Introducing Ramadan & Eid-al-Fitr in Classrooms:

A Resource for Parents and Educators

Created by LittleMuslimLearners.wordpress.com
Dear Parents,

Assalam Alaikum

This guide was created for you to introduce Ramadan and Eid holidays in your children’s classrooms. Introducing our traditions in classrooms not only fosters a voice within our Muslim children, but it also helps our children’s classmates appreciate other cultures and nurtures a sense of tolerance and acceptance. The more we understand and appreciate each other, the more we strengthen the social fabric of our city and our schools.

It’s imperative that we cultivate relationships with our school leaders so that schools can meet our children’s needs and create a more inclusive environment for all. Parents, community members, and educators should present religious practices and cultural traditions to students in sensitive and developmentally appropriate ways.

Please consider the context within your child’s classroom as you approach your teacher. Most of the suggestions and activities listed in this guide are geared towards preschool and elementary school grades. However, additional resources are listed towards the end for secondary grades. I hope this guide will help you navigate the challenges of reaching out to your children’s school. May Allah (swt) guide us to do what’s best for our children.

Wa Salaam,
Fellow Muslim Parent and Educator
Date

Dear Principal and Teacher,

Greetings and Peace. I am the parent of ________________ in your class. I would like to bring to your attention that the upcoming Islamic month of Ramadan will be celebrated by our family.

Ramadan is the 9th month of the lunar Islamic calendar. This year it is expected to begin on __________ depending on the sighting of the new moon. Muslims who have reached a certain age are required to fast during this month, feed the poor, and expected to be on their best behavior. The fasting entails abstaining from food and drink during the hours just before sunrise to sunset. The month will last approximately 29 or 30 days.

Although ___________ is not yet at an age where he/she is required to fast, he/she looks forward to Ramadan every year and likes to join his/her family in fasting and celebrating this month. I would like to encourage ___________’s participation in Ramadan again this year to cultivate his/her spiritual growth. I hope that you will support us in this decision, in the interests of our child and other Muslim children like him/her in your class.

I have enclosed some information about Ramadan and Eid (the holiday that follows Ramadan). If possible, I would also like to come in to you class and make a short, informal presentation to inform ___________’s classmates about the significance of this holiday in our life. I would very much appreciate it if you could allocate a short time for me to come in and share our traditions. The more we understand and appreciate each other, the more we strengthen the social fabric of our city and our schools. I look forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you

Sincerely,

______________________________________ (_’s Mom)/Dad)
Tips for Class Presentation

• Make contact with your child’s classroom teacher and if possible, set up an appointment to discuss what you intend to do. Give yourself enough time to communicate with your teacher. Many schools require parents and guest speakers to obtain permission and approval from the principal as well. Feel free to send your child’s teacher/principal the following pages with teaching resources and lesson ideas.

• Be flexible with dates and timings. Keep the presentation short, typically 20-35 minutes is enough. The teacher can always extend your presentation later in class if he/she would like.

• Create a plan of what you intend to do in your brief presentation and communicate it with your child’s teacher. Have your child’s teacher preview the materials beforehand. Be well-informed and keep your child’s teacher updated.

• Collaborate with other Muslim families that may be present in your child’s class or school.

• Be sensitive and respect everyone and their beliefs in a polite and pleasant manner.

• Take a few books with you and put them on the desk for display. If you have pictures of mosques or calligraphy or other artifacts, bring them in for display as well. Wear or take special outfits to enhance your presentation. See Book Suggestion List provided.

• Begin your presentation by explaining a little about yourself and clearly state the purpose of the presentation. “I’m here to share with you information about a special holiday that _________ (child’s name) and I celebrate.”

• Initiate a brief discussion about celebrations around the world. “What holidays and traditions do you participate in and how do you celebrate them?”

• Make the presentation age-appropriate. Select lessons and activities that are geared for the correct grade level. See Lesson Plans ideas provided. Get your own child involved, he/she might have good ideas since he knows his classmates well!

• Seek permission beforehand when bringing foods to taste. Schools have special food policies due to dietary restrictions and allergies.

• Since henna is applied in many countries as part of celebrations, a demonstration of henna is appropriate. However, do not apply henna on other children’s hands without seeking written approval from children’s parents.

• Give something students can take home to show parents. “Treat bags” filled with Ramadan Mubarak or Eid Mubarak pencils or toys, gold coins, candies, balloons etc. are a good idea. Attach a simple note about Ramadan and Eid.

• Be sure to thank the class and the teacher at the conclusion of your presentation. Send a hand-written thank you note afterwards!
Introduction for Educators

Cultural celebrations and festivals are common to people all over the world. These events celebrate different historical and cultural practices, values, and beliefs. Often holidays like these bring together families and communities, and introduce new generations to traditional food, dance, music, and handicrafts.

K-12 curriculum in schools incorporate special celebrations in order to introduce students to diverse peoples and cultures. Learning about multi-cultural celebrations allows both students and teachers to identify aspects of cultural uniqueness, while at the same time appreciate differences. Educators can make a conscious effort in creating a classroom with shared context of personal experiences, cultures, and values. It involves creating a safe, comfortable, and respectful space where students (and their families) can share their stories that are most important to them, thus creating a more welcoming classroom and school. It is in this spirit that this guide was assembled.

Recognizing the Muslim month of Ramadan provides a valuable way to understand the diversity and shared values of more than 1 billion Muslims around the world. The information and lesson plan ideas follow will address the historical, social, cultural, and doctrinal elements of Ramadan worldwide. These ideas can be used to discuss similarities and differences among various holiday customs worldwide.

How to use the Resource
Feel free to select and choose parts of the resource that most fits with your classroom needs. Most of the resources on this guide are geared towards preschool and elementary grades. However, additional resources are listed towards the end of the guide for secondary grade levels. This resource includes a fact sheet, lesson ideas, book suggestions, and other resources to gain more information about Ramadan, Eid, and Islam.
Islam is one of the world’s major religions, and is the final link in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition of monotheism (belief in One God). Two of the major holidays in Islam are Eid-al-Adha (Festival of the Sacrifice) which takes place in the month of Hajj, or annual pilgrimage to the city of Makkah (in Saudi Arabia).

The other celebration occurs after the completion of Ramadan (also spelled Ramadhan), the Islamic month during which Muslims (believers in Islam) fast daily from dawn to dusk as part of an effort towards self-purification and betterment. This holiday is known as Eid-al-Fitr (Festival of Breaking the Fast).

The Lunar Calendar
Muslims use a lunar calendar for many of their religious observances. A new month in the lunar calendar is determined by the appearance of a new crescent moon. Since this occurs every 29 or 30 days, the lunar year is about 11 days shorter than a typical Gregorian year. As a result, dates of events in the Islamic lunar year “move forward” about 11 days every year. This year, the month of Ramadan will begin on ________ (insert date).

The Importance of Ramadan
Ramadan is important for Muslims because it is believed to be the month in which the first verses of the Holy Qur’an (the divine scripture) were revealed by God (Allah) to Prophet Muhammad (570-632 C.E.).

During Ramadan, Muslims fast from dawn to dusk every day. In the Arabic language, fasting is known as Sawm. This means not consuming food or drink, including water during the daylight hours. Muslims arise early in the morning during Ramadan to have a pre-dawn breakfast meal, known as Suhoor. At the end of the day, the fast is completed by taking the Iftar meal, which usually includes dates, fresh fruits, appetizers, beverages, and dinner.

Fasting is also a form of spiritual purification. All Muslims are expected to observe exemplary behavior during the fast (giving charity, helping the poor and hungry, congregating with community members, performing good deeds, complete prayers, etc.).
Vocabulary Sheet for Educators

Arabic: the language of the Qur’an, a book that teaches Muslims what to believe and how to practice their religion. Muslims believe the first verses were revealed to Prophet Muhammad in the month of Ramadan

Eid al-Fitr: a Muslim holiday marking the end of Ramadan, occurs on the 1st day of the month of Shawwal

Eid Mubarak: a greeting used during the Eid holidays, means have a blessed Eid

Islam: a monotheistic religion (belief in one God). The followers of Islam are called Muslims

Lunar Calendar: calendar based on the cycle of the moon

Mosque: a place of worship for Muslims

Qur’an: the holy book of Islam

Ramadan (Ramadhan): the 9th month in the Islamic calendar

Ramadan Mubarak: a greeting used during Ramadan, means have a blessed Ramadan

Salaam Alaikum: how Muslims greet one another, means peace be with you

Tradition: stories, beliefs, practices, the way of doing things from one generation to another

Words you already know in Arabic:
Algebra
Guitar
Jar
Lime
Orange
Safari
Sofa
Sugar
Zero
Lesson Plans

Lesson: Moon and Star Hanging Craft
The Islamic calendar is based on the moon cycle. Ramadan begins when the thinnest crescent (hilol, in Arabic) moon is sighted by the eyes. The middle of the month is marked by a full moon. Then the moon gradually gets smaller until all that can be seen in the night sky is a crescent again. Together with their families, Muslim children go out to scan the sky to sight the crescent in anticipation of the first day of Ramadan. They again, scan the sky at the end of the month to celebrate the completion of a month of fasting marked by Eid al-Fitr.

Suggested Grades: Prek-2  Subject Area(s): Science, Art

Materials:
- *It’s Ramadan, Curious George* by H.A. Ray
- *My First Ramadan* by Karen Katz
- *Ilyas and Duck and the Fantastic Festival of Eid-al-Fitr* by Omar S. Khawaja
- Paper Plate
- Colored tissue paper
- Scissors, paints, markers, or crayons
- Contact paper

Goal: Students will create a paper plate moon Ramadan/Eid hanging craft after hearing about how Muslims celebrate Ramadan and Eid.

1. Cut out a crescent moon and star from a paper plate. Younger children will need help with this.
2. Have kids paint the entire plate. Let dry. Or use crayons and markers to color the plate.
3. Place contact paper on the plate so that the sticky surface faces upwards through the moon and star. Trim around the edges so the contact paper fits the size of the plate.
4. Decorate your design. Have kids tear small bits of tissue. Use the torn tissue paper to fill in the shapes of the moon and star. Tearing tissue paper is a great fine motor skills for little fingers.
5. Punch a hole on top and tie a string to hang.

Extension (for older students): Discuss the usage of geometry and colors in Islamic art. Surface patterns on works of art created in the Islamic world have been prized for centuries for their beauty, refinement, harmony, intricacy, and complexity. Have students create geometric patterns on the plate as a mosaic piece.

Lesson taken from *Nurture Stone* http://nurturestore.co.uk/paper-plate-moon-ramadan-craft
Lesson Plans

Lesson: Ramadan Lanterns
Ramadan lanterns are hung around in and outside of home to celebrate Ramadan in cities like Cairo. Metal smiths make beautiful creations of molded and punches metal with colored or clear glass inside. Candles are placed inside so that light shines through the glass and holes in the metal. Children sign traditional songs as they walk from house to house swinging their bright colored *fanoos* (lantern in Arabic) on Ramadan and Eid nights.

Suggested Grades: 1-3  
Subject Area(s): Art, Social Studies

Materials:
- *Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns* by Hena Khan
- Bright colored paper
- Scissors, tape, glue, stapler
- Glitter, stickers, markers

Goal: Students will make their own Ramadan lanterns (*Fanoos* in Arabic) and learning about the ways Muslim celebrate Ramadan and Eid.

1. Select two colored pieces of bright paper. Decide which colored paper you’d like to be on the outside of the lantern. Fold the color paper you’ve chosen to be on the outside in half lengthwise (hot dog style, long way).
2. Cut evenly-spaced perpendicular slits through the fold (about 1 in. wide lines). Leave an inch from the end.
3. Unfold the paper. Decorate it with glitter, stars, gems or other shapes and designs.
4. Take one end from the short side and roll it to the other end. Glue or staple the sides together.
5. Get the other colored paper and roll it up to fit into the lantern.
6. Cut a strip of paper for a handle and attach it to the top of the lantern.

Extension (for older students): Create a more complicated design for the lanterns. Encourage students to cut out more complicated patterns on each of the sides of the lantern before attaching the liner inside of the lantern. Find arabesque and middle eastern geometric patterns for students to copy or adapt into their artwork.

Discussion Questions:
- How does the custom of hanging Fanoos in Egypt compare to American holiday customs?
- What types of similarities to you see with Christmas lights, Hanukkah menorah, the Chinese New Year, the Hindu festival of Diwali, etc?
Lesson Plans

Lesson: Moon Phase Dial

The Islamic calendar is based on the moon cycle. Ramadan begins when the thinnest crescent (hilal, in Arabic) moon is sighted by the eyes. The middle of the month is marked by a full moon. Then the moon gradually gets smaller until all that can be seen in the night sky is a crescent again. This is the sign that Ramadan is ending, and when a new month will begin. Muslim families around the world look forward to scanning the night sky for the Ramadan moon and then again at the end of the moon marking the last day of fast.

Suggested Grades: 2-4 Subject Area(s): Science

Materials:
- Night of the Moon by Hena Khan
- (2) Black paper plates (6” or 8 “ size)
- Removable dot stickers or black marker
- Moon phase dial template
- Glue

Goal: Students will observe the different phases of the moon and create their own moon dial

1. Discuss the phases of the moon. The moon’s appearance in the sky follows a 29.5-day cycle. During the cycle, it first appears as a crescent. The lighted portion that you can see in the night sky becomes larger as days pass, growing until you see a full moon. As more days pass, the lighted portion gets smaller again, until no moon is seen. The cycle then repeats. This 29.5-day cycle corresponds to the time during which the moon makes one complete orbit around Earth. When you see a full moon, Earth is between the moon and the sun, and all of the lighted half of the moon faces Earth. When there is a “New Moon,” the moon is between Earth and the sun, and all of the lighted half of the moon faces away from Earth. When there is a New Moon, you can’t see any of the moon at all.

2. Cut out the template (attached) and glue it on a circular paper plate.
3. Peel 4 removable dot stickers and place them in each quadrant of the circle. The dot circle represent the moon
4. Have the students color in the “moon” with a black marker according to the quadrant label-Crescent, full moon, crescent, new moon.
5. Take the 2nd paper plate and cut 1/4 of it out. Stack both paper plates one on top of each other. Punch a hole in the middle. Place brad through both plates so the plates spin to create a dial. Ask students to take it home and in the evening to observe the night sky for the moon.

Extension (for older students): Teach students the full lunar cycle, (new moon, waxing crescent, first quarter, waxing gibbous, etc). Modify the template to include all phases of the moon and have students to dree-draw a picture for each moon phase. Students can observe the moon for a month, drawing pictures of the moon each night and bring to class.
Lesson Plans

Lesson: Moon Phase Dial Template

- Full Moon
- Crescent
- Crescent
- New Moon
Lesson Plans

Lesson: Sharing traditions
Families often share memories together and create traditions that children value and want to share. People around the world practice different religions and each has its own traditions. Fasting in Ramadan is an important belief in Islam. Fasting signifies an inner struggle and self-purification among other benefits.

Suggested Grades: 2-6 Subject Area(s): Social Studies, Writing

Materials:
• *Holidays Around the World: Celebrate Ramadan and Eid Al-Fitr* by Deborah Heiligman
• *Ramadan Moon* by Na’ima B. Robert and Shirin Adl
• Access to Internet

Goal: Students understand that religious traditions and beliefs have meaningful origins and symbolic importance for practitioners.

1. Ask students to share one tradition that their family follows or a tradition with which they are familiar with (This can be assigned for homework preceding this lesson). As students share, chart some example of traditions. Then ask students to look at the list and work together to categorize the traditions that the students listed (food, holidays, religions, events, etc).
2. Explain that the class will explore one of Islam’s main tenant—fasting. Other religions and cultures also fast, ask students if they’re familiar with fasting. Students may mention their parents fast for dietary restrictions, for religious purposes (Christians, Hindus, etc).
3. Read one of the books suggested (see complete list attached) and/or watch the short clip—“Nadia’s Ramadan”
4. Work together to make a list of things that stuck out to the students as you read the book and/or watched the video clip. Discuss the traditions the family participated in. What similarities or differences did they notice? What are some key themes in the book and video?
5. Journal writing. Students zoom in and write about a family tradition he/she celebrates with the family. Students should create a snapshot (much like the video clip) of this family tradition and describe it using their senses—color, taste, smell, feel, and sound.

Extension (for older students): Students work in pairs to research a selected country’s Ramadan and Eid celebrations. Muslims have immigrated to different parts of the world and they at times bring their cultural beliefs and social activities from one culture to another creating new traditions. Possible countries to choose from: India, Pakistan, Malaysia, England, France, Egypt, Sudan, Iran, United States, Germany, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Ghana.
Lesson Plans

Decorate this classic pattern as a Ramadan decoration.

Taken from Crayola.com-Islamic Patterns http://www.crayola.co.uk/free-coloring-pages/print/islamic-patterns-coloring-page/
These books can accompany lessons about Ramadan and Eid as mentor and read aloud texts.

- *Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns: A Muslim Book of Colors* by Hena Khan (Grades PreK-3)
- *It’s Ramadan, Curious George* by H.A. Rey (Grades PreK-3)
- *Rashad’s Ramadan and Eid-al-Fitr* by Lisa Bullard (Grades PreK-3)
- *My First Ramadan* by Karen Katz (Grades PreK-3)
- *Ramadan* by S.H. Ghazi- (Informational text, Grades K-4)
- *Ramadan Moon* by Na’ima B. Robert and Shirin Adl (Grades K-4)
- Holidays Around the World: Celebrate Ramadan and Eid Al-Fitr by Deborah Heiligman (Grades K-5)
- *Night of the Moon* by Hena Khan (Grades 2-4)
- *Under the Ramadan Moon* by Sylvia Whitman (Grades 2-4)
- *Lailah’s Lunchbox: A Ramadan Story* by Reem Faruqi (Grades 2-5)
- *Ilyas & Duck and the Fantastic Festival of Eid-al-Fitr* by Oman S. Khawaja (Grades PreK-5)
- *Raihanna’s First Time Fasting* by Qamar Hasan (Grades 1-5)
- *A Party in Ramadan* by Asma Mobin-Uddin (Grades 2-5)
- *Owl & Cat Ramadan is...* by Emma Apple (Grades 1-5)
- *The White Nights of Ramadan* by Maha Addasi (Grades 1-5)
- *Moon Watchers* by Raza Jalali (Grades 1-5)
- *The Best Eid Ever* by Asma Mobin-Uddin (Grades 1-5)
- *Celebrating Ramadan* by Hoyt-Goldsmith. *(Informational text, Grades 2-7)*
Other Resource Suggestions

Videos
• Islamic Celebration: Religion & Ethic Newsweekly. PBS Learning Media (Grades 2-12)
  http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/islam08.socst.world.glob.islamceleb/islamic-celebrations/
• Nadia’s Ramadan. Unity Productions Foundation. (Grades K-8)
  http://www.upf.tv/nadiasramadan/

Additional resources for lesson plans
• Celebrating Cultural Diversity with Ramadan. Scholastic Inc.
  http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/celebrating-cultural-diversity-ramadan-1
• The School Holiday Calendar. Teaching Tolerance: A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center.
  http://www.tolerance.org/lesson/school-holiday-calendar
• Learning About Eid al-Fitr & Eid al Adha. NYC Department of Education.
• Resources for Schools Related to Ramadan. California Three Rs Project: Rights Responsibilities, and Respect
  http://ca3rsproject.org/pdfs/Ramadan2013Resources.pdf
• Tucson Children’s Museum
  http://www.childrensmuseumtucson.org/_pdf/_educational%20guides/Eid%20Al-Fitr.pdf
• 99 Creative Moon Projects
  http://acraftyarab.com/portfolio/project-5
• Teaching Ramadan-news and resources round up. The Guardian.
  http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2013/jul/14/ramadan-education-news-resources