

Character Building Framework (Blueprint)

(In the Light of Islamic Teaching:)
Live Islam as A Way of Life

Overview

At Pleasant View school, building character refers to the systematic development and training of our students in the light of Islamic teachings. It is a continuous and comprehensive process of developing all aspects of our students' character and personality, i.e. spiritual, intellectual, moral, social and physical aspects.

The real aim of character building education is to develop Taqwa and to put all members of PVS school on the path of constant self-purification, self-correction and self-development and instill in them the passion for truth, righteousness, justice and respect for others. The focus of this program is to train students who are distinguished, strive for excellence, are self-motivated, conduct a balance life, live in peace with themselves and their environment, be equipped with the necessary knowledge, understanding, and skills to make difference in the society by taking an active role in the reform process that seeks to make the betterment of our community, our country and the entire world.

The full impact of character building development is truly realized when parents, students, and staff all work cohesively together. In other words, the goal of character development efforts is to supplement and enhance, not substitute for, family efforts to instill positive ethical values and good character.

How Character Building Program Impacts Academic Achievement

When a comprehensive character education program is instituted in schools, evaluations indicate a drop in referrals for problem behaviors, more respect and better class discipline—all conducive to learning. Furthermore, Results of two four-year, federally funded studies involving 104 Missouri schools and more than 45,000 students demonstrate that well-designed character-building programs significantly improve academic performance, as well as overall school climate and behavior of students within a school. Results showed that student achievement in communication arts increased as much as 17 percent for schools in the program for at least one year, and student disciplinary referrals decreased 41 percent, with an overall difference between treatment and control schools of 63 percent. These results are particularly significant in light of the relatively short term of the intervention.

These dramatic results demonstrate that effective character-building programs do much more than prepare students to lead lives based on values such as "caring, cooperation, courage, honesty, kindness, patience, perseverance, respect and responsibility." They also improve the climate of schools and academic achievements of students.

It is worth noting that in order for character education to work effectively in schools, it has to be much more than just a 'word-of-the-month' or a 10-minute stand-alone lesson, These studies prove that when schools integrate character education into the entire school curriculum, the rewards will include increased student achievement, improved student discipline, and better school-parent relations.

The Vision:

“Creating a school environment where students learn virtues that enable them to be changing agents in their communities.”

The Mission statement:

"The Mission of the Character Building education is to empower all children in the PVS community with knowledge, skills, and aspiration to develop and practice positive character traits in light of Islamic teachings and spirit.”

The Plan: (Interactive Workshop Format)

This is a weekly period (one of the existing Islamic studies/Quran periods), which is to be student-centered and interactive. This period is not intended to be text or lecture-based, but rather, a discussion-based one, where students feel more comfortable to speak their minds and open up with their teacher. This period is more beneficial for students in grade 7-12. Topics to be handled during these periods can be pre-planned by the teacher, but should ideally be driven by the interests of the students themselves. (A student questionnaire at the beginning of the school year may help generate topics.)

Character Building Blocks:

In order for the character development plan to be effective and fruitful, it should consist of the following key components:

1- Handy Life skills

Life skills are defined as psychosocial abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Receiving life skills education is an essential part of being able to meet the challenges of everyday life, especially, in a constantly changing environment. To cope with the increasing pace and change of modern life, students need new life skills such as the ability to deal with stress and frustration. Additionally, the development of life skills help students to find new ways of thinking and problem solving, as well as help adolescents to transit successfully from childhood to adulthood healthly.

A selection of topics will be discussed such as:

- Goal setting process
- Conflict management

Perseverance
Critical thinking
Time management
Active listening
Building confidence

2- Emotional Well-Being and Psychological Development

Mental health concerns affect students' ability to attend classes, focus on academic material, and learn effectively. Mental disorders may hinder motivation and/or induce feelings of discouragement and hopelessness. When unattended, students with mental health diagnoses are more likely to receive lower GPAs than their peers without such challenges. American College Health Association released a report in 2011 identifying depression and anxiety as the top impediments to academic performance.

Schools have a great influence over the lives of adolescents, as they provide a setting where friendship networks form, socialization occurs and behaviors are developed and reinforced. Because healthy students learn better, schools play a significant role in addressing the health needs of students.

Through this program, the instructor can help student to keep their stress level in check, minimize academic stress, encourage him or her to set realistic goals, prioritize tasks and be intentional in his or her time management. Additionally, Instructor will help the student in building a supportive social network, having time set for fun and leisure and maintaining health through balanced diet, regular exercise and sleep routine are important stress-crushers.

The instructor can be an important resource to overcome emotional challenges. Spend time with your student, talking about his or her experiences in college. Pay attention to signs of a larger problem or emotional distress. Invite your student to confide with you. Work together with your student to build their skills and overcome existing challenges to best benefit from opportunities provided by college. You can particularly play a role if your student is starting college having been diagnosed with a mental health condition. Have a transition plan and remain in communication with your student regarding their emotional wellness. Below are two great resources summarizing how you can help your student achieve success in college when he or she has previous mental health concerns.

1-[Emotional Health and Your College Student: A Guide for Parents](http://www.transitionyear.org/_downloads/parent_pdf_guide.pdf)
http://www.transitionyear.org/_downloads/parent_pdf_guide.pdf

2-[Protecting Your Child's Mental Health: What Can Parents Do?](http://www.jedfoundation.org/assets/Programs/Program_downloads/parentsguide.pdf)
http://www.jedfoundation.org/assets/Programs/Program_downloads/parentsguide.pdf

A selection of topics will be discussed such as:

Developing emotional intelligence-four parts
Managing peer pressure

Learning to say No/assertiveness
Managing anxiety
Managing anger
Practice mindfulness
Anti-bullying campaign
Leading healthy lifestyle balanced diet/exercise
Personality type-test
7 types of intelligence

3 – Islamic life style and manners

“I Have Been Sent to Perfect Good Manners”, Prophet Muhammad.

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

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

Selection of topics will be discussed such as:

Raise the consciousness of Allah in students.
Developing love for Allah.
Value of Al-Iklas (sincerity)
Purpose of life
Islamic identity
Advocacy
Developing compassion
Civic engagement
Racism
Dealing with Islamophobia

Modesty for both genders

Service-community outreach
Honesty and understanding plagiarism
How to handle stereotypical qs about Islam?
How to handle racist remark in public such as: “go back to your country” “lose the towel head”
How to be safe when wearing head covering (Hijab) in US?
How to be proactive in educating about Islam (Dawa)
Dealing with parent
Social media/music/TV viewing
Who is your role model? Why

In a nutshell:

Islam is a set of beliefs that must manifest themselves in a set of rituals. These rituals must have an impact on the character of the individual. The character of the individual manifests itself when we deal with other people.

If one engages in excellent Ibadah(worship),but has terrible Akhlaq(manners),then the Ibadah won't make up for the deficiency in character.However,if one has excellent Akhlaq and decent Ibadah,the excellent Akhlaq may make up for the deficiency in Ibadah.

We extract this teaching from the Hadith of the Prophet(pbuh)in which he was informed about two women.One woman prayed, fasted and performed all of her extra acts of worship,but she was extremely rude to her neighbors.The Prophet(pbuh) said that if she continues in this lifestyle,then her final abode would be the hellfire.The Hadith then mentions another woman who did not pray or fast much but only fulfilled her obligations in regards to people,like being kind to her neighbors.The Prophet(pbuh)said that if she continues in this lifestyle, then her final abode in the hereafter would be Paradise.

Activities:

1. Trip to Leadership Conferences.
2. MIST trip.
3. Trip to Omra/ Senior class. Set up a launch good campaign for this purpose.
4. Invite guest speakers-inspiration young adults
5. community services
6. Train male students to deliver current and relevant Fridays' ceremony inside and outside the school

7. Sleepover: Twice a year, a sleepover can be organized (for boys and girls separately). In addition to its obvious social and recreational benefits, the Sleepover should have a theme and clear objective which should be targeted through the different activities.
8. Camp or Retreat: The camp can be utilized to instill values of love of Allah, feeling the majesty of Allah through the contemplation in his creation.
9. cross-grade pairing of student buddies

Samar Al Majaideh