

Imam al-Ghazali's teachings address the whole person. For example, in his book, on the *Mysteries of Purification*, regarding the purification of both the outward and the inward, he wrote that "one should know with certitude that the purification of the Heart comes through ridding the soul of its vices and reforming it with virtue, and that a person who stops at outward purification alone is like someone who wants to invite a king to his home, then busies himself with decorating its front door, while leaving the inside full of rubbish and debris."

The Project's aim is to establish from the start of the child's life, reflexive habits such as humility, patience, love, altruism, gentleness, forbearance, and respect for other faiths while providing children with real and effective tools to address such failings as selfishness, backbiting, arguing, laziness, envy, bragging, hypocrisy, greed, wasting time and pride.

## 17) Curriculum Objectives

The aim of the Ghazali Children's Project materials is to support children:

- in their ability to recognize and maintain their innate human dignity.
- in becoming aware of their True Selves and in identifying with this pure aspect of their being rather than with the lower, false, egoic and separative nature which is centered on itself [al-nafs al-ammara].
- in becoming self-observant and self-correcting.
- in realizing nobility of character through imitation of the Prophetic qualities realized by understanding, loving, and practicing the inner dimensions of all outward acts – to stop simply just "going through the motions".
- in living life with humility and in service.

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When small children are presented with truth, they recognize it; they cannot bear injustice or lying. The Ghazali educational package presents essential teachings in a simple and enjoyable way, making otherwise deep concepts accessible and easy to live and grow by. It gives parents a language through which they can discuss profound concepts with their children.

Ghazali provides a map for all ages. The materials are for children who can read, but may easily be adapted by parents and teachers for a child as young as five years of age. Ghazali's core teachings, which are presented in the stories and then reinforced by the workbooks, curricula, videos and children's website, provide a systematic way to develop noble character in an enjoyable way.

## Realization of the Objectives

The objectives of the curriculum of the Ghazali Children's Project are achieved through:

- a. Core teachings presented in stories and reinforced by workbooks, curricula, and the website ([Ghazalichildren.org](http://Ghazalichildren.org))
- b. A curriculum which encourages self-observation and correction with activities such as quiet time doing one's Heart drawings, the Virtue Box, and more.
- c. Social service built into the calendar
- d. Play-acting, through which both the unpleasantness of the bad action is better understood and the correct act practiced, is experienced as pleasurable. (e.g. not sharing then sharing, meanness then kindness). For example: Ghazali explains that a good thought must be followed through immediately before the 'whispering' suggests otherwise. Children can take turns expressing a good thought while another child whispers a counter suggestion. This fun game demonstrates clearly what goes on in peoples' minds and makes it easier to be aware of these thoughts and make the correct choice.
- e. A key project feature is based on role-modeling. The teachers, parents and students must all strive to embody what Ghazali is transmitting so that everyone is a good example for the other. In this way, not only do the students improve, but the community as a whole will be transformed. The best schools will involve the parents, teachers, students, alumni, and the community at large.

It is recommended that all parents and teachers first read straight through the children's books. In this way they can easily convey and continually reinforce the ideas to smaller children during daily life activities and simplified bedtime stories, while at the same time becoming clear as to the changes they need to make in *themselves*.

Please emphasize that this learning is a community effort. Teachers, parents and students all need to work together with the material in order to reinforce what is being taught. Children can learn from role models better than from stories. The ideal is for each parent and teacher to read through the children's books 1-6, and use every opportunity in daily life to draw attention to these teachings. A class by itself will not be enough to transform the character of a child. Collective involvement also provides a precious opportunity for the parents and teachers to observe and consciously correct themselves, thereby becoming the kind of role model/teacher which Imam al-Ghazali says we are to be. He concludes his Book of Knowledge-considered to be a summation of his entire *Revival of the Religious Sciences*, by emphasizing that we are *all* teachers.

## THEMES

Imam al-Ghazali based everything he wrote on his profound understanding of Quran and Hadith. Certain themes from al-Ghazali's **Book One** are presented repeatedly in the children's stories in order to emphasize their importance and underscore their urgency. Among them are:

- Divisions of Knowledge, their importance and Sacred Sources.
- The brevity of human life, whose true purpose is to know and worship God and prepare to meet Him.
- The Two Worlds: The fleeting enjoyment of this world and the Eternal Peace in the Abode of Permanence.
- Human dependence on God, trust in His Will.
- The polishing of the Spiritual Heart: self-observation and correction, key virtues, and harmful vices.
- The provisions and focus for life's journey, the importance of not wasting time.
- The quality of the true teacher and responsibility of the student: we are all teachers.
- Putting knowledge into practice.

In **Book Two**, the Book of Belief/Creed, Imam al-Ghazali explains the nature of God – Who and What and Where He is. This has been adapted for children. This book then goes on to talk about accountability and what happens after we die.

**Book Three**, The Mysteries of Purity, and **Book Four**, The Mysteries of Prayer, help children to love and understand the deep and beautiful levels of ablutions and prayer with a special emphasis on humility.

**Books Five** and **Book Six**, Charity and Fasting address the profound meanings of generosity, patience and the deeper interior levels of the fast.

**Book Seven** on the Hajj, provides again the sacred structure and interior personal transformative aspects underpinning the pilgrimage. (Forthcoming)