

# Islamic Academy of New England

## A Brief Guide to Your Children's Teachers, 2007-2008



*The Islamic Academy of New England is honored to offer such a talented and high-qualified group of educators to the community. They are energetic, passionate, and consider the school a family. This adds to a positive and warm Islamic environment. Most of our teachers either have their graduate degree or are currently seeking a graduate degree. They come from a diverse background of professional disciplines and each teacher offers unique experiences to our students. In addition, nearly every teacher is either a licensed educator in Massachusetts or is in the application process for licensure.*

## Islamic Academy of New England

### **Sr. Nur'Izzah Khalil, B.A.** **Acting Principal**

Sr. Nur earned her Bachelor of Art degrees in English and Psychology, from the University of Calgary, Canada. Upon graduation, she taught for 2 years at a public elementary school in Singapore before being recruited by the government to be an Assistant Registrar at the Registry of Companies and Businesses whereat she assumed additional responsibilities as a Public Prosecutor at the Subordinate Courts. Sr. Nur later ventured into advertising and became a Media Director with a renowned British consulting company specializing in In-flight media. Marriage brought her to Massachusetts and, alhamdulillah, she returned to her first passion, teaching, and immediately became part of the IANE-ANA family. Sr. Nur loves sports and the outdoors and is ever thankful to Allah s.w.t. for this rare opportunity to make a difference to help contribute and shape the minds of our precious Muslim youth. Sr Nur is presently pursuing her Masters in Educational Leadership degree and can be reached at [nsgkhalil@gmail.com](mailto:nsgkhalil@gmail.com).

### **Sr. Dalal AIDajani, B.S.** **Administrative Assistant**

Sr. Dalal graduated from University of Jordan with a bachelor degree in civil engineering. She taught in an Islamic school in London, UK, for three years. Subsequently she participated in a Saturday Islamic school for two years in Cambridge, MA. Currently, she holds an administrative position at IANE. Outside work, she leads a Girls Scout troop and she is skilled in arts and crafts projects. Sr Dalal can be reached at [dalalaldajani@gmail.com](mailto:dalalaldajani@gmail.com).

### **Sr. Aminah K. Muhammad, A.S.** **Administrative Assistant**

Sr. Aminah serves many roles at both ANA and IANE. She has her Associate's degree from Northeastern University. She has extensive experience, working in Islamic schools since 1984 in both Massachusetts and Mississippi. Sr. Aminah has been with Al-Noor Academy since 2000 and in 2006, started fulltime at IANE. Nevertheless, she can be found at both schools, serving as a lifeline between parents, students, and teachers. Her favorite activities include working with children, reading, and sewing – when she has the time to sew! Her email is [aminahk@msn.com](mailto:aminahk@msn.com).

### **Br. Justin Valanzola, B.S., MEd**

#### **Social Studies and Guidance Counselor (Islamic Academy of New England and Al-Noor Academy)**

Br. Justin is the social studies teacher for Al-Noor Academy, Guidance Counselor for the Islamic Academy of New England, and College Admissions Counselor. He is a native of Mansfield, MA. His background is in philosophy/history, religious studies, and education. Br. Justin has a Bachelor of Science and Masters in Education with a concentration in Special/Exceptional Education from the University of Maryland, College Park – ranked top 10 graduate schools in the country. He is licensed as an educator in both Maryland and Massachusetts. He taught at public schools and previously had a homeschooling/education consulting business in Maryland. He has experience with the Muslim Students' Association as an Executive Committee Member, Assistant to the Muslim Chaplain, a current member of the Council for Exceptional Children, and loves skiing! He can be contacted at [jeav33@yahoo.com](mailto:jeav33@yahoo.com).

**Sr. Nargess Obeid, B.A.****Religion Teacher**

Sr. Nargess holds a degree from the University of Damascus in English Literature in 1991, a diploma in general Education, and Post Graduate Studies in Educational Administration. She has held various teaching positions for the past 17 years in Syria, United Arab Emirates, and the US, including principal for one year at a middle school in Syria. Sr. Nargess is currently the religion teacher for all grades at IANE. She loves teaching this subject more than any other subject and asks Allah to help her build the Islamic character in all the students – for the sake of Allah (SWT). Sr Nargess can be reached at [nsobeid@gmail.com](mailto:nsobeid@gmail.com).

**Sr. Asma Shaqrah, B.A.****Lead Arabic Teacher, Quran Teacher**

Asma Shaqrah obtained her Bachelor's Degree in Arabic Language and Literature from the University of Jordan. She has been teaching Arabic for 10 years; 3 years in Jordan and 7 at the Islamic Academy of New England (IANE). Asma has been the lead teacher in the Arabic Department at the IANE. Asma is the head of the Arabic Department at Muslim American Society Council of Islamic Schools (MASCIS). Asma has done many projects in the school such as "My School" video clip and the Arabic Calligraphy project. Asma's goal is to help the students understand Quran through teaching Arabic to build strong Muslims and build a strong Muslim community. Sr Asma can be reached at [ashaqrah@hotmail.com](mailto:ashaqrah@hotmail.com).

**Sr. Rachida Benkaci****Quran & Arabic Teacher**

With over five years of experience teaching Arabic language at the Islamic Academy of New England, Sr. Rachida is certainly not an unfamiliar face amongst the staff this year. Armed with extensive knowledge in Arabic language and literature, she has been a driving force behind the Arabic department at IANE in the past and has contributed tremendously to instilling the love of the holy language of the Quran in the hearts and minds of our students for many years. We welcome Sr. Rachida back this year with open arms and a prayer that she may continue with her dedicated service to the school with the same zeal that has been her trademark so that our students go on to learn and excel in the Arabic language, insha'Allah. Sr Rachida can be reached at [rachidabenkaci@aol.com](mailto:rachidabenkaci@aol.com).

**Sr. Safia Eldesuky, B.A.****Arabic Teacher**

Sr. Safia graduated from Alexandria University from the Arabic language Department. She gave sister's halaqa and worked in a private high school in Egypt for 3 years. After coming to America, she taught at IANE and ANA for many years. She wrote her first book about Hijab, called *Sweetness of Hijab*. After finishing the book, she went back to teach at IANE. Sr Safia can be reached at [szelnaml@bhcc.edu](mailto:szelnaml@bhcc.edu).

**Sr. Hebaallah Hasan, B.A.****Lead Pre-School & Kindergarten (K-2) Teacher**

Sr. Heba is the Lead Teacher for our two Kindergarten (K1 & K2) classes. She has a Bachelor's degree in Classical Languages and Literature from Ain Shams University in Cairo, Egypt and majored in Greek and Latin. She is currently pursuing her Masters in Education and majoring in Early Childhood. Sr. Heba is a certified pre-school teacher from the Department of Early Education and Care. She has enjoyed working with our beautiful four-year-old children for over eight years and is presently in her fourth year of teaching at IANE. Sr Heba can be reached at [heba.hasan@yahoo.com](mailto:heba.hasan@yahoo.com).

**Sr. Souheir Mond, Assoc.Degree****Kindergarten (K-3) Teacher**

Souheir Mond grew up in Damascus, Syria. She studied French literature at Damascus University, and has Early Childhood Teacher Certification. She lived with her husband and family in Saudi Arabia for four years, Oman for two years, and in the United Arab Emirates for three years. While in the Emirates, she worked in the library at the American University of Sharjah. Mrs. Mond relocated to Massachusetts in 2002 and began working at the Islamic Academy of New England that year as a kindergarten assistant. Mrs. Mond has continued working at the IANE for the past five years and served as the primary kindergarten teacher for the past four years. Mrs. Mond celebrates the miracle of being able to watch her students grow and learn during the year they are with her. She enjoys the privilege of being able to see them read and write their first words. Mrs. Mond also has three of her own children, ages 14, 12, and 9. Sr Souheir can be reached at [souheirzon@yahoo.com](mailto:souheirzon@yahoo.com). Her husband, Br Robert Mond, was Al-Noor Academy's former Principal.

**Sr. Yasmin Hosein**

**Kindergarten (K-3) Teacher Aide**

Yasmin Hosein is a junior in the School of Education at Boston University. She is pursuing a degree in early childhood education. She worked for 2 years in a preschool program during high school, was a part time assistant in a 1st grade classroom in a Concord public elementary school, and has worked as a personal tutor and nanny for children ranging from 2 months old to 10 years old. Yasmin is excited to be back at IANE as a teacher, having attended the school for 7 years and graduating. She loved her experiences at the Academy and is extremely happy to be back in the community. She can be reached at [yazh@bu.edu](mailto:yazh@bu.edu)

**Sr. Anna Marie Dirks, B.A.****First Grade Teacher**

Sr. Anna is the first grade teacher at IANE. She grew up in Des Moines, Iowa, but has been living in Massachusetts for twelve years. She holds degrees in Electrical Engineering, Creative Writing and Women's Studies from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, MA. She is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Library and Information Science at Simmons College. When she isn't at school, Sister Anna likes to spend her free time writing. She is working on a collection of travel essays about Oman. She can be reached at [anna@chillonia.org](mailto:anna@chillonia.org).

**Sr. Sarah Boyle, B.S., B.A.****Second Grade Teacher, Lead Teacher**

Sr. Sarah is the second grade teacher at IANE. She is from Maryland, where she attended the University of Maryland, College Park. She graduated from the UMD in 2004 with a Bachelors of Science Degree in Elementary Education (with an emphasis in Mathematics) and a Bachelors of Arts Degree in Art History. She plans to continue her Masters' Degree in Massachusetts after the start of the school year. Sr. Sarah has spent the last three years teaching in the public schools in Maryland. She is certified in elementary education in Maryland and licensed in elementary education in Massachusetts. She has experience teaching second and third grades. She has the former President of the Muslim Women of Maryland (a sister organization to the MSA) and very active in the Muslim Students Association. Sr. Sarah can be reached at [saraheboyle@gmail.com](mailto:saraheboyle@gmail.com).

**Sr. Sara Awad, B.S.****Third Grade Teacher**

Sr. Sara graduated from the University of Massachusetts-Boston with an honorary degree in English Literature. While this is her first year teaching at IANE, she has had over four years of experience working with children at various educational centers and after-school programs within the Boston area. Insha'Allah, she plans to continue her studies and earn her Masters' Degree next year, as well as work towards certification. When not busy with school or work, Sr. Sara loves shopping and traveling to Lebanon. Sr. Sara can be reached at [sarsura04@yahoo.com](mailto:sarsura04@yahoo.com)

**Sr. Joan Richardson, B.S.****Fourth/Fifth Grade English and Social Studies Teacher**

Sr. Joan Richardson is the fourth grade homeroom and 4th/5th grade English and Social Studies teacher at the Islamic Academy of New England. Alhumdulillah, this is her second year teaching at the school where she is known to establish a very close rapport with not only her students, but her fellow colleagues as well. Sr. Joan has a degree from Tufts University and has four years teaching experience. She is a skillful, creative and dedicated individual who challenges and empowers students to strive for and attain high levels of achievement. She has an undeniable passion for teaching that is apparent in the innovative approaches she employs to motivate students to learn. She'll never let her students settle for less than their best. She can be reached at [joan\\_336@yahoo.com](mailto:joan_336@yahoo.com).

**Br Hani Tawfik, B.A****Fourth/ Fifth Grade Math and Science Teacher**

Br Hani has long experience teaching different grade levels. He joined the Islamic academy of New England in 1998 and taught third, fourth and fifth grade for over six years. He also taught at Boston Renaissance Charter School and The New England Center for Children. He is a very dedicated and creative teacher and enjoys teaching Math and Science. His goal is to guide students to develop the skills and knowledge necessary in becoming successful in the future. He can be reached at [hanitawfik71@hotmail.com](mailto:hanitawfik71@hotmail.com)

**Br. Zineddine Benkaci  
School Maintenance**

Br. Zineddine is another familiar face amongst the staff at IANE and ANA this year. Br. Zine has been in charge of the janitorial services at both schools for many years now. Not only have his services been invaluable in maintaining the buildings at both Mansfield and Sharon, this father of three's daily presence at the school has always been a source of comfort and joy for all the staff at the school where everyone has embraced him as part of their family and has depended on his helping hand time and time again. Alhumdulilah, Br. Zine will be continuing his service to the school again this year and we welcome him back with great warmth and joy.