In the name of God

Saturday June 13th, 2020

Managing and Reopening Schools Amid COVID-19

Saturday June 13th:
- 7:00 am Los Angeles
- 10:00 am Toronto
- 3:00 pm London
- 6:30 pm Mashhad
- 9:00 pm Jakarta
- Midnight Sydney

Managing and Reopening Schools Amid COVID-19

Webinar held on June 13, 2020

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اعوذ بالله من الشيطان رجيم

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

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Dear Brothers & sisters

Welcome to our webinar titled "Managing and Reopening Schools Amid COVID-19."

My name is Nooh Kasraie. I am the moderator of today's session. We are honored to have our dear brothers & sisters from Islamic schools around the World.

I would like to introduce you to our panelists;

- Our first speaker is brother Nauman Zaidi- the USA
- Our second speaker is brother Syed Adil Rizvi- Canada
- Our third speaker is brother Seyed Alireza Khoei- the UK
- Our fourth panelist is doctor Mahmoud Amani Tehrani- Iran
- Our fifth panelist is doctor Miftah Fauzi Rakhmat- Indonasia
- Our sixth panelist is brother Mohamed Wehbe- Australia
- Our final speaker is brother Maulana Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi- Canada

Just to go over the format of the program, during each presentation, if you have any questions you can use the chat section to type your questions. We try to answer one question after each panelist finishes his presentation. We keep the rest of the questions for the end of the Webinar. At the end of the Webinar, we have a surprise for you so, please stay with us.

Today, we were supposed to meet most of you face to face in holy Mashhad. As you know this is part of the World Schools Summit on Education also known as WISE. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic we were not able to do that. This Webinar is not meant to be a replacement for that Summit. We postponed the Summit to another date when we have the blessing to see you in person.

For those of us who are new to WISE, the mission is to provide a platform for periodical and systematic meetings of Islamic Schools. It holds objectives such as sharing ideas & experiences, developing joint projects and activities, addressing challenges and issues that we have faced, sharing resources, planning school trips, professional workshops and programs together and etc.

Before we start the presentation, I am going to give a little introduction. We have schools here that have already opened and schools that are in the process of reopening due to the global pandemic that we are all experiencing. At the same time we are seeing themes emerging at schools that have opened or the ones that are reopening. We will discuss some of these themes today, from preparing for the school and the new regulations that each country may have set based on the recommendations from their public health department, and also, parents' support, teachers training and etc.

BEGINNING TO SEE THEMES:

School Preparedness:
- Strict guidance
- Physical distancing instituted
- Clear routes for all movement in/out/through buildings
- Younger students back first
- No busing
- Staggered start/end times
- Change food service to eat in classroom
- Advice/expectations about which staff/students stay at home (i.e. high risk)
- Increased cleaning and hygiene efforts
- No parents/visitors allowed inside buildings
- Smaller groups with one home room teacher and no/limited transitions
- Increased communication

New Rules:
- No borrowing from other students
- No games that require touching
- Cleaning desk areas routinely

Parent Support:
- Masks
- Hand sanitizer
- Cloth napkins for under snacks/lunch
- Family temperature checks each morning

Themes from schools that reopened

What we do know about schools that have reopened and according to quotes of principals of some Islamic schools that reopening schools is the easy part. It becomes a logistical nightmare because everything has been impacted. The level of stress and anxiety is high and finally the same parents that pushed for reopening, blamed the school when there was a confirmed case in the school.

What do we know about schools that reopened?

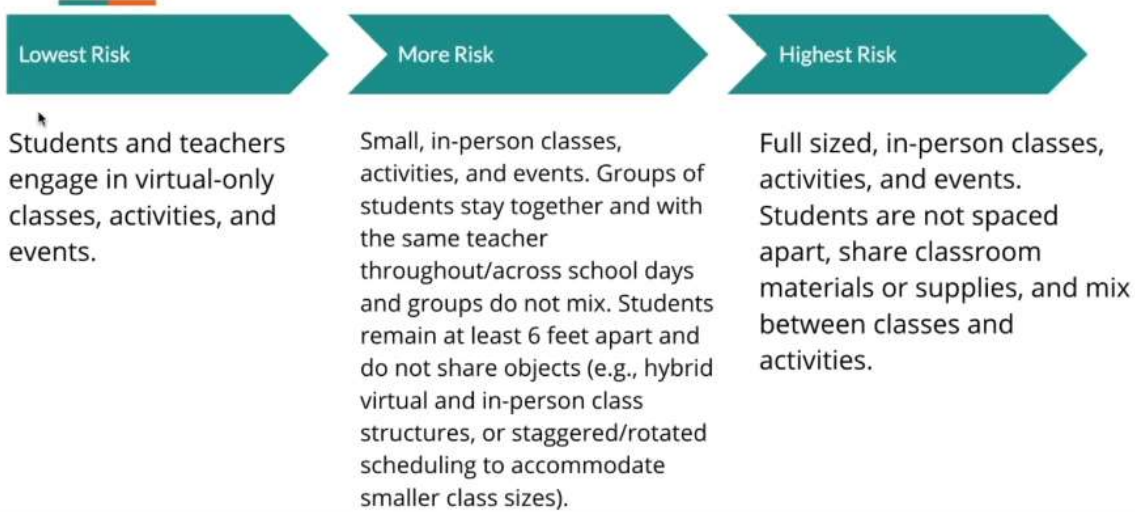"Reopening schools is the easy part!"
"It's a logistical nightmare!"
"Everything has changed!"
"Staff are stressed out."
"The same parents that pushed for reopening, blamed the school when there was a confirmed case in the school!"

If you look at the risk level, what most governments around the world are saying is for schools to have Only Online Classes, the highest risk is face-to-face, and the middle- ground risk is what we call a hybrid or flex-model.

The risk of COVID-19 spread increases in school settings as follows

Lowest Risk → **More Risk** → **Highest Risk**

Students and teachers engage in virtual-only classes, activities, and events.

Small, in-person classes, activities, and events. Groups of students stay together and with the same teacher throughout/across school days and groups do not mix. Students remain at least 6 feet apart and do not share objects (e.g., hybrid virtual and in-person class structures, or staggered/rotated scheduling to accommodate smaller class sizes).

Full sized, in-person classes, activities, and events. Students are not spaced apart, share classroom materials or supplies, and mix between classes and activities.

So, many schools are planning for almost all scenarios. Whether those are going to be fully online because of the second wave of the pandemic, or it is going to be fully on site for countries that have controlled the pandemic, or if it is going to be a hybrid or flex-model.

Scenario Planning

1 — FALL TERM BEGINS ON SITE

2 — FALL TERM FULLY ONLINE

3 — FALL TERM IS HYBRID OR FLEX

For those who are not familiar with hybrid or flex-model, it is when you have half of the school come in two or three days a week or in the morning shift and then the others are online and then they switch after that.

Hybrid or Flex Model

Divide each classroom into two groups:
- Group 1
- Group 2

Option 1:
School is open 7:50am - 3:30pm.

Group 1 - attends on A-C-E days at school
attends on B-D-F days on ZOOM

Group 2 - attends on B-D-F days at school
attends on A-C-E days on ZOOM

*This is an every other day model for each platform.

TIME & DAY	A Day	B Day	C Day	D Day	E Day	F Day
Group 1	At School	ZOOM	At School	ZOOM	At School	ZOOM
Group 2	ZOOM	At School	ZOOM	At School	ZOOM	At School

Option 2:
School is open 7:50am - 3:30pm.

Group 1 - attends on A-B-C days at school
attends on D-E-F days on ZOOM

Group 2 - attends on D-E-F days at school
attends on A-B-C days on ZOOM

*This is three consecutive day model for each platform.

TIME & DAY	A Day	B Day	C Day	D Day	E Day	F Day
Group 1	At School	At School	At School	ZOOM	ZOOM	ZOOM
Group 2	ZOOM	ZOOM	ZOOM	At School	At School	At School

So, based on the country where you are standing, you may be focusing on online only, face-to-face or somewhat in between with different phases. And most schools are trying to reopen with lower elementary coming first.

Nevertheless, the assumption that many schools are taking around the world and specifically Islamic Schools is that there is a chance of decreasing enrollment especially if you go online as there are other alternatives for parents. This will impact the finances. Statistically speaking, after the 2008 recession in the USA, Islamic Schools saw an increase of 50% demand for financial aid. So, at least here we are expecting that number to increase. At the same time, the stress and anxiety level of parents, students and teachers is high and we are expected to do more with less resources.

Assumptions for next year

Enrollment ↓

Finances ↓

Stress & Anxiety ↑

Productivity ↑

Resources ↓

And as schools are planning, everyday a new factor pops up, something as simple as, if you share a building with a masjid or an Islamic center, if they are having a Friday Prayer, how do you control that? How do you control visitors at the school? What about little kids that share objects? What if, God forbid, one of your staff is infected with Covid-19 and they cannot come to work? What is your back up plan for that? And what if that becomes two staff or three? So these are factors that schools are considering. That is why many schools are sending out surveys to parents to get their input specially we the Islamic Schools, since we are community based. Getting their input and feedback is a key. At the same time, some teachers are not prepared to come back to actual school on campus. A poll shows that if schools in the US open, one out of five teachers is unlikely to return. They either want to change their career or they are going to retire or they look for an option to teach online only.

Having said all of that, I would like to end with this recommendation for all schools that at hard times go back to your mission. Just think why we are here and what value an Islamic School add. Remember this beautiful verse of Quran that after the hardship, there is relief. That if we can turn the threat to an opportunity and look at this as a learning experience to become better and better at what we do. Inshallah we will all survive.

Nooh Kasraie;

I would like to invite our first panelist, Brother Nauman Zaidi. He has been a distinguished principal for many years who has been recognized at different levels. He is also a board member of RISE Montessori, an Islamic School in Los Angeles- California.

Nauman Zaidi:

I am in California right now and as a result we generalize for California for most schools and communities with that perspective.

When we look at reopening schools there are three factors to consider:

1. Safety
2. Academic Program
3. Teacher Training

<div align="center">Safety</div>

The Californian department of education in conjunction with the center of disease control & prevention (CDC) basically released this guideline which is a very strong resource and it outlines what each school site and school district need to do in order to reopen school and make it safer for the population that they serve.

So when you are thinking about reopening the school, the first decision has to be "Are we really ready to reopen the school?" The CDC has provided a tool that you can use. The first thing you have to consider in reopening the school is that whether or not you can keep your children and employees safe in a high risk school setting. You have to look at what are the recommended help and safety actions in place by your local health department. If you can answer yes to all these questions, you can move to the next level.

So if you decide and you are ready to reopen, now what? What do you do next?

Per the CDC and California Department of Education recommendations, when the decision has been made to reopen, you have to have clear plans and protocols in place to ensure the safety of students and staff. All students and staff need to wear a mask. We have to favor how to keep kids separated inside & outside the classroom, and on the buses. With knowing that there is no one size that fit to all schools, there is a checklist on how to keep the school site safe with ten categories to implement to open up the school.

The following checklist covers the following main categories:

1. Local Conditions to Guide Reopening Decisions
2. Plan to Address Positive COVID-19 Cases or Community Surges
3. Injury and Illness Prevention Plan
4. Campus Access
5. Hygiene
6. Protective Equipment
7. Physical Distancing
8. Cleaning/Disinfecting
9. Employee Issues
10. Communication with Students, Parents, Employees, Public Health Officials, and the Community

Providing masks, disinfectants and thermometers will cost 2 to 3 million dollars. That is a big cost especially when schools have gone under a huge budget reduction in this situation.

Academic Program

The Californian Department of Education basically formed four models that we can follow. Schools in the district are currently collaborating to figure out which model we want to adopt for our school. The two examples that are being shared are either two-day rotation blended learning model or a looping instruction. Since we ended the school two or three months earlier, they will start the school with the same teacher for multiple grade levels.

Teacher Training

Now in the summer time, we are actually in the phase of training all the teachers. This really depends on each school site at this point. In our own public school, our teachers are going through the google classroom certification process which is a fifteen- hour certification process. There will also be ongoing professional development in inline platforms. We are training our teachers in t=different platforms to get them ready for the fall.

Nooh Kasraie;

Our next speaker is dear brother Syed Adil Rizvi from Wali ul Asr Learning Institute in Canada. When we talk about accomplishments and strength of Islamic Schools in our community, Wali ul Asr is a good model for us. They have recently been named the number one school in the province of Ontario- Canada.

Managing and Reopening Schools Amid COVID-19 Webinar Speaker

Syed Adil Rizvi
Director and Founder
Wali ul Asr Learning Institute - Canada

Syid Adil Rizvi;

The current situation in Canada is better and we are doing better than many countries. Both of our campuses are in the region that have been recognized as having the highest risk of Covid-19 per capita, so we are in the hot zone. Based on the guidance and research of health authorities, the virus is here to stay and we ought to live with it for the next few years. We are praying that is not the case, but this is what we are planning for. To reopen the school, we have been studying several models in different countries diligently. After long discussions we reached the conclusion that social distancing among children is impossible in medium to long term bases. Considering our position based on parents, students and staff is that we can do something like hand sanitizers and distance however it is impossible to maintain social distancing among 5 to 7 year-olds for 5 months since specifically when they use the same wash rooms, drink from the same water fountains. So, we don't consider that to be practical in long term basis. We try to seek Islamic guidance and qualifications for such a situation. We have to keep the safety as the primary factor. So, like what our brother Nauman pointed out. We consider three or four classes to come to school two days a week each and then have shifts in the class. We are looking at online and hybrid models. Though we think we can put forth more policies for older kids which is much harder in the case of younger kids. When we saw what was happening in the world, we got prepared for online school earlier so the day when the schools closed, we started the online school.as a result we have three months of experiences in online school and good practices. The online schooling system has been successful for older kids but not the younger ones so we are trying to improve cases for younger ones. Since we have two thousand people at our school we prefer not to take risk so we consider all three methods to hold classes. We continue all these three models while studying in detail and make the final decision for fall in August based on the level of risk that is present then. We have to consider long term effects of online or any other method classes on their social & emotional peace.

Nooh Kasraie;

Our next presenter is dear brother Seyed Alireza Khoei. He is the head and member of the board at Al- Sadiq and Al- Zahra schools in the United Kingdom.

Seyed Alireza Khoei;

I was asked to briefly explain what happened in Europe amid the Covid-19 outbreak. Then I will discuss about what we did in Al-Sadiq and Al- Zahra schools in London. I am not going to only talk about the plans for the future but will briefly talk about past, present and future. As you may have heard, European countries took different instances towards the Corona Virus. According to the European commission, most European schools closed as part of the measures to limit the contact between people and to slow down the spread of the virus. From among all European countries which closed their schools early in March, the UK closed the schools late March, on the 23rd. Some countries like Sweden and Island which decided to rely on stricter social distancing and hygiene measures instead of full school closure.
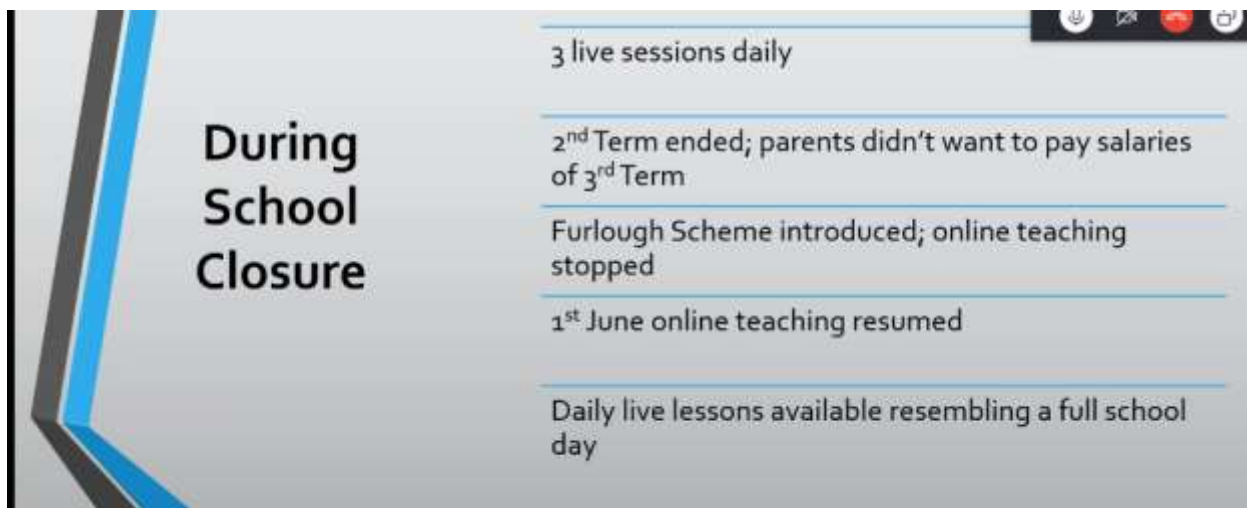
Generally in Europe, learning support has been given in different ways. It is either via books and materials taken from schools, or E-learning plat forms which enable teachers and pupils to interact with each other or via the national television programs and the lessons on social media plat forms.

Now we are going to specifically focus on our schools in London. I will explain it in three different stages; before school closure, during school closure and plans for reopening schools.

At Al-Sadiq & Al- Zahra schools, we took some measures before the outbreak happened in Europe. The main reason for that was that during our half time break in February, Covid-19 outbreak happened in Iran. That was the time when some of our parents, students and staff went to Iran to perform a ziarat during their holiday. So this put us on alert and made us prepare for the pandemic before the government announced any decisions. I personally think that this pandemic proved to us that as school leaders we should make decisions carefully and in a timely manner.

One of the challenges we had was the allegations & rumors about the occurrence of Covid-19 cases at schools which were partly untrue but the false news spread among parents within a few minutes through their WhatsApp groups. To overcome such a challenge we established a strong and a transparent communication platform with parents in the form of sending them daily updates via email. This had a positive effect and they appreciated it that they were constantly in the loop. However at other stages this communication was not daily. We contacted them when there was a concern to be discussed over. This was because we aimed to make a balance between being firm and flexible. Due to the pandemic we had to be understanding and had to show more flexibility with parents because this was the situation which was out of anyone's hand. At the same time, we realized that if we wanted to be too flexible, then the situation would be out of hand. So for certain decisions, we had to stay firm.

When the virus spread in Italy & Europe, it became clear for us that we have to close the school in London. Our leaders decided to plan for a smooth closure of the school and at the same time prepare teaching materials for after school closure. The challenge at that time was that the government and the Department of Education were both insisting on the school to remain open. To make the process of closing the school smooth & to be able to deal with the government demands, we decided to make decision in different stages. So, the first stage was that we allowed parents to keep their children at home if the wished so and that their absence was authorized. Within a week the virus was spreading rapidly but the government still insisted on the schools to remain open. As a result, we decided to close the school despite the government's advice for one week because we had a group of staff who were among the high risk cases. They went into a soft isolation and we took it to our benefit saying that due to the lack of staff we cannot operate the school for the time being. Finally by the end of that week the government announced that all schools in the UK should close as of Monday March 23rd. Since we had planned for the school closure and had enough preparation for that situation, we knew that the best option during that time was online teaching. By that time the E-Learning platform, accounts for the students and staff were all ready and all of them were trained on how to use the platform and the tutorial documents were ready as well. Due to this, we could start our online teaching without a gap exactly from the date when the school announced closure. This was a brief explanation of our activities before the school closure.

During **School Closure**

- 3 live sessions daily
- 2nd Term ended; parents didn't want to pay salaries of 3rd Term
- Furlough Scheme introduced; online teaching stopped
- 1st June online teaching resumed
- Daily live lessons available resembling a full school day

During the school closure, we diverted all our focus on online teaching. In the beginning we had three live sessions a day. For each session, teachers had recorded and uploaded their material in advance so during the session they answered all the questions and misconceptions from students' side. We carried on the same way until the end of the Spring Term.

The Summer Term was supposed to start from late April. However, majority of parents declared that due to the pandemic, they were not able to pay the school fees and that they didn't want to make registration for the upcoming term. At that time the government introduced the Furlough Scheme which meant that employees in the private sector were entitled to receive 80% of their salary from the government with the condition that they would not carry out any work for their employers during the lock down period. So, parents' demands and the government scheme limited our options. As a result, we had two options ahead of us; either to continue online teaching and enforce parents to pay teachers' salaries or to stop all our services including the online teaching and do not charge any parents but to pay 80% of teachers' salaries from the government.

Considering the financial limitations at that time, and the pandemic situation and on top of that the complication of online sessions during the holy month of Ramadhan, we decided to suspend the online teaching the first half of the Summer Term and to resume the online teaching for the pupils from the second half of the Summer term when Ramadhan is also over from the first of June. Obviously, it was a very risky decision and we received a lot of criticism from parents' side. However the school leaders were confident that this was the right decision. So we did not back track even though some parents gave us very tough time.

The plan for online teaching for this half term was that we resemble a normal school day. That is we have our online class from morning till the afternoon with break time and lunch time in between. Over all, all teachers and students found this method better and more effective than the previous one. Obviously there were concerns about the screen time and the amount of parents' support which was required but we constantly monitor leaders, parents and students to make sure that it suits majority of them.

Finally, we come to our plans to reopen schools. The British Government has announced that students should go back on site in a couple of year groups, like year one, year two or year six from the first of June but this faced a lot of opposition to the extent that the government back tracked this decision. The main reason was the incident in France that when schools opened Covid cases increased considerably. So, most schools including ours are closed at the moment. We have based our decision on parents' views and our own risk assessment. It is unlikely that we can begin our activities at school earlier than next academic year which is September 2020.

In fact we are planning to be prepared in case we will not able to reopen all the year groups in September. The big challenge at this stage is that the end of Covid-19 pandemic and the government's decision are both unpredictable. As a result, the only way to manage the condition is to set a plan for all different scenarios. Like our brothers in the US and Canada, we are taking all safety and academic measures in to consideration as well as the emotional well-being of students. The important concept of social distancing and how it impacts students emotionally is the reason why the UK government did not push for in site teaching. The instances in France when they tried to maintain social distancing among young kids was heart breaking. This is the main complication at this stage.

Nooh Kasraie;

Now we move from Europe to the Middle East. Our next presenter is our dear distinguished brother doctor Amani Tehrani. He is an educational counselor at the organization for educational research and planning. He is affiliated with Alavi School, one of the top schools in Iran.

Managing and Reopening Schools Amid COVID-19 Webinar Speaker

Dr. Mahmoud Amani Tehrani
Educational Counselor in The Organization for Educational Research and Planning
Alavi School - Iran

Dr. Mahmoud Amani Tehrani;

In my presentation today, I will review the experience of Iranian schools in confronting Covid-19 and the important points we will be facing after this period of pandemic in the medium and long term based on the talks we had with our principals and teachers.

Perhaps none of the events in recent decade has had as profound and practical impact on the education system as Corona Virus. This was a complete shock to schools. Of course this shock can be considered as a factor in upsetting the balance between teachers and schools as a result they are forced to achieve a new balance. We look at it with optimism and this is equivalent to learning.

In the face of this shock, schools in Iran were divided in to two groups. The first group was schools which already had an E-Learning infrastructure in addition to face-to-face teaching method like Alavi Junior high school which is an example of the first group of schools. It already had an online platform for education as a complementary method but during the pandemic and with the suspension of regular schools, this platform grew stronger and became the main system of communication between students & schools. The online platform is used to share learning objects, hold online classes. It is also used for giving tests, assessments and evaluations. We also have an internal messenger for notifications and updates.

The second group was the schools which were not prepared for this condition. Obviously, most schools go into the second category. In the beginning of the school closure, students and teachers were confused since they thought they were only a few days off. However after a few days they

realized it was a serious matter and that they had to do something. Various measures were taken by both public and private schools. Many turned to social networks like Bale & WhatsApp. So they shared their own recorded content in groups they shared with their students. Usually, students do not have a cell phone so they had to use their parents' phones in this case. Sometimes students and teachers' relationship was two- way and students were required to share photos and contents with teachers. Others relied on live teaching programs, prepared in connection with the Ministry of Education & Iranian Television, on the Iranian national TV channels. Among these schools, there were some that quickly adapted themselves to this new condition by equipping their schools with e-learning tools. In another word, they turned the threat into an opportunity. There were considerable movements by teachers, students and charities to help those in deprived areas. Also the Iranian ministry of education proceeded to create a national infrastructure for online teaching called SHAAD.

On the basis of what we experienced during this period, there are four important factors to be considered in our future planning & reopening schools;

The points in reopening schools:

- **Schools**: Emerging a new type of hybrid or blended schools
- **Teachers**: The need to professional teachers, who will be competent to work in this combined space
- **Devices**: laptops or PCs, better than mobile phones and tablets
- **Content**: Need to a Content pool

There are new types of schools in addition to face-to-face like Hybrid and etc. Besides, it is clear that we need teachers who are competent enough working in this combined situation. Of course there has been several training programs for the teachers to make them familiar with online tools and systems and as a whole to fully prepare them for such teaching. As per teachers and parents' ideas, for an online class, pcs and laptops are handier than cell phones and tablets. And finally we need to create a suitable content to help organize education in this new condition.

Again based on what we have experienced so far, we think we might face three important challenges on the days ahead of us, in the mid and long term;

Important challenges:

- the educational (not instructional) aspects and personality development of students in the new space
- Lack of competent enough teachers for educational design of creating effective learning opportunities in the new space
- the valid and authentic evaluation ways which be efficient in the new space.

The first challenge is the concept of Tarbiat not the instructional aspects which should be considered by everybody in E-Learning environment. That is establishing a good relationship and interaction between student- teacher & student- student which will decrease considerably in this new situation.

The second one is that teachers lack enough competence for planning & creating effective learning opportunities in this new condition.

And finally, there is a lack of authentic and reliable evaluation system through which we could assess the efficiency of the E-learning method and students' achievement. Of course these are the challenges which will not appear immediately after opening schools but will emerge long after reopening schools.

Nooh Kasraie;

As we talk about Iran, there is another school I would like to highlight today as it is working on a project that can benefit many of our schools in terms of teaching of Quran.

Internationl Activities for Teaching the Quran
(Hafezan e Wahy Institute)

In 1995 Hafezan e Wahy Schools were established with the aim of creating interest and implementation of the Quran and the teachings of Ah lol Bayt for school children. This organization has incorporated Quranic teachings alongside the formal curricular activities required by the Ministry of Education in such a way that each student undertakes 7 to 14 hours a week of Quranic and heavenly teachings in a variety of forms. In the newer program emphasis is placed on memorizing the Quran and by middle school each student will have memorized the entire Quran alongside learning its various concepts and translation. In TAHA program, more emphasis is placed on the implementation of Quranic teachings in real life situations. By the end of middle school students in TAHA program will have memorized hundreds of verses from the Quran and will have a full understanding of its teachings and translation as well as knowledge of popular Hadith and prayers.

In addition to these great blessings, the production of variety of teaching materials for each grade in the Hafezan e Wahy schools is another accomplishment. These books and teaching materials are currently used in our schools alongside other activities for creating deeper applied knowledge of concepts of Quran. One of these teaching materials is the collection of puppets and storytelling props which has been designed and built by their professional team to aid Quranic and Ah lol Bayt storytelling and create interest and connection with the students. This collection has been sent to six other countries and is being used worldwide.

By holding various programs for our teachers, we attempt to teach our methods to our instructors. Interested parents are also welcomed to join. These training programs are held on a recurring and constant basis. So far, several trainees and interns from abroad have also taken part in this programs to transfer the knowledge to their own countries.

Under the Covid-19 pandemic situation, the training programs have been held online for the first time and participants from Canada, Germany, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Argentina, Iraq & Pakistan have benefitted from the training program.

The most important topics discussed in these programs include; techniques for teaching Quran to students, the dos and don'ts of teaching the Quran, storytelling methods, and special games for Quranic classes.

We hope that by establishing ties of managers and educational leaders from Islamic Schools across the globe, we will be able to disseminate our experience, methods and products to a wide range of audiences across the globe.

Those who are interested in the teachings of Quran and Ah lol Bayt are hoping to learn from your valuable insights as well.

Nooh Kasraie;

We are going to move now from the Middle East to Indonesia. As an educator, when I think of one of the best educators that I have known in my life it is no one but Shahid Ostad Morteza Muthahhari. When I heard there is a school named Muthahhari in Indonesia, it just filled me with joy. The name of this man who has worked so hard and who has educated millions of people with his books and teachings. With that introduction we welcome our dear Dr. Miftah Rakhmat, founder and head of Muthahhari schools in Indonesia. For those who are not familiar with Muthahhari schools, one of the strengths of their schools that could be a model for us is their emphasis on Empathy Education.

Managing and Reopening Schools Amid COVID-19 Webinar Speaker

Dr. Miftah Fauzi Rakhmat
Founder and Head
Muthahhari Schools - Indonesia

Miftah Fauzii Rakhmat;

According to the previous presentations, it is obvious that you are well informed and well prepared. However that is not the case in Indonesia. We don't really know what is going on and we doubt the number of the people infected by Covid-19. Therefore, we follow whatever the government tells us, whether to open or reopen schools. Until now, we don't see any movement toward reopening schools. We have been working on E-learning for about ten years so, we are ready for distance learning. We probably do not have a good health care system as well as a good welfare system. So we believe the government may decide to open schools late October or probably by January next year.

We know that there is a gap between teachers and students. Teachers are not familiar with digital materials so much so they are called "Digital Immigrants". So with this distance learning going on, we are actually entering our students' world. Sometimes, we as teachers are very much left behind what the students already know. We learn a lot from our students. They have their favorite YouTube channels for math, science and even history. So we use that to our own advantage. We closed our schools mid-March. At first we tried to have a normal schedule for our classes but online, but unfortunately we were not really successful. So, we had to change it to fit more into the students' own timing. We sensed that there are many factors in our curriculum and lesson plans that need to be revised and re-prioritiesed. We know that many of the things we teach them in an actual classroom does not seem to be that much important. So this made me think more about what exactly is more

practical for them. So we reviewed our curriculum to see what is more practical and important for them to receive with this approach. Besides, we decided to prepare our teachers for the upcoming situation and for distance learning during the summer time. We emphasis that our teachers have a more empathy approach towards their students since we know that all children are tired, lonely, stressed, bored in this Pandemic situation. They are all facing anger management issue. So we need to have a more empathetic approach. We urge teachers to be in touch with their students on daily basis and ask them how they are doing, sometimes even make video calls with them. We use several apps that the students might be familiar and might be using. Our priority is more on Mental Health of our students in this pandemic situation. So we step aside the regular curriculum objectives and put more effort on empathy communication with students.

Nooh Kasraie;

Now we move to Australia. We move to our next presenter, our dear brother Mohamed Wehbe who is joining us from Belfield College. He is the IHSAN director and the board member.

Mohamed Wehbe;

Knowledge is all about sharing and we can never assume that it is an exclusive property. With the blessing of your contribution, we are moving forward together as a team.

According to health advice in Australia, school children do not need to follow strict physical distancing guidelines but they should follow good hygiene practices such as regular washing hands, avoiding sharing drinks or food, coughing or sneezing into your elbow. As for school attendance, all students should be at school unless they either have a medical certificate saying that they are unable to return to school due to an ongoing medical condition or they are currently unwell.

As for school activities that are on site, the majority of school activities can be recommended as long as the following measures are observed;

1. All visitors and external guests to school must obey relevant hygiene & distancing and safety protocols.
2. Principals may continue to limit or prohibit activities if they see it contrary to the current Health Advice.
3. External visitors and guests are required to demonstrate compliance with safety and health and safety requirements.
4. Finally, non-essential adults are expected not to be present to school grounds or at school events like parents unless they are specifically approved by the principal.

Physical distancing for children in the school environment is not required according to Australian HPPC guidelines however all adults must maintain physical distance from one another.

At first all schools were supposed to remain open but Belfield College decided about a transition to the single common digital learning platform. Belfield college principal released a survey to receive feedback from parents on the children's interaction with digital learning as well as their hardship experiences, challenges and needs. We actually discovered through this survey that many of our students do not have very good software and online literacy skills in addition to the financial hardships of parents who lost their jobs. From Mid- April we developed a plan that the college remains open for students who want to attend but provides flexibility to those who wish not to attend and stay home in line with the guidelines provided. As of May, we started to think of possible measures to return to school on a gradual basis to more flexible options for those who would like to return to school. So in line with federal government recommendations, Belfield College resumed normal operation with all students return to face-to-face teaching.
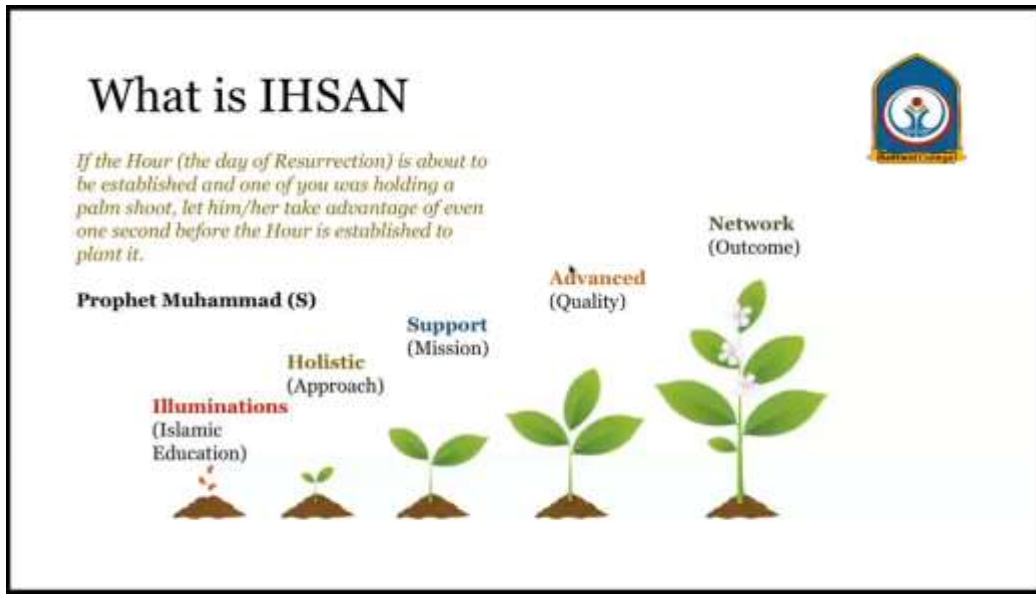
IHSAN is the Belfield College Covid-19 action plan. It actually stands above Covid-19 and moves beyond it. It was inspired by our Prophet Muhammad who once said if the Hour is about to be established and one of you was holding a palm shoot let him or her take advantage of even one second before the Hour is established to plant it. And so IHSAN became that organic initially to holistically and systematically respond to the feedback we received through parents. It is an acronym that stands for Illuminations Holistic Support Advanced Network. IHSAN is a virtue in Islamic illumination. And to do IHSAN is to be a witness to the beauty of God and the beauty He has created for us. So, we not only seek IHSAN but also we seek to manifest IHSAN in everything we do.

IHSAN refines the way Belfield College presents itself in its community. A good college is not one that builds palaces for itself but rather lives in a community as a whole. IHSAN has a two- fold objective, to ensure that the college is engaged that is, it is fully present to support the community that it represents and to ensure the college is sustainable that is it looks at the capacity to flourish in long term.

IHSAN operates in the following ways

How IHSAN (operations)

- **Procedures and programs:**

➤ Transporting Character education and Islamic routine at the school into the home sphere (where the heart lies).

➤CANVAS (online learning)

➤Mentoring

➤Counselling

➤Family Support

Let me finish with the insight that I think could help us to envisage a better future. It is said how one becomes a butterfly. You have to learn to fly so much and that you are willing to give up being a caterpillar.
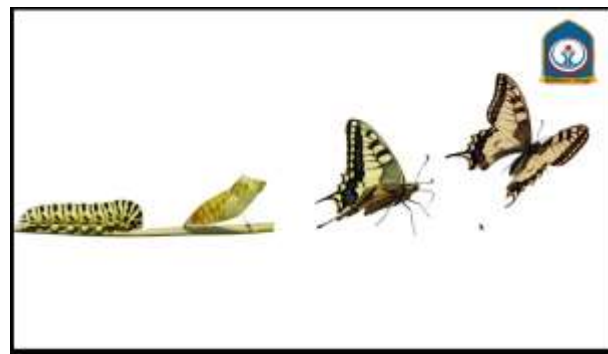
Nooh Kasraie;

We have been discussing the academic parts and operations. Brother Wehbe tied up his speech with spiritual aspects. I am going to use that to introduce our last speaker Maulana Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi. He is the resident scholar, Imam of Jafari Islamic Centre in Canada. He also oversees As-Sadiq schools. He is a well-known figure in North America.

Managing and Reopening Schools
Amid COVID-19 Webinar Speaker

Maulana Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi
Resident Scholar
As-Sadiq Schools and Jafari Islamic Centre - Canada

Maulana Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi;

It has been a pleasure to listen to various presentations made here from across the globe. I was asked to make some final remarks here, more a Dua than anything else. Your presentations and participations reflect this Ayeh from Surat ol Maedeh "و تعاونوا على البر و التقوى " asking us to cooperate with one another on the basis of what is good and righteousness.

Within this two hours you have exercised an example of such cooperation (Ta'avon). I think the field of education is an example of Al Bir va Taghwa. You are actually raising a generation who will be the Imam Al Motaghin or after all followers of Imam Al Motaghin.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank and appreciate the hard work of brother Shamszadeh and his team. They have become like the thread of Tasbih, bringing the various schools around the globe together so that they can facilitate the process of learning and sharing from one another. I have seen many good initiatives here today. I just make a remark. Islamic Schools around the world did not sit either in this situation of Covid-19, rather they got involved to do things in different ways. As a result, many potentials among individuals and institutions which were hidden before came out. The potentials to do things in new ways. This is when we realize that with every calamity (Bala) there is a blessing (Nemat). And in this Covid-19 calamity, we have this ability to experience things in a different way which we wouldn't have done under normal situations.

I pray for the Towfigh of all the brothers and sisters around the world. May Allah to increase your strength, your number and to give you the resources to fulfill the dream of creating a society for the followers of Imam Al Motaghin (Al Momenin val Momenat). I will end my speech with one sentence from Sahifat ol Sajjadieh where the prayer is for our children and students;

Allah, make our children righteous, make them among the good ones, make them to have good eyes and insight on issues so that they can make right decisions, they can be among those who obey You and Your olya, those who love You and your Olya. They shouldn't be in any way associated with those who are your enemies.