

Islamic Schools Need Your Support

During these difficult times, as the global pandemic of COVID-19 intensifies, the Islamic Schools League of America (ISLA) and the Council for Islamic Schools of North America (CISNA) urge parents and community members to **support Islamic schools as they face financial instability amidst school closures, layoffs and a weakening economy.**

For over thirty years, Islamic schools have played a critical role in the preservation of Islam in America. From their inception, these schools have sought to help students develop a strong American Muslim identity. They have provided an alternative to the Orientalist and Islamophobic depictions of Muslims found in mainstream textbooks and popular media alike by providing historical and contemporary examples that counteract these negative images. Furthermore, they have simultaneously helped students develop a connection to the masjid and the Muslim community as students forged life-long friendships and positive memories facilitated through their Islamic school experiences.

As a result, Islamic schools have helped produce young Muslim men and women who are now spearheading masjid programs, conducting Jummah khutbahs, and organizing community service initiatives. In short, Islamic schools have played an important role in helping cultivate this new generation of leaders who are well-grounded in their religion and committed to serving both God and humanity.

With the spread of COVID-19, schools across the country have had to close. However, Islamic schools lost no time in transitioning to online and distance learning; many were up and running within one week of the closures. School leaders understood how important it was for them to provide consistency and connection to students in a rapidly-changing and unpredictable world. They jumped into action to provide training to staff on distance learning platforms and techniques. ISLA and CISNA both facilitated the sharing of resources and mobilization of schools to make this transition efficient.

Furthermore, Islamic schools have sought to be a source of guidance for the entire community during this time by providing Islamic reminders and sermons for all to access on Facebook Live and YouTube. In doing so, they have provided a much-needed Islamic perspective to the crisis we are all facing, to complement the scientific and social expositions offered by mainstream media. Indeed, Islamic schools have continued to provide a safe space that supports and uplifts their students, parents and communities.

Yet, the threat to their financial stability is real. “Conversations about sustainability have turned into conversations about survivability,” according to the National Council of Nonprofits (<https://www.councilofnonprofits.org>). Islamic schools as non-profits must remain aware of their financial bottom line and must in turn make difficult decisions regarding student retention, staffing, and ultimately, the ability to reopen in the upcoming academic year.



There are a number of ways that you can help alleviate the challenges Islamic schools are currently facing, even as they attempt to provide consistency in these unprecedented times:

1. **Keep your children enrolled in Islamic school:** If you are financially able, keep your children enrolled in Islamic schools and continue to pay tuition. We must recognize teachers as “essential workers” that are providing children with a sense of normalcy and helping keep students focused and growing. If families pull their children out of Islamic schools, these same schools will not be able to financially sustain their employees, which means more layoffs and unemployment for the community.
2. **Re-enroll students for the following year:** Islamic schools have already made financial and budget related decisions for the following year. Teacher contracts might have been released, rent and mortgage payments made, contracts signed, outsourced services paid for, curriculum and resources purchased. Your local Islamic school relies heavily on your continued patronage in the form of tuition.
3. **Consider paying next year’s tuition in one lump sum:** These funds will assist the school in moving forward with its instructional plans for the upcoming academic year.
4. **Give constructive feedback on e-learning:** Most Islamic schools have made a decision to continue their services online. If something is not working for your family, consider giving that feedback to your child’s teacher, head of school or principal. Most Islamic schools welcome constructive feedback so they can continue offering high quality services.
5. **Increase Donations:** Whether you send your children to Islamic schools or not, consider donating or increasing your donation. Remember every dollar you give to an Islamic school is a form of *sadaqa jariya* (continued charity) that can benefit you, your family, and your community in this life and in the hereafter.

On behalf of your local Islamic Schools, both ISLA and CISNA are grateful to have your support. Please rest assured that your Islamic School is committed to educating the future leaders of tomorrow.

Shaza Khan

Shaza Khan, PhD
Executive Director
Islamic Schools League of America
www.theisla.org

Sufia Azmat

Sufia Azmat
Executive Director
Council of Islamic Schools in North America
www.cisnausa.org

