represented by symbols.
- b. To understand that symbols for Arabic sounds are different than those for English sounds.
- c. To discover that unlike English, Arabic script is written and read from right to left.
- d. To discover that the Qur'an is written in Arabic.
- e. To realize that their and their friends' names can be written down in Arabic symbols just as in English.
- f. To discover that one way of learning new words is to listen to others and play back again and again what was heard.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

#### **1. Discovering that Arabic sounds can also be represented by symbols.**

These activities will help the children make this discovery:

Writing in Arabic some of the words dictated by children and reading them back to the children. Children repeat after the teacher.

Labeling pictures in Arabic and reading to the children and then with the children.

Saying the names of some objects in the classroom in Arabic and labeling each one by turn after telling its Arabic name to the children.

Writing the name of each child in Arabic on his or her name tag.

## **2. Discovering that Arabic is written from right to left.**

Some activities are these:

Opening an Arabic book and sharing with the children, pointing to the fact that the writing goes from right to left.

Giving every child a chance to open the book from the right side and experience this fact.

Letting children look at the book and check the title page and the cover.

Drawing children's attention to the right-to-left hand movement while writing a sentence in Arabic on the blackboard.

Making sure that children move their hands from right to left while coloring or tracing over Arabic letters or words.

## **3. Discovering that the Qur'an is written in Arabic.**

Some activities are these:

Sharing the Qur'an with children, letting them touch and feel it and turn the pages over.

Reading *Surah al-Fatiha* out loud to the children from the Qur'an.

Showing different calligraphic patterns in which the Qur'an is written.

Letting children see and experience different *mushafs* in various sizes and bindings.

Displaying on the bulletin board some Qur'anic *surahs* which are known to the children and asking children if they recognize the *surah* it is.

## **4. Realizing that his name can be said and written down in Arabic symbols also.**

Some activities are the following:

Writing each child's name in Arabic in front of him.

Reading the name in Arabic.

Putting the name on the cubby and on the bulletin board.

Writing his name on a sheet of paper for the child to color and trace.

Writing the names of a few children on separate pieces of papers and asking each child to find his and her name from those.

Providing opportunities for children to experience and see their names written in Arabic as many times as possible.

**5. Discovering that one way of learning new words is to listen to others and play back again and again what he has heard.**

Reading short stories to the children on many different occasions.

Read Arabic "read-along" stories to the children.

Taping conversations, story readings and story-telling sessions and allowing children to listen to them at a different time.

Repeating songs and nursery rhymes.

Using flash cards for vocabulary words and use them with the children.

**6. Experiencing the Arabic language around the classroom.**

Displaying Arabic alphabet charts.

Displaying Arabic letters colored and painted by the children.

Displaying samples of Arabic calligraphy.

Labeling bulletin boards which display English and Arabic.

Labeling objects in the classroom in Arabic and English.

Using Arabic vocabulary during lessons.

## A NOTE TO THE TEACHERS OF ARABIC LANGUAGE IN PRESCHOOL

At this stage, formal teaching of reading and writing Arabic is not encouraged. Preschool children are not in the operational stage to take on formal reading and writing lessons of a foreign language. However, this is time to provide as many literary experiences with the Arabic language as possible. The teacher should provide plenty of opportunities for the children to experience the language and become familiar with its words, sounds and symbols. They should be exposed to some basic vocabulary and certain grammar patterns.

Memorization of *Surah Al-Fatiha* and other short *surahs* should be emphasized during the preschool years. Practice should be carried out every day for at least 25-30 minutes. The practice should be carried on every day as the first thing in the morning and a second time perhaps after snack or lunch. Children memorize very easily at this age and can easily learn 10 to 15 *surahs* during their preschool years.

As with English teaching, do not force the children to read and write but encourage them as they express readiness to learn. All they need is a language-rich environment to get motivated to read.

# Islamic Experiences

During the Preschool Years



## Philosophy

Islamic education encompasses the notion of total development of a child's personality. This Islamic personality will emerge only when Islamic values and knowledge are integrated with a child's total training and education program. Every aspect of an individual's life is to be guided by the eternal principles of Islam.

The Islamic Studies curriculum in a preschool is geared more towards providing experiences in Islamic living and behavior than teaching and learning about Islam as an academic course of study. Teachers should create an Islamic environment in the school and the classroom and should be the best models of Muslim men and women that the children know. They should allow the natural growth of Islamic behavior, expressions, models of dress code, and solutions to problems through classroom situations. Teachers should use whenever possible stories and illustrations from the *Sunnah* of Rasulullah (S) for the children to follow as the model.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

#### **1. Developing of the Personal Self as a Muslim.**

There are different characteristics by which the Muslim child distinguishes him or herself from non-Muslims, and the teacher can arrange activities to inculcate each characteristic.

##### a. Dress Code: male and female

Having a dress-up corner in which are kept dresses of Muslim children from different Muslim lands.

Dressing up regular dolls as Muslim dolls.

Dressing properly during *salat*, girls with scarves and long dresses and boys with loose clothes.

Coloring pictures of Muslim dresses.

Talking about Muslim dress codes just briefly.

Coloring and making patterns on the scarves for mother.

Talking about and demonstrating the difference between tight and loose clothes.

*Being models of Islamic behavior, the teachers should themselves be dressed properly.*

##### b. Food Habits of Muslims

Having a lesson on healthy foods given to us by Allah (SWT).



Talking about food which Muslims can eat (*halal*).  
Talking about Allah's mercy in making us so we can be fed by plants and animals which He has provided for us. Discussing the different plants and animals He has given us to eat.  
Talking about certain things which Allah (SWT) has asked us not to do during snack/lunch time.  
Learning *du'a* we say before and after eating.  
Coloring pictures of foods Muslim children like to eat. Displaying these pictures in the classroom with Arabic and English labels.  
Having at least one lunch or snack a week where the children share the food with each other from one tray.

c. Islamic Manners and *Akhlaq* while eating

Washing hands before starting to eat.  
Saying *du'a* before starting to eat to ask Allah's blessings on the food.  
Sitting together at the dining table and eating as a family.  
Eating with the right hand.  
Eating slowly.  
Taking just enough food out in the plate so none is left or wasted.  
Welcoming a guest to join in and share the food.  
Being courteous to others at the dining table.  
Saying *du'a* after dinner to thank Allah (SWT) for the food.  
Helping the teacher, parents or other adults in clean-up.  
Washing hands and mouth after eating a meal.

d. Islamic Behavior: The teacher should discuss the following behavior pattern regularly with the children and make sure that they are being followed by the children and adults alike.

Being considerate to peers by sharing (toys, crayons, books etc), helping a friend in need, working together and taking turns.  
Telling the truth.  
Taking care of classroom materials: not wasting paper, pens, paint etc.  
Greeting every visitor, teacher and each other with "*Assalamu alaikum.*"  
Singing together the song,  
    "When I see a Muslim, I say *Salam.*  
    *Assalamu Alaikum --- Wa Alaikum Assalam.*"  
Keeping the classroom, tables, and cubbies clean and tidy.

The concept of cleanliness as part of iman should be emphasized.

e. Names of Children: Because Islamic names are different from American

Judeo-Christian names, they can be used as effective tools of establishing Islamic identity.

Writing each child's name in English.

Writing each child's name in Arabic for name tags.

Talking about names of other children in the classroom, siblings etc.

Telling each child the meaning of his and her name.

Breaking the name of each child into syllables and saying these syllables together while clapping.

f. Use of Proper and Decent Language:

Using Islamic vocabulary "*Al-Hamdu Lillah*," "*Subhan Allah*," etc.

Using proper vocabulary in conversation and dramatic play.

Avoiding unacceptable words and prohibiting certain expressions, for example swearing.

Using polite and gentle expressions such as "please," "may I," "thank you," etc.

## **2. Providing experiences in learning about *iman*.**

*Iman* denotes the basic faith or belief of a Muslim in Allah and His Oneness and Power. Certain activities will help the child realize this *iman*.

Reciting and memorizing *shahadah* with teachers. The recitation should be done in Arabic and in English.

Reviewing from time to time other elements of *iman* and listening to stories which illustrate them. These other elements of *iman* are the following beliefs:

- \* Allah (SWT) has power over everything: birth, storms, rocket ships, etc.
- \* Allah (SWT) has power over life and death: story of Bambi.
- \* Allah (SWT) gives reward and punishment in this life and the next: story of Prophet Yusuf (A) when he was saved from the well as an example of Allah's rewards, or the story of Pinocchio as an example of punishment. The teacher should discuss Jannah and Jahannum to instill the concept of life after death.
- \* The existence of angels: they sit on our shoulders and record our deeds, though we cannot see them.
- \* Allah's books: the Qur'an was brought to us by Rasulullah (S) as guidance from Allah (SWT). The teacher should tell stories from the Qur'an, the Bible and the Torah.

### **3. Deepening awareness of Allah (SWT) as the Creator of everything.**

The following themes should be introduced to the children, who can then participate in activities which will deepen their understanding.

\* Allah (SWT) has created trees, fruits, flowers and all plant life.

Showing pictures of trees, fruits, flowers, oceans and other landscapes during group time and discussing how they are all created by Allah (SWT).  
Cutting from magazines pictures of different trees, fruits and vegetables created by Allah and pasting them on construction paper.  
During science activities, planting seeds and bulbs and watching them grow with Allah's Will.

Taking a field trip to an orchard, garden, park or arboretum to see the many different kinds of trees, plants, leaves, fruits and flowers created by Allah.

\* Allah (SWT) has created animals, birds and reptiles.

Watching a movie of animals in Africa, Australia, Asia and other lands.

Watching a film strip or video of the movie "Zoo Animals."

Watching videos or movies of farm animals.

Sharing pictures/posters of different animals, birds and reptiles.

Discussing with children that all animals are created by Allah (SWT).

Recalling that trees, plants, fruits and flowers are also created by Him.

Making a wall story of "All the Animals Created by Allah" and asking each child to draw and color a picture of one animals, bird, reptile, tree, plant, flower and fruit created by Allah (SWT) and paste it one the wall story, with the child's name under his work.

Discussing these pictures and drawings.

Visiting the zoo.

\* Allah (SWT) has created men and women, boys and girls.

Showing photographs of children in the class with their families.

Discussing their names and who is who during group time. Then asking questions such as, "Who has created us?"

Discussing how we need a mother and father to be born.

Discussing how we have mothers and fathers, and how our fathers and mothers also had mothers and fathers.

Learning that the very first man created by Allah (SWT) was Prophet Adam (ASW).

Drawing and painting pictures of their families. The teacher can later make a book of "Our Families" with all the pictures and drawings, and

she can write every child's story about his and her family under the painting.

#### **4. Learning that Allah (SWT) is the only Creator**

The teacher should use deductive reasoning with the children in helping them understand and conclude that since everything is created by Allah (SWT), He is the only Creator. Although children at this age are quite young to comprehend this reasoning, the teacher can do the following to help them:

Preparing flannel board figures of families of birds and animals, boys and girls.

Asking children to put the families on the flannel board then asking the children, "Who has created these?" She can ask one child to come put the letters *ALLAH* on the top of the board.

Telling the story of Prophet Ibrahim (ASW) when he was young and trying to find the Creator of the world.

During arts and crafts activities, having children color between the lines in the word "*ALLAH*" in English and Arabic.

Singing with the children and teaching them the following songs:

"Allah, Allah" (The Milky Way, AIM, London, 1979, p.13)

"Silver Star" (Muslim Nursery Rhymes, p.10, Islamic Foundation, London).

"Allah Is One" (Bismillah, Iqra' Book of Verse, Iqra' International Educational Foundation, Chicago, IL 60607).

#### **5. Seeing that Allah (SWT) is Compassionate and Merciful:**

Teacher should provide feedback to the children and talk to them about the fact that Allah (SWT) is the only Creator, and that He takes care of everyone and everything. The teacher should do the following activities:

Showing to the children posters, pictures and books of animals and their youngs, and reading them stories of how parents love and take care of their babies. She should explain how Allah (SWT) has put this love in the hearts of the parents and how Allah (SWT) loves all of through our parents and teachers and other elders.

Showing a movie or a video of a dry land, where plants and trees are dying and need water, and then showing how Allah (SWT) sends rain for the crops and the trees to be green and alive again.

Helping children plant seeds and bulbs and see them grow with water and sunlight, gifts from Allah (SWT) for all of us.

Letting children draw and color pictures of things Allah (SWT) has created for us. The teacher can talk about the pictures and discuss the blessings of Allah (SWT).

Telling the children the story of Sayiddna Hajirah and baby Prophet Ismaeel (ASW) in the valley of Bakkah, when the baby was very thirsty and Allah (SWT) sent His angel to protect him from the heat of the sun and created the well of Zam Zam for the mother and the baby to drink. Singing songs and doing finger plays with the children at different rug time activities.

## **6. Learning that Allah (SWT) has created many kinds of living beings.**

The teacher should explain to the children that Allah's creation is vast and varied, and that we are just a small part of it. We see some of Allah's creatures, such as human beings, animals, birds, flowers, fruits, clouds, trees, rivers and oceans. But there are many creations we cannot see and so we do not know much about them. Angels are one of Allah's creations we usually cannot see or touch. But some people, like Prophets, can see them and tell us about them.

Some activities for the teacher to do are these:

Showing the children pictures of Allah's creations and asking them to describe the pictures and discuss who is the Creator.

Asking the children to cut and paste the pictures of some of Allah's creations.

Telling the children that there are some creations of Allah (SWT) we cannot see but know are created by Allah (SWT) because Allah (SWT) has told us so in the Qur'an.

Demonstrating this fact by showing a book or any object to the class and saying, "I have this book here," then hiding the book under the table and asking the children if they think that the book is there, thus bringing home the fact that just because we cannot see something does not mean that it does not exist.

Imagining things which cannot be seen. The teacher should guide the children into realizing that we believe in all the creations of Allah (SWT) mentioned in the Qur'an whether we can see them or not. However, this is not the case with the things which we imagine but are *not* mentioned in the Qur'an or Hadith. In these cases we have to apply our critical abilities and evaluate in the light of the teachings of the Qur'an and the Prophet (S). For example, many people believe that there are many gods and goddesses, or that Allah (SWT) comes down to earth as a human being, but we know that this is not true because Allah (SWT) has told us in the Qur'an that this is not so. Angels are one of those creations. Allah (SWT) has told us about

angels in the Qur'an. We believe that angels are created by Allah (SWT). Also the Prophet (S) told us many times about angels. Angel Jibril visited him many times and brought the Qur'an to him. Reading to the children the story of when Angel Jibril visited the Prophet (S) in the cave of Hira, referring to *Surahs al-Najm* (53:5-13) and *al-Takwir* (81:19-21), and talking about the appearance of Angel Jibril to the Prophet (S) on the two occasions mentioned in the *surahs*. [shorten, check references]

### **7. Believing in Risalat.**

The teacher can draw directly on the Qur'an in her activities, which are designed to inculcate this belief:

Reminding the children that all human beings are created by Allah (SWT).  
Telling the children the story of Adam (A), the very first man created by Allah (SWT), as told in the Qur'an. (See 2:30-4, 2:35-9, 7:19-25, 20:120-1).  
Telling the children that Adam (ASW) was the first Prophet of Allah too.  
Explaining the meaning of "Prophet."  
Telling the children the name of the last prophet of Allah (SWT).  
Reciting the poem "Muhammad is the Last" with the children (Iqra' Book of Verses, p.13, Iqra' International Educational Foundation, Chicago.)  
Telling stories of the Prophets.

### **8. Believing that Muhammad (S) was the last Prophet of Allah (SWT) and that he is our prophet.**

Telling the story of the birth and childhood of Prophet Muhammad (S).  
Showing the children pictures of the Ka'bah, the House of Allah (SWT).  
Showing maps and pictures of Makkah, the city in which the Prophet Muhammad (S) was born.  
Displaying on the bulletin board Makkah, the City of the Ka'bah.  
Leading the children in making and coloring a model of Ka'bah with a box.

### **9. Gaining the knowledge that the Qur'an is the Book of Allah (SWT) and it was sent to Rasulallah (S).**

The following activities can be used to foster this understanding in the children:

Sharing the Qur'an with the children (they will have already learned about Qur'an in their Arabic class).

Telling the children that the Qur'an is the Book of Allah (SWT).  
Asking the children if they remember whether Muhammad Rasullullah was the first or last prophet of Allah (SWT) and explaining that since the Qur'an was sent to Muhammad Rasulallah (S), it is the last Book of Allah.  
Teaching the children adab of the Qur'an and practicing it every day in the classroom. The teacher may send a note home to the parents asking their cooperation in this regards.  
Keeping a copy of the Qur'an in the classroom and allowing children to look at it often.

#### **10. Understanding that the people who believe in the teachings of the Qur'an are called "Muslims."**

The children should be taught that our status as Muslims is based on our actions and beliefs. We are Muslims because we believe in what the Qur'an tells us:

- \* There is no God but Allah (SWT).
- \* Muhammad is the last Prophet of Allah (SWT).
- \* The Qur'an is the last Book of Allah (SWT).
- \* Allah (SWT) has created Angels.
- \* We will be rewarded or punished according to our deeds. [include?]

Here are some activities:

Playing fill in the gap games with children, for example:

"We are Muslims and we believe that there is no God but \_\_\_\_\_ (Allah)."

"We believe that Allah (SWT) has created \_\_\_\_\_ (teacher shows the pictures of animals and children say the names of the animals).

The teacher shows the pictures of a family of people and says:

"We believe that Allah (SWT) has created \_\_\_\_\_ (men, women, children, etc.)"

The teacher shows large posters of various living things and says:

"Allah has created \_\_\_\_\_ ( humans, animals, mammals, birds, plants, etc.)."

Playing "Fish for things created by Allah (SWT)."

Writing the name "Muhammad" in English and in Arabic on a big poster paper. Showing it to the children, she asks if anyone can read the name.

Talking about Rasulallah (S) as the last Prophet of Allah (SWT).

Showing a copy of the Qur'an to the children and asking them if they remember the name of the book. The teacher tells the children that we should follow the teachings of the Qur'an."

Discussing some of the teachings with the children. The teacher should

give them a chance to use their own imaginations and knowledge to decide which are the teachings of the Qur'an, while the teacher helps them with the concepts and correct information.

### **11. Understanding that Muslims are required to pray five times a day.**

Not only should children learn the obligation of prayer but also the steps:

Helping the children to prepare for prayer: *wudu*, clean clothes, proper coverings, *musallahs*, etc.

Practice *salah* in small *jama'ah*.

Learning to follow the Imam.

Practicing being quiet and listening to the *adhan*.

Memorizing *Surah al-Fatiha*.

Emphasizing punctuality and consistency, i.e. praying on time every school day.

### **12. Realizing that Muslims fast in the month of Ramadan and experiencing fasting through parents, teachers and other older siblings.**

Preparing a special calendar for the month of Ramadan.

Working with the children on the calendar every day.

Discussing with the children what fasting involves. She herself will be the model by not eating or drinking, being calm and patient, etc.

Teaching the children to respect those who are fasting.

Asking children to help parents and older siblings at home during *iftar* time.

Having an *iftar* party with children, parents and the teachers.

Talking about the *barakah* of Ramadan and how Muslims should pray and read Qur'an more than usual during these days.

Reciting the Qur'an with children every day.

Making special preparations for *Jumat-ul-Wida'* -- taking shower, wearing especially clean or new clothes -- and if the school is not closed then going to *juma'* prayers in a *masjid* with the children.

### **13. Experiencing and participating in the Eid preparations and celebrations.**

The children should be encouraged to participate and give thanks to Allah after a month of fasting. The teacher can involve the children in these activities:



Making *Eid* cards for parents, siblings and friends.

Discuss the day and date when *Eid* may be celebrated.

Talking about how we have to see the moon before celebrating *Eid*.

Asking parents to make sure to go out on the evening of 28th or 29th of Ramadan to look for the new moon with the children.

Talking about *Eid* clothes which the children are going to be wearing: the colors, materials, kinds of clothes, etc., and asking children if they can draw or paint on paper a picture of their clothes.

Singing with the children *Eid* songs such as "Eid." (The Milky Way, p.15, AIM London)

Preparing a wishlist of gifts children would like to receive for *Eid*.

Displaying an *Eid* bulletin board.

Dear Teachers, Principals and Parents of our dear children,

Assalamu 'Alaikum.

We at Iqra' are grateful to Allah (SWT ) for giving us the strength to go through the long and tedious process of preparing this curriculum for our preschool children. We are also extremely grateful for Iqra' Charitable Society, Jeddah, for its continuous moral and financial support, which makes this study possible. We hope that our relentless efforts will InshaAllah bear fruits and our children will grow to be intelligent, confident and practicing young Muslim men and women, ready to take on the challenges of the modern society with an Islamic spirit and *iman*.

Please let us know about your comments and remarks as you use this manual in your daily lessons to guide the growth of Muslim children in your care.

May Allah (SWT) bless you.

Sincerely Yours in Islam,

Tasneema Ghazi

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