



## *Islamic Speakers Bureau Tips for Teachers #3*

### *Discussing Current Events in the Classroom Relating to Political Conflict in the Middle East or Muslim World*

- 1) Remind your students that the school is a place of safety for everyone in it, and that help and care for all students and staff is available and can be sought.
- 2) Make sure to let your students know that if they feel uncomfortable and fearful at school hours, they can voice their feelings to teachers, counselors, or other school officials.
- 3) Remember that students are both perceptive and impressionable. By promoting an atmosphere of understanding and tolerance in the classroom, you are preventing serious problems from arising.
- 4) Be supportive in words & deeds of a collective, inclusive, and positive feeling in the classroom & school. Avoid discussions that refer to “us” and “them”, especially with Muslim or Arab students.
- 5) In all verbal communication, body language and behavior be careful not to cause any student or teacher to feel separated or singled out due to their ethnic or religious background.
- 6) Remind your students that the social norm of the school does not support or allow any teasing, threats, or so-called joking about the current situation directed at any student, teacher, or school employee.
- 7) Avoid asking students of Middle Eastern or Muslim background to publicly comment on current events or suggest that they are the classroom “expert” on the current crisis or situation.
- 8) Do not expect any student, particularly those of Middle Eastern or Muslim background to openly denounce any attacks/incidents or endorse our government’s actions in order to be “acceptable” to the rest of the class. The First & Fourth Amendments uphold freedom of speech and privacy.
- 9) Remind your students that all Arabs are not Muslim and all Muslims are not Arabs. Furthermore, President Bush has said, *“We must be mindful that as we seek to win the war [on terrorism] that we treat Arab Americans and Muslims with the respect they deserve. I know that is your attitude as well; it’s certainly the attitude of this government, that we should not hold one who is Muslim responsible for any act of terror.”*
- 10) Remind your students that only the perpetrators are responsible for their actions; no religion condones violence against innocent people. John Ashcroft, U.S. Attorney General said, *“We must not descend to the level of those who perpetrated Tuesday’s [September 11th] violence by targeting individuals based on their race, their religion, or their national origin. Such reports of violence and threats are in direct opposition to the very principles and laws of the United States and will not be tolerated.”*
- 11) Provide public discussion about religious/ethnic beliefs and practices and how they differ from those who misuse them to support terrorist activity.
- 12) When discussing terrorism make sure to allow for comparative discussions on various types of terrorists: Timothy McVeigh, militia or white supremacist groups, & anti-abortion extremists in the U.S. Discuss the role of the media in its focus on certain groups, double standards, and lack of diverse views.
- 13) Provide public and repeated vocal support and respect for all human life.
- 14) Remind students about the principles of justice and equality that our country was founded on and the importance of recognizing the rights of all Americans, irrespective of their race, religion, or national background.