

Teaching methods of an experienced Muallimah in Phoenix – Grade 6, 7 and 8

Introduction

I have noted down a few points and ideas which I have implemented and used over the years of teaching which *alhamdulillah* has worked very well for me and I have achieved the desired results. I teach the grades 6, 7 and 8 girls. I hope Insha Allah these notes can be of benefit for other Apas as well.

Qur-aan and Tajweed

Firstly, when I get my class at the beginning of the year, on the first, I do the proper pronunciation of all the Arabic alphabets with the correct Makhaarij. I explain to them the importance of Tajweed and write the following examples on the board to illustrate the difference in the meaning just by reading 1 letter incorrectly:

اللهم طهر قلبي

O Allah purify my heart

So just by reading ك instead of ق you are actually saying كلبى (O Allah purify my dog)

والله سميع عليم

And Allah is All hearing All knowing

by saying اليم with an Alif instead of ع it means painful. So you are actually saying Allah is All hearing, painful. (Na'oozhu billah).

By then the girls are already so shocked and some are laughing at the first example. So *Alhamdulillah* the point is understood that we need to be reading every letter correctly otherwise it will change the meaning of the Quraan.

In January when we do Quraan sabaq I only do 3 lines sabaq for the month of January. I teach the sabaq to them on the board with all the markings. That is so that the girls get used to reading correctly, with proper makhaarij and so that the fluency comes right and they are not stopping after every 2/3 words. Once they get used to how I want them to read, their sabaq increases individually according to their reading.

I correct every single mistake each pupil makes. Even if it's 10 mistakes. Don't overlook even the smallest mistake. By setting this trend the students know exactly how you want your work. You have to set your standard of work from day 1. You can't start off being lenient with tajweed and then afterwards try to get them to start reading with tajweed.

The most common mistakes I find when they read Quraan are the open and closed letters and Tashdeed. All concepts are shown on the board. Any mistake the child makes is shown on the board with the correct and incorrect version so they can physically see and understand what they are reading and what it was supposed to be read as.

I teach every concept of tajweed for a week. If I need 2 weeks we do it over 2 weeks e.g. Ikhfaa letters. For example, if we are doing full mouth letters this week, only full mouth letters is done from Monday to Friday. The girls must say it to me every single day whenever they get a chance. They have a tajweed book where they find 2 examples each and write it down. Then next week the tongue letters. Then ghunna and so on.

If the girls read any tajweed rule that we have already done incorrectly, then I do not tell them the correct answer. They must go to the tajweed corner where the rules of tajweed charts are in the class or open their tajweed books, find it and tell me the rule. In this way they are not being spoon fed, but rather finding the answer for themselves.

Learners in grade 6 **must** get tested their Quran sabaq by a grade 7 or 8 learner before coming to me for testing.

All sabaqs must be marked otherwise I will not test them their sabaq.

Learners are constantly reminded to read clearly, slowly and open their mouths and read loudly. Many of them don't open their mouths and read clearly so they have to be constantly reminded.

General

When I enter the class I write all the work that needs to be tested for the day on the board. After 1 or 2 months the girls know exactly how its done and they write it on the board themselves. This saves time and disruption in the class where each student who comes in doesn't have to ask me: "Apa what are we doing for suras, duas or Fiqh etc...?" When they enter the class, they can find everything to do on the board and come for whatever they are ready with, but they must complete whatever work is on the board.

Due to having a big class and multiple grades you have to multi test as well. So someone comes for Quraan on my right, then another child to my left for duas, or surahs or hadith etc. At other times they test their partners as well.

Lots and lots and loads of praises, 'Masha Allah' and 'I really love how you read today' 'I really enjoyed listening to your beautiful recitation.' Its surprising how excited and over the moon they get just to be told Masha Allah. They were extremely happy and excited when the examiner who took their exams told them Masha Allah on their exam day. They can't get over that and told me over and over that the examiner actually told us we read so well Masha Allah. Kids love to hear they are improving. So even if they not reading too well I tell them Masha Allah and tell them they are doing great and they have improved, and they need to keep it up and I explain to them what they need to focus on and where their weaknesses are.

They all have partners in the class. So before getting tested any subject they get tested by their partner before coming to me. 98% don't learn at home. I have come to terms with that and accepted that. So I do give them time in class to learn. I tell them that if they didn't learn or go over their work, they must please learn in class before coming to me so they don't have to get shouting.

Bigger girls don't want you to complain to their parents regarding their slow progress. I only do it in extreme cases.

Surahs / Duas / Hadith

While testing Suras, Duas, Hadith or written subjects, if they make a mistake I do not tell the correct answer. They must look inside themselves and read it from the kitaab. I find it works better as they remember their mistakes in future.

Revision is done throughout the year for all subjects. So exam time no one is stressing as all past year surahs, duas and Hadith is done continuously. 99 names of Allah is done every single day.

Revision

One round of revision is done every single week as follows

SURAHS EVERY WEEK

Mon: Surahs grade R/1 and 2

Wed :Surahs grade 3/ 4 and Sura Duha of gr 5

SURA YASEEN is done every day Monday to Thurs from the beginning of the current ruku and revision of 1 previous ruku. They get 1 aayah of sabaq every day even though its not a surah day.

Mon: Ruku 1 plus the ruku of current sabaq

Tues: Ruku 2 plus the ruku of current sabaq

Wed: Ruku 3 plus the ruku of current sabaq

Thurs: Ruku 4 plus ruku of current sabaq

Ruku 5 gets done every day

The same with Surah Mulk

1 p.g. per day revision plus current sabaq page.

DUAS & HADITH REVISION EVERY WEEK

TUES: revision of gr 1/2/3 plus 6 (current grade)

THURS: Revision of gr 4/5 plus 6 (current grade)

WED: ONLY Hadith gr 6 or 7 with lessons

Alhamdulillah our dedicated Apas of the previous grades are also doing a wonderful job teaching and laying the foundation for us in the bigger grades.

Fridays

On Fridays I only do Quraan sabaq, the 1 aayah of Surah Yaaseen or Mulk and Tuhfatul Banaat. I give the girls time after that to just take a break and relax as they work very hard during the week. They look forward to that. So we talk together as a class about whats happening in school and challenges they face. Sometimes I make popcorn, pancakes, pizza, cakes, dessert, chips, etc. for them and while eating we play a sunnats game. We have to say the different sunnats without repeating what was already said. That is like their weekly incentive which they look forward to. Any pupil who didn't finish any work during the week will have to catch up on a Friday during play time. (Which they obviously try to avoid)

Compassion

Before they leave madrasah to go home I tell them I love you all and I can't wait to see you all tomorrow. I also give them a hug. They must know that you enjoy having them around and you love teaching them. They love that. Many of them come from broken homes or have lost their parents. They crave love and attention.

Dua to Allah Ta'ala

After salaah when we all make dua, we say;

O ALLAH PLEASE HELP ME AND MAKE ALL MY WORK EASY FOR ME. I AM LEARNING FOR YOUR PLEASURE SO PLEASE ACCEPT IT AND MAKE ME A PRACTICING MUSLIM. AAMEEN.

Also not forgetting always make dua for them. Take their names. Read 2 rakaat saalah and ask Allah Ta'ala for help. Before their exam they read 2 rakaats salaah in class and make dua.

Written Subjects

I make sure I test the previous lesson I taught thoroughly before teaching a new lesson. If they don't know it either I redo it or I give them time to learn and then test them. This works really well as every lesson is learnt thoroughly. If you do not test them, they will not learn, because they know they are not being tested. TEST THOROUGHLY A-Z

ALL worksheets must be completed after each lesson.

I finish the syllabus early so there's enough time for revisions and tests. By the 1st week of the 2nd term all my half yearly written subjects are done. There's enough time for tests, revisions and corrections.

Do lots of test papers with them so they understand how to answer questions. It's a sad reality that as big as they are, their level of reading and understanding is very very poor. This will really help them.

When they get an answer wrong, I don't tell them the correct answer. They must find it themselves and do corrections.

Partner testing works great before coming to you. Put a weaker child with a bright child.

When doing tests corrections are increased per test. E.g. first test 1 time, second test 2 times, third test 3 times and so on.

Closer to the exam I test each child orally from their text book like 3 girls per day. Whatever they don't know I put a cross so they know where to concentrate and where their weaknesses are. Then they are called again to be tested all the crossed one's.

Make their work easy for them.

I make worksheets for them for e.g. a worksheets with all the terms from the kitaab.

Worksheets with all the names for history.

Worksheets with all dates and important details.

Short note points. Easy points.

It makes their learning easier as everything is found on 1 page instead of them searching through the entire kitaab for all the different terms, names etc. I don't mind sharing it with other Apas should they need it as I have copies.

When I teach grade 6 history, they find it very difficult because of all the battles, names, dates, etc. I try and finish the kitaab early so we have enough time for thorough revision. So for the 2nd half of the year when I teach, I teach one lesson from the front which is a battle and 1 lesson from the back which is not a battle. E.g. Battle of Muta (front) and mu'jizaat (from the back). So what's happening is that they are learning 2 lessons at one time but its not too difficult because only 1 lesson is a battle.

In this way the kitaab is finished earlier and there is more time for revision and tests. Since we do have exams for practicals, sunnats and tuhfatul banaat, we must have time for that revision as well.

This year I tried this method with my girls as I had a big number and it worked alhamdulillah. Make 2 groups verse each other to answer questions and see who wins. It's amazing to see them helping each other while they are learning and it's fun.

I make mnemonics for them to remember points.

Conclusion

Not every year is going to be as smooth as you want it to be. You will constantly face challenges. Try different methods and ways accordingly.

Build a good relationship with your students. Show them you love them and they mean a lot to you. My girls don't like it when we have long holidays. They actually ask me, "Apa can't we come to madrasah in the holidays?"

Do not be "a shouting teacher". Sometimes make a joke and laugh together. Win over their little hearts and they won't want to ever disappoint you. They will want to do everything that will make you happy. If they do something that upsets you, they will feel bad and apologise. Your students must love you. Then they will do all you tell them to do. They will write you lots of letters telling you that they enjoy madrasah and that they love you.

Constantly remind them that Quraan and tv, music, etc. cannot go together. It's a very challenging and trying time for them as well with these tik tok trends and school friends. You have to keep on reminding them.

Alhamdulillah these methods have really helped me over the years. Teaching bigger grades and multiple grades is definitely more challenging as the content is much more. But *Alhamdulillah* with the help of Allah Ta'ala we try different methods and techniques each year to make it work.

May Allah accept our efforts and keep us all on Siraat-e-Mustaqeem and guide our children during this trying time, grant them good akhlaaq and make them ambassadors of Deen and a means of Sawaab-e-Jaariyah. Aameen.