



## Important Dates

- Feb 11<sup>th</sup>** Annual Blessing Bag Drive  
**Feb 18<sup>th</sup>** Presidents' Day Weekend  
(no class)  
**Mar 4<sup>th</sup>** Calligraphy Workshop

## Du'a of the Month

↓  
For Afiyah

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ الْعَافِيَةَ

Allahumma inni As'aluka Al-Afiyah

O ALLAH! I ask you for Afiyah  
(saved from any afflictions)!

Assalamu Alaikum SBIAIS community,

If you are interested in contributing to the SBIAIS Newsletter, please contact: [sbiaisnewsletter@sbia.info](mailto:sbiaisnewsletter@sbia.info)

## Suffa or SBIAIS

Simrah Alam and Minaal Mekarim

Since 2015, the Islamic weekend school has been called Suffa. However, this year the name was changed to South Bay Islamic Association Islamic School, or SBIAIS. A recent debate at our school is whether SBIAIS or Suffa is a more suitable name for our community's place of learning.

Some community members like the new name because "SBIAIS makes the school feel more connected and a part of the masjid," as said by Nuha Khan, president of the SBIA Youth Committee and a former student. The intention behind the name change was to closely tie the school to the SBIA mosque. This ensures the school remains affiliated with SBIA. One community member says, "The school name was changed because it was becoming a separate identity from SBIA and that had never been our intent. At its inception, Suffa was an SBIA initiative...The name change was done to avoid two separate brands and identities diverging". After all the school sprouted from the SBIA mosque and community.

Suffa refers to the place where companions of the Prophet ﷺ who migrated to Madinah, known as Aṣḥab al-Ṣuffah (Companions of the Suffa), stayed and studied the religion of Islam. It was located inside Masjid Al-Nabawi and this is where some of the most prominent Companions of the Prophet ﷺ were educated, as explained by Imam Tahir Anwar.

7th Grade Qur'anic Studies teacher Tariq Afzal also tells us "This was a safe place for newly converts to practice their new religion in good company. This was also the first Islamic academy for regular learning of Islam. [Also,] residents of this small place wanted to stay [in] close proximity to the beloved Prophet ﷺ." He adds, "I believe these goals are still [the] utmost desirable in the environment that we live in...Just by having the same name of our institute we feel related to Aṣḥab al-Ṣuffah and pray that we be raised



*continued on next page . . .*

## Teacher Spotlights:

**Teacher  
Samia Nadeem**

by Safa Mekarim



Teacher Samia has been teaching at SBIAIS since the start of the program, when it was called Suffa. "I wanted to do something positive for my community and since I am a preschool teacher already this was right up my alley," she said. Her favorite part about the SBIAIS community is the support and encouragement we all give one another. We are so lucky to have such an amazing community here at SBIAIS, Alhamdulillah!

Teacher Samia grew up in Pakistan, getting her education in Karachi. Her Islamic education came from family members, including her parents and grandparents, "[who] showed and taught me how to be honest in every relationship and try my best in everything I do."

When asked about a message to give to our SBIAIS students, Teacher Samia has some uplifting and motivating words of wisdom. She said, "Never underestimate your abilities. You never know when you will surprise people around you with something really amazing" and that one should always "believe in yourself and always give it your best, you will never be disappointed." What inspirational advice! We are blessed to have Teacher Samia as a part of our SBIAIS community and hope to apply the lessons she has taught us all in our everyday lives, InshAllah.

## Rapid-Fire Q&A With Teacher Samia:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Favorite colors?</b><br>Dark blue, yellow, & white                  | <b>Favorite sports?</b><br>Tennis, squash, badminton, & soccer                   |
| <b>Tea or coffee?</b><br>Tea   | <b>Where do you want to visit?</b><br>I want to take a train ride through Europe |
| <b>What are some of your hobbies?</b><br>Baking, teaching, & gardening |  |



*Suffa or SBIAIS continued . . .*

among their company [on] the Day of Judgement.” Imam Tahir says, “We chose to name our school with this honorable name when we began at this location.”

Many find it easier to pronounce Suffa since it is what they are familiar with. SBIAIS, on the other hand, can be difficult to pronounce and could be easily mixed up. Current Youth student Mehrish Khayam mentions how “Suffa is a better option because it [is] memorable and has history behind it. It is also easier to pronounce and people recognize that organization.” Nuha Khan says, “Personally, as a former student, Suffa is always what I refer to on the Saturdays that I spend teaching at SBIA”. Another member of our community says, “I do prefer the old [name] because that's the name I'm used to ever since Suffa opened and when I was a student as well.” Community members still find themselves referring to the school with its previous name since they have spent many years making memories every Saturday at the school known as Suffa.

While SBIAIS does closely tie the school back to its originating mosque, a portion of our community collectively agrees that the name should be returned to Suffa because it has deep roots in our religion. Our community is tight-knit and faithful, so the name of our school should reflect this. Should the name be reverted? Should we move forward with the new? Or is there another option? What are your thoughts on this topic?

## ChatGPT

by Aliza Qureshi



ChatGPT is a free artificial intelligence (AI) chatBot released in November 2022, that is used to generate human-like responses to virtually any question. It can explain quantum mechanics in simple terms to ideas for a teen birthday party, and even write a sonnet. ChatGPT was created by a non-profit company, OpenAI. The technology behind ChatGPT is an area of AI called Reinforcement Learning from Human Feedback (RLHF).

After using ChatGPT, I realized what a valuable resource it is, since it can answer all of my questions, even the ones about Islam. I asked it for different duas, stories of the prophets, and meanings of surahs. It makes a very efficient and simple virtual assistant, and provides easy-to-understand answers in a pleasant conversational tone. The ease of use of this chatBot was quickly recognized by the public as one million users registered within the first week of its launch.

However, it is imperative that ChatGPT output must be verified with the help of other trusted websites, search engines such as Google Search or Microsoft Bing, and other established sources on the subject. It has been noticed by users that sometimes while ChatGPT's answers seem plausible, they may contain misinformation.

If you are interested in using ChatGPT, it is available as an extension on Chrome.

*Teachers Spotlight continued . . .*

## Teacher Sehr Qazi

by Safa Mekarim



We are blessed to have Teacher Sehr teaching at SBIAIS from the beginning, alongside Teacher Samia. Teacher Sehr loves interacting with her kindergartners and meeting people at SBIA from different countries and learning about their cultures.

Growing up in Peshawar, Pakistan, Teacher Sehr went to Pakistan Air Force High School, then went on to earn a degree in law from the University of Peshawar. When asked who her role model is, Teacher Sehr replied, “My mom, she is the strongest person I know,” having raised her and her siblings alone after Teacher Sehr's father passed away. Citing her family as her biggest influence, Teacher Sehr considers herself blessed to have received Islamic education through them, including growing up with an Islamic scholar in her family.

The best advice she has ever received is “to live each day to the fullest and to fight for what you believe in and never give up!” These are truly words to live by!

Her message to all of us, SBIAIS students, is to “be kind, honest, work hard, believe in yourself and be proud of who you are.” Thank you for these guiding principles, Teacher Sehr, we hope to absorb all the great advice you and the rest of SBIAIS teachers share with us, InshAllah.

## Rapid-Fire Q&A With Teacher Sehr:

### **Favorite book?**

Little Women

### **Favorite movie?**

The Legend of Maula Jatt

### **Tea or coffee?**

My Sheer chai

### **Sleeping in or early bird?**

Sleeping in for sure

### **What are some of your hobbies?**

Shopping, movies, decorating and collecting teapots, and nature hikes.

*We want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to  
Teacher Samia and Teacher Sehr for  
participating in our teacher spotlight!*