

Shooting Star Connection

The Official Newsletter of Washington Islamic Academy



Farewell and Thank you, Principal Sultan

Volume 1, Issue 5

December 18, 2009

Dr. Talat Sultan retires from his position as principal of Washington Islamic Academy. Friday, December 18th marks the end of Dr. Sultan's memorable time with us and the beginning of a new chapter in his life. Dr. Talat and his wife will be moving to New Jersey to live with their son and his wife. Dr. Sultan's son, Sohaib, is the first Muslim chaplain of Princeton University.

Dr. Sultan has long been meaning to begin working on the fifth book of his career. He is happy to finally have the time for this endeavor, having accepted the posi-

tion of Director of Research for ICNA.. The book will discuss the concepts and characteristics of the Islamic Movement .



We wish him the best and ask that Allah rewards him for his work here at Washington Islamic Academy.

Dr. Sultan leaves us in contemplation with one of his favorite ayahs, 6:162, where Allah tells us to devote our lives to His service. Surely, Dr. Sultan has strove to answer Allah's command and we ask that Allah accepts it from him.

Thank you, Dr. Sultan, for your example and your sacrifice! You will truly be missed.

Important Upcoming Dates:

- December 23: 2nd Quarter Progress Reports Sent Home
- December 24—January 1: Winter Break
- December 18: Dr. Sultan's Farewell Dinner tonight, at 6:00 pm at the school

Ayah of the Week:

- Week of Dec. 14—18: Declare: "Surely my prayer and my devotion, my life and my death, are all for Allah, Rabb of the worlds..." Surah Al-An'am, v. 162

Principal's Last Message

Dear WIA Teachers, Parents & Students

This is the last message that I am writing to you as WIA principal. I will be leaving on December 25th for Hamilton, NJ to take up my new responsibilities as the Director of Research for Islamic Circle of North America, one of the major Islamic organization of Muslims in the US and Canada..

Alhamdulillah, WIA has passed through many milestones during this two and one half years period when I had the privilege of commanding this ship. In fact, the building papers were signed the same day I consented to join the school. And then within a year, the building was beautifully renovated to look like a standard school. This hat trick resulted in the 50% increment of our enrollment. Despite our pre-occupation with the building, delays and moving, *alhamdulillah*, we were able to significantly improve our curricular as well as co-curricular programs and over-all administration of the school.

We continued to place utmost emphasis on SOL and Fairfax County Public Schools' Program of Studies [POS]. Computers, Art and PE were added to our requirements. A Montessori program was introduced at pre-k level. The class period for Math was extended at all levels to seven hours a week rather than five. Mostly teachers with English as their first language were employed as Language Arts teachers. All textbooks were updated in accordance with the State approved list. Terra Nova test was introduced to check the achievements in core subjects. Islamic Studies and Arabic curriculum was revised with the introduction of new textbooks that were better professionally prepared. The computer lab was re-organized. All subject-matter teachers were asked to use it frequently. Greater use of other technology and a variety of teaching techniques was also emphasized.

The most substantial change and improvement, however, occurred in the co-curricular area that plays a key role in developing the talents and the behavior of the children. The daily **new** programs included *Ayah of the Week*, *Taleem Al-Salat / Al-Akhlaq*, *systematic and organized adhan*, *Iqamah*, *and duas and adhkar after Salat*, *at the beginning and end of meals and at the dismissal time*—all led by students in rotation. The practice of salam was greatly promoted and adhkar were posted in the classrooms and bulletin boards. Boys and girls' lunch and recess programs were separated and regularized.

Again, for the first time in the school's history, a Student Shura Council was elected each year. The Council worked successfully in implementing many projects and in solving some of the students' problems and concerns.

For the yearly co-curricular activities, several school committees were appointed to include teachers and parent volunteers. These committees were expected to review and coordinate their respective curricular programs as well. Besides the Science Fair and Quran Competitions, **new** programs were introduced in Spelling Bee {Arabic & English}, International Day, Book Fair, Hadith Narration, Story Telling, Field Day, Essay Competition, Accelerated Reading, Nasheed Competition and Annual Function. All of them, *alhamdulillah*, were highly successful and brought unprecedented number of visitors to our open house programs that were often scheduled simultaneously.

The over-all administration of the school was re-organized with the development of a new and detailed *Parents and Students' Handbook* and a multiplicity of new procedures and forms. A new dismissal procedure was introduced that is running successfully despite some limitations. Parents were encouraged to organize themselves and to volunteer for the various activities. A Parent-Teacher Association was organized and officers were elected. The Web site was improved with their assistance. Classroom e-groups were organized to promote communication especially through the weekly Schedule of Classroom Activities. The new disciplinary form along with a Parent Concern form have been introduced to let the parents know regarding the behavioral / academic problems of their children and resolve them.

May Allah [SWT] accept our humble endeavors in His Cause, continue and multiply our efforts and indeed make our small Islamic educational institution a model for all Muslims in North America. In order for our school to continue to improve, we need to follow the following suggestions at the earliest:

1. A WIA Foundation must be established to raise endowments for it and to invest funds in order to set us free from hand to mouth existence and deficits.
2. The school's management (not the administration) needs to be streamlined with decision making process clearly defined. Teachers, parents and students ought to have a definite role in it. Charter and By-laws should be adopted / endorsed by all three of these segments of school population and strictly followed.
3. Scholarship Fund should be established for in-service education of teachers requiring them to secure certification within a period of time.
4. Scholarship Fund should also be established for deserving and needy students.
5. Play ground and sports' field should be provided at the earliest.
6. All co-curricular activities as described above must continue with same zeal and enthusiasm.
7. Greater emphasis should be placed in the use of technology in the instructional process.
8. Plans for starting a high school should be developed.

I have indeed enjoyed working with teachers, parents and students at the school. I will always remember their sincerity, kindness and affection. I would like to express my profound gratitude to all of them for their whole hearted cooperation and assistance. May Allah reward them profusely. Please remember me in your duas.

Sincerely,

Dr. Talat Sultan
Principal [August 2007 – December 2009], Washington Islamic Academy