

Islam Awareness

MAC | Muslim Association
of Canada

Workshops

High School:
Sharing the Muslim Salah (prayer)
Experience

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the importance of prayers (salah) in Islam.
- Understand the need for Muslims to have a safe clean space to complete their required prayers (salah).
- Understand that prayer (salah) is a requirement offered as a means of reflection, redemption and renewal
- Reflect on the actions within the Islamic prayer as an invitation to a personal reflection/meditation session, wherein spirituality and action towards oneself and others is evaluated and harnessed.

Prior Teacher Preparation:

Teachers may review the following resources to build their knowledge base:

- What is prayer: <https://yaqeeninstitute.ca/abdullah-oduro/pillar-2-what-is-prayer>
- Why do Muslim pray: <https://yaqeeninstitute.ca/abdullah-oduro/pillar-2-why-do-we-pray>
- Why does God ask people to worship Him (infographics)
<https://yaqeeninstitute.ca/infographics/why-does-god-ask-people-to-worship-him-infographic>
- Punctuality in prayer: <https://yaqeeninstitute.ca/omar-suleiman/allah-loves-punctual-prayer>
- A TDSB guide on [Islamic Heritage Month: Resource Guidebook for Educators](#)
- Find local mosques and Islamic centres <https://www.islamicfinder.org/places/>

Our approach: Experiential Learning Cycle

The model used in this document, referred to as the experiential learning cycle, comprises three necessary phases, where students:

- participate in a learning experience connected to a community;
- reflect on the experience in order to derive meaning from it;
- apply their learning to influence their decisions and actions in various aspects of their lives.

Source: [Ministry of Ontario Curriculum document: Cooperative Education Grades 11-12](#)

#1 Introduction

Activity: Myths and Misconceptions about Prayer and Islam

Ask students the following questions and ask them to jot their answers down on a cue card given to them:

- Who do Muslims pray to?
- Why do Muslims pray?
- How many prayers do Muslims have in a 24 hour period?

Some possible answers that students may give are: (we will not be taking it up):

About Prayer:

- Muslims worship the moon or a strange god
- Muslims supplicate only in Arabic
- Muslims who pray all their prayers are fundamentalist
- Women are oppressed and/or forced to do things (e.g. pray behind men)

About Islam:

- It is a violent, barbaric religion
- It oppresses women
- It is strict and/or old-fashioned

Summary of the basic FACTS:

- Muslims pray 5 times a day because it is one of the 5 pillars in Islam
- The prayer is an opportunity granted by the Creator (Allah) for reflection, redemption and renewal (accountability) of the self.
- Muslims supplicate in any language only to Allah (God) the Creator of the Universe
- The actual prayer and how it is performed has been taught to us from the Archangel Gabriel who taught the Prophet Moahmmad (peace be upon him) who then taught his followers
- Men and Women are equal in their prayers to their Creator, but occupy their own private spaces when praying.

References on the Muslim prayer:

[Teaching about Muslims in PS Classroom: The Muslim Prayer explained in brief](#) (see p. 21-23)

Islam 101- See MAC Islam Awareness Courses

#2 Participate: “Do it”

Option A:

- Educators can organize a school trip to a local mosque or an Islamic centre to see how a typical prayer is performed in a community setting. Some mosques have an ‘open door’ or ‘educational tour’ that could be booked to discuss the basic tenets of Islam and if time permits join a salah session for those who would like to experience a salah in congregation.
- Find local mosques and Islamic centres to book a school trip:
<https://www.islamicfinder.org/places/>

Option B:

Teacher could show the following short video on how Muslims prepare for prayer (wudhu) and then how they pray (salah). As a preface to introducing the wudhu and salah, teachers could include the adhan “call to prayer” which is an invitation/call to pray.

- Adhan- how it sounds in the community- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wbh-S5uq8SY> or just words and audio <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kJExzyKG4Y>
- Wudu -purification
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93kjPt6ajaA>
- Salah- 2 rakat Fajr (morning prayer)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kuk6HgOH9yQ>

#3 Reflect: “So What does this mean to me?”

Ask the students to reflect upon their 'salah' experience after attending such a session in the community or to simply reflect on some of the benefits of consistent action taken with conviction.

- Ask students to write a reflection piece, or create a vlog where they discuss their "prayer/meditation" experience and what it means to them.
- Connect the 'salah' experience with life skills shared commonly by humanity such as;
 - discipline, accountability, reflection, humility, empathy, gratitude, servitude through social activism to bring equity, justice for the vulnerable.
- Sample questions to ask:
 - What did you learn about yourself through this activity?
 - Why is (life skill) ex. discipline-(list other life skills here) important in your daily life?
 - How can the life skills learned from consistent meditation/salah help you in your future?
- Life skills with real life examples:
 - Teachers might use this opportunity to discuss the art of **discipline and routine** in each student's personal life and how it could help them "grow" in their own personal space.
 - **Accountability and taking ownership** for one's actions the 'good' and the 'bad,' using this time (prayer/meditation) to reflect on your actions and what you can do to improve yourself and the life of others
 - **Empathy and admiration** for those that take time out for themselves to "reflect" even when it is not "cool" or "popular" to do so.

#4 Apply: Challenge yourself to create space

Option A: Self-reflection and challenging oneself through new experiences.

Once students have reflected on their actions in their own personal life, they can apply these reflections to new experiences and challenge themselves to have more discipline, accountability, responsibility, and empathy in their lives.

- Apply what was learned to a similar or different situation,
- Improve on past experiences and practice by implementing these life skills.
- Sample questions about applying the experience:
 - How can you apply what you learned to a new situation?
 - How will you act differently in the future?
 - How could you apply life skills learned through this practice in the future?

Option B: Integrate with anti-Islamophobia practices in the context of Muslim students being able to pray in public schools.

Now that we have learned about the importance of prayer for a Muslim student, what can be done in our school community to accommodate those who wish to take a short time to do their prayers?

- Discuss some issues that were caused when some folks were ignorant, or had anti-Muslim hatred towards a few students taking time out to pray. Something as personal as prayer is on the attack because of Islamophobia, anti-Muslim hate, bigotry due to gendered and racist beliefs that drives them.
- Discuss what is meant by a secular space?
 - Is secular space neutral? Or does it take a position especially in the context of an individual who identifies as part of a faith community that has a short window of opportunity in which to perform a religious obligation?

Find general trends or common truths in the following news articles

- Present the following articles and video report:
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/muslim-students-praying-video-peel-1.4048991>
- And this one on provincial government stance on making accommodation:
<https://www.thestar.com/news/queenspark/2017/03/23/muslim-prayers-in-schools-get-provincial-endorsement-following-intense-meeting.html>
- Local imam threatened for supporting Friday prayers inside schools:
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/imam-ibrahim-hindy-threats-1.4075975>

Self-Evaluation: (for both options A & B)

- Reflect on strengths and weaknesses of the lesson as taught.
- Describe individual student responses to techniques used. How did they react?
- Discuss student "thinking" and ideas.
- Ask students for a brief evaluation of the activity. Include their responses.

Background reading:

Organizing a space and time for salah (prayer) has been a contentious matter within the various district school boards of Ontario. School wards with a high percentage of Muslim students and administration have faced an uphill battle just to have the opportunity to hold mandatory religious prayers that occur within school hours. Opposition for accommodation has been based on two premises; the need for secular spaces within public schools or Islamophobic fears that those who wish to pray will want shariah law or utter hate-speech in their prayers and sermons if permitted to hold prayers on school premises.

Unfortunately this notion of 'neutral secular space' disproportionately discriminates against Muslims who will miss out on a religious obligation or miss out on school to meet their religious needs. Muslim students and staff have to forego their prayers if reasonable accommodation has not been made by either allowing them to leave the classroom and congregate to pray or by not giving them a safe clean space to hold such sacred religious practices which are time sensitive.

Rational:

Teenagers who identify as Muslim might also feel disenfranchised to ask for permission to leave for prayers in a public school because of the consistent negative stereotypes by which prayer; and Islam have been depicted by Islamophobes. They may fear backlash from asking for accommodation or may fear ridicule from their peers.

As such school boards, administrators and educators who practice an anti-oppressive and anti-racist framework ought to interrupt and disrupt Islamophobia and microaggressions and also need to recognize that the absence of accommodation is, in itself, both discriminatory and aggressive-even if unintended. The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has accessible documents for reading on the *Code* and on reasonable accommodation. Cooperative education and experiential learning cycle can be used to introduce the Islamic prayer as a point of reflection/meditation in order to capture and share the simplicity and universality of the action within the school community.

References:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-39508319>

<https://www.thestar.com/news/queenspark/2017/03/23/muslim-prayers-in-schools-get-provincial-endorsement-following-intense-meeting.html>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/tempers-flare-over-prayer-in-schools-1.1104775>

Modified and adapted from: <http://www.experientiallearning.ucdavis.edu/toolbox/des-lessonplan.pdf> and Ministry of Education: The Ontario Curriculum Grades 11-12 Cooperative Education

Curriculum Connections:

| Subject/Course | Grade Level | Overall Expectations |
|---|-------------|---|
| Cooperative Education | Grade 11/12 | <p>Participate What? Students are immersed in an experience, acknowledging what they are doing, what they are thinking, and what they are feeling during the experience. Reflect So what? Students think about their experience, guided by reflective questions and prompts, and identify what they learned as a result of the experience – about themselves, other people, the world, their opportunities, or the topic of study. Apply Now what? Students describe how their learning stimulates further inquiry: how it has influenced – or may influence – their decisions, opinions, goals, and plans; and what they might do differently if they have a similar experience in future.</p> |
| Geography | Grade 9 | <p>Strand D Changing Populations: In this strand, students will analyse trends in Canada’s population and assess the implications of these trends in local, national, and global contexts. Students will have the opportunity to analyse geographic issues associated with population demographics and settlement patterns and to assess strategies that could be used to address the economic, environmental, social, and political implications of an aging and increasingly diverse population.</p> |
| History | Grade 10 | <p>Strand E: Canada, 1982 to the Present E1. Social, Economic, and Political Context: describe some key social, economic, and political events, trends, and developments in Canada from 1982 to the present, and assess their significance for different groups and communities in Canada, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities E2. Communities, Conflict, and Cooperation: analyse some significant interactions within and between various communities in Canada, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, and between Canada and the international community, from 1982 to the present, and how key issues and developments have affected these interactions E3. Identity, Citizenship, and Heritage: analyse how various significant individuals, groups, organizations, and events, both national and international, have contributed to the development of identities, citizenship, and heritage in Canada from 1982 to the present</p> |
| Dynamics of Human Relationships | Grade 11 | <p>Strand D: Rights and Responsibilities D1. Individual Rights and Responsibilities: demonstrate an understanding of the nature of individual rights and responsibilities in human interactions; D2. Rights and Responsibilities in Community Context: demonstrate an unde</p> |
| World Religions and Belief Traditions: Perspectives, Issues, and Challenges | Grade 11 | All strands |
| World Religions and Belief Traditions in Daily Life | Grade 11 | All strands |