



UNIVERSAL EXPRESS

Mrs. Hanan Abdallah, M.Ed., Principal

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From the Principal's Desk

Winter 2009 – 2010 school year

Dearest Universal School Families,

Assalamu - Alaikum, I hope this letter reaches you in the best of Health and Iman.

As we prepare for the New Year, (Muharram and January), we find ourselves continuously reviewing our personal growth and accomplishments. In the first express letter of this school year I mentioned how the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was always concerned with teaching Muslims to have the best manners and personal characteristics as well as to excel in everything they do and that it would be our continuous focus to do the same. Working with an excellent staff, student body and community we hope that you feel as we do; that our school is a more positive environment and that we are seeing continuous growth in all areas, personal development, academics and extra-curriculars.

Students are keeping busy and give 110% all of the time. Our gymnasium is in use every minute from 8 am - 8 pm daily with Basketball and volleyball practices and starting right after school . The Wrestling practice, debka practice and NHS tutoring take place in the North Cafeteria, the middle school students and DAWA club are meeting and putting together their newsletters after hours on the second floor. The science lab is in constant use as students prepare for the school, regional and state science fair. Some have just completed Drivers Ed and others are starting ACT classes as soon as we return from break.

Character counts as the teachers have been using the bully free programs in the elementary classes, the DAWA club has been presenting Islamic peer- mentoring halaqas, khateeras and khutbas for the student body and the IMAN club is out visiting the food pantries to distribute food to the needy, the soup kitchen.

Enclosed you will find additional information about Semester Exams for 8th – 12th grade, ACT classes, standardized test results, and some of the programs and competitions our students have enjoyed this first semester.

Ilhemdilah we have been very busy and will continue to be as we prepare to close the first semester and do our best in the second. Insha- Allah you have a safe and beneficial winter break. May Allah bless you and your family.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Hanan Abdallah





They're Hip, They're Cool, They're Funny, and They're...NERDS?!

Universal's First through Sixth grade students were treated to a fun and informative assembly by the Morris Brothers at the end of the first quarter. The Morris Brothers are two N.E.R.Ds—Never Ending Radical Dudes—who believe they are “superheroes” sent to save the world. Rupert and Homer Morris performed an educational and hilarious assembly on Bullying via music, skits, comedy, and audience participation. They captured our attention in with their offbeat appearance of taped eyeglasses, pen stuffed pockets, and less than stylish clothes, and we learned that everyone is special and cool in their own way. Our students learned the keys to a “bullyfree” school, the difference between tattling and reporting, and how to deal with a bully.

The Five Ways to Make Your School “Bullyfree”

1. Show respect by treating others the way you want to be treated
2. Teamwork
 - Do your part, report bullying, but don't tattle. Remember: “reporting” helps stop trouble and “tattling” causes trouble.
 - Include everyone
 - Follow all rules
3. Remember: Everyone is special
4. Stop and Think
5. Learn ways to deal with a bully

Ways to Deal with a Bully

1. Avoid the Bully
 2. Think of unsafe places and don't go there
 3. Travel in groups
 4. Let adults know where you are going
- Our students practiced what to do if the bully comes up to you and you can't get away
- ✦ When you speak, look him/her in the eyes, stand up straight, and speak calmly.
 - ✦ Tell him/her how you feel and to stop what he/she is doing
 - ✦ Agree with him/her
 - ✦ Use the broken record strategy

Use humor—Sing a song like “Happy Birthday” or the Barney Song

**If none of this works, or if you think someone might get hurt, walk away and report what has happened to the teacher.

The Islamic Knowledge Competition of 2009/2010

Universal School students had a great time with their yearly event of the Islamic Knowledge Competition, which was held on Thursday, December 10, 2009. The Islamic Studies department and Dawa Club members did a great job in organizing the event. The teams participated in answering questions that increased everyone's knowledge in Fiqh, Aqidah, Hadith, Seerah, Quran, Duaa.... The students' performance was exemplary and everyone had a great time. Winners will receive medallions and certificates of participation during the annual Award Ceremony. First place winners will also receive one free lunch.

Great Job, Universal!



Science fair

Welcome to the exciting, sometimes-hectic, but always-rewarding world of preparing students for a science fair. It is a journey full of discovery for students and teachers alike, and one that creates more motivated and critically thinking learners in the process. Every year, 1st through 9th grade Universal School science teachers take their students on this journey in promoting scientific inquiry in their classrooms. By applying the scientific method in their own experiments, learning becomes more meaningful for the students while they actually “do” science! The science fair experience has consequently become an integral part of the Universal School science curriculum.

Students who are successful with science fair at the school level are then encouraged to take their inquiry skills a step further and participate in the science fair at the regional level, sponsored by the Illinois Junior Academy of Science (IJAS). This prestigious organization holds regional and state science fair competitions. With over 55 schools participating from grades 7 – 9, at the regional level, Universal School has taken first place for three years straight, and over 10 projects were then selected to represent Universal School at the state science fair held annually in May.

Science fair results for the 2009 – 2010 school year will be available online at www.universalschool.org after the winter break.

Get Ready for the First Semester Exams!

MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL STUDY SKILLS

Midterm Exams don't have to be stressful if you are prepared! If you plan carefully and use the right study skills techniques, you can be relaxed and ace even the most difficult exam. Use the suggestions below to help pull yourself together and survive exam week!

Study Timeline:

About 4 weeks before:

- Teachers will hand out study guides—keep them in a safe place—they are valuable to you!! Each teacher will give you their own advice for preparing for their exam. Listen carefully and take notes about what each teacher will expect you to know for their exam.
- Read over each study guide. Ask your teacher for anything you have questions about or do not recognize. Mark the topics/items that you already know or don't need to study in too much detail. This leaves the rest for you to focus your attention. Locate/organize all papers, old tests, notes etc. that will be helpful for studying.

Time Management Schedule

You can use a weekly schedule to plan your time during exam reviews. Filling out a schedule and sticking to it as closely as possible will reduce feeling stressed. Fill in all your planned activities for each day. As you schedule your study hours, keep in mind your personal preferences. Ask yourself the following:

- At what time of day do I prefer to study? Morning, afternoon, or night?
- Do I work productively for several hours at a time or for short chunks of time?
- What will I schedule in first—the easiest or most difficult classes?
- What day(s) will I take a break from studying?



studying!

Plan for at least a couple of “free” days where you do not study at all.

About 1-2 weeks before:

- Continue working on study guides—make time to ask for clarification of the questions, answers, or concepts you highlighted previously.
- If the teacher will be going through the study guides in class, be sure to check your answers even if you think they are already correct. Continue reviewing on the schedule you create.

Finals Week:

- Review your study guides for the exams you have the next day.
- Get to bed early so you will be rested.
- Get up in time to eat a light, healthy breakfast.
- Review study guides on your way to school. STAY RELAXED!!



Reducing Test Anxiety

It is normal to feel nervous or anxious about a big exam or test. You can keep anxiety from interfering with your test performance by reducing it to a manageable level. Follow some of the tips below to help reduce your test anxiety:

- **Be prepared—follow the study timeline to pace and prepare yourself.**
- **Visualize yourself doing well and achieving the grade you want.**
- **Do not compare yourself with others.**
- **Practice relaxing by taking several deep breaths when feeling stressed.**
- **Reward yourself after studying instead of indulging to avoid studying.**

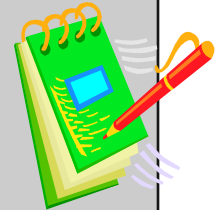
About 3 weeks before:

- Make a schedule for studying over Winter Break. Start working on study guides. Note/highlight questions you have for the teacher as you complete the study guides.
- Prioritize—use a different day for each subject. Give yourself a time limit—don't overdo it. More is not always better!
- Take breaks to eat a healthy snack and refresh—drink plenty of WATER.
- Get enough sleep at night and take a nap between studying if you are tired.
- Plan for fun activities or going out—you need to relax between

Taking the Test

It's finally time for the exam! You take your seat and prepare to begin. STAY RELAXED!! Take a few deep breaths, say a duaah', and do the following:

- Look over the entire test, READ THE DIRECTIONS!
- Plan your approach and schedule your time.
- Complete the easiest parts first.
- Focus all your attention on the test. Don't waste time and energy worrying about not doing well or how your classmates are doing on the test.
- Mark the questions you don't know the answer to so that you can go back to them after completing the parts you are most sure of.
- Go back to the marked questions and think carefully about the study guide—you most likely will be able to recall the information.
- If you start to feel anxious, close your eyes, take 3 deep breaths, say Bismillah and a duaah', then get back to work.
- Use all or most of the allotted time to complete and check over the exam before turning it in—don't worry about being the last to finish!



UNIVERSAL EXPRESS

The Universal Express is a publication of Universal School serving to inform Universal families and the greater community. For more information, please contact the school.

The Dawa Club By Dr. Fadhli



The 7th Annual Dawa Club Seminar will be held in the third quarter of this year. The tentative theme of the seminar is "Internalizing Islamic Values in the minds, hearts, and souls of young Muslims." The Universal School Dawa Club invites all Islamic schools, the Community leaders, and Islamic institutions at large to its annual seminar.

Building a Bridge: This program involves, visiting and inviting Muslim students in various Public Schools to Universal School. By doing so we hope to establish

Islamic programs and activities in Public Schools. Some of these programs are delivering speeches, Friday kutbas, organizing seminars, etc.

"The Young Muslim Week", a week long program for elementary school students. During this week the Dawa Club will try to plant various practical (applicable) Islamic values into the hearts of elementary school students.

The Annual Orphan Project: Will start soon this year. In this project the Universal School Family (students, Teachers, Staff, Administration, Board, Mothers' Club, and Fathers' Club), sponsor orphans in America and around the world. Last year Universal School was able to sponsor 28 orphans. This year the Dawa Club is targeting to sponsor at least 35 orphans Inshallah.

Inter-Islamic History Bowl Competition



Calendar of Events

On December 16th, Universal and AQSA School hosted the Inter-Islamic History Competition. We had a total of 96 students from CPSA, MCC, Islamic Foundation, AQSA, IQRA, and Universal in groups, comprised of a representative from each Islamic School. It was a three parts competition: Historical Reenactment based on a famous speech, a Poem/Song contest where students were asked to answer a legal/constitutional question through a poem or a song which they performed, and a quiz bowl of three rounds with questions on U.S. History, World History, Geography, Islamic History, and current events. The Universal School's winners of the competition were:

1st Place: Nisreen Alharsha (10th), Talat Suleiman (10th)

2nd Place: Ayah Chehade (9th), Omar Mujahid (9th)

An Award Ceremony was held after a nice luncheon. Congratulations !

January 4	School Resumes
January 9	ACT Classes Begin
January 14-15	Semester Reviews
January 18	Independent Study Day for 8th-12th Grade Students
January 19-22	Semester Exams
January 22	End of the Second Quarter
January 25	Teacher in Service
January 29	Report Cards Sent Home
February 24	Progress Reports Sent Home
March 19	Teacher In-Service
March 22-26	Spring Break
April 2	End of the Third Quarter
April 16	Parent/Teacher Conference 10-6 pm
April 23	Experience It! Open House for New Parents 9-12 pm

ACT Review Class Registration



10th and 11th grade students have been given ACT review Registration Forms. Please sign up your child before the classes are full.

Classes start **Saturday, January 9th, 2010!**



H1N1 Flu Vaccine

The Cook County Department of Public Health will be at Universal School on Wednesday, January 6th, 2010 to administer the H1N1 Flu Vaccine. If you would like your child to receive the vaccine please return the consent form that has been sent home with your child. If you need a copy, please visit www.universalschool.org.