

STRIVING FOR WHOLENESS IN EDUCATION:
PERSPECTIVES FROM ACCREDITED ISLAMIC SCHOOLS
IN THE UNITED STATES

by
Isra Brifkani

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Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Rick Vanosdall, Chair

Dr. Nancy Caukin

Dr. Ossama Bahloul

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Dedicated to
My Beloved Mother and Father

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative grounded theory study presents evidence-based perspectives from accredited Islamic schools in the United States. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a randomized purposeful sample of principals from accredited Islamic schools ($n = 20$ principals) stratified across four regions of the United States (Northeast, South, Midwest, and West). Additionally, document analyses of a randomized sample of accredited Islamic school mission and vision statements ($n = 50$ schools) was completed. This study explored wholeness in education, its representations in Islamic educational thought, and how wholeness in education is addressed in accredited Islamic schools in the United States. The research questions addressed the educational beliefs, practices, challenges, and aspirations from the perspectives of accredited Islamic schools in the United States. An extensive review of literature indicated that the Islamic worldview of education is holistic in nature and aims to nurture students as whole beings. The research findings suggest that accredited Islamic schools in the United States strive for wholeness in education, but may not be unified in their understanding of the components and implementation of this wholeness. Furthermore, academic excellence and spiritual education are two areas of high importance for accredited Islamic schools. The principals in this study expressed the need and importance of a shared vision for Islamic schools and for more collaboration to occur among these schools. Overwhelming evidence from the data indicates that Islamic schools in the United States strive to nurture their students to contribute positively to the community at large as American Muslim citizens. Islamic schools in the United States continue to face challenges, such as financial stability and negative perceptions. The interviewed principals were optimistic about the growth of

Islamic schools and the positive contributions that these schools can make to the United States and the world.

Keywords: Islamic schools in the United States, holistic education, wholeness in education, Islamic school principals, whole child education, Islamic education, Islamic school mission and vision statements

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Preface

Around the world, whether by candlelight or in modern and technologically equipped classrooms, learning experiences occur as children continually grasp information from their environment. The question is not whether learning experiences occur or don't occur, but rather the type of learning experiences that occur, for what purpose and vision, what realms are nurtured or neglected, and whether the learning experiences are transformative in nature. Furthermore, just because there are experiences in education, these experiences aren't necessarily educative, and to the contrary, can be un-educative (Dewey, 1938, p. 25). Thus, not all educational experiences are equal, and for experiences to be educative, they have to develop students from within, promote positive growth, and awaken curiosity, drive, initiative, and purpose in children (Dewey, 1938). Beyond the presentation of a Deweyian philosophical underpinning, it is interesting and perhaps compelling to note the Latin roots of the English word *education*. In the English lexicon, the term *education* is rooted in the Latin words *educere*, to lead out, and *educare*, to train or mold (Bass & Good, 2004). The two root words seem antithetical to each other, with *educere* aiming to bring forth and nurture the innate in individuals, while *educare* aims to mold the individual.

Many children spend large portions of their childhood in formal school settings, and within that time period, they are exposed to an array of explicit and implicit learning experiences and messages (Eisner, 1994). The explicit messages are the publicly communicated goals and objectives of the planned curriculum. The implicit messages

are the subtle yet consistent messages that are transmitted through the curriculum and the interactions beyond the explicit curriculum that take place in school. The implicit curriculum and associated learning experiences “socialize children to a set of expectations that some argue are profoundly more powerful and longer lasting than what is intentionally taught or what the explicit curriculum of the school publicly provides” (Eisner, 1994, p. 88). Also, Eisner (1994) explicates his concern about what isn’t taught or nurtured in schools, or the null curriculum. This is considered as important as what is taught in schools, as it communicates implicitly to children what is and what is not important (Eisner, 1994).

Teaching and learning involve complex considerations. The complexity expands in systems of education with large numbers of students, as exist in the United States. The National Center for Education Statistics estimates that in 2017, the number of students in the United States in all levels of elementary and secondary education will reach 55.6 million. Of those, they estimate that that 5.1 million will attend private schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). Examining these numbers, one can begin to understand the sheer magnitude of the complexity of our education system. Understanding this complexity helps us navigate the adequacies, inadequacies, and proposed remedial routes.

Over the years, policies and reform initiatives like the *No Child Left Behind Act* (2002) have been implemented with intentions designed to resolve educational dilemmas, but have for the most part been unable to yield the desired results (Ravitch, 2010). The approach to educational reform in the last several decades has been positivistic in nature, addressing the *educare* in education, and aimed at delivering standardized solutions to an

increasingly diverse population of students. These standardized attempts to solve problems in our complex education system have required uniformity. But the fact of the matter is that children are not uniform, and many different variables are not uniform across different schools, including the context, resources, teachers, and community engagement (Eisner, 1994 p. 14). Diane Ravitch (2010) shares her learning journey as an educational historian, and her concerns and lessons learned over the years regarding the current trends in education that place a heavy emphasis on quantitative measures, standardized test scores, and using standardized measures for accountability and educational improvement. She states:

If we want to improve education, we must first of all have a vision of what good education is. We should have goals that are worth striving for. Everyone involved in educating children should ask themselves why educate. What is a well-educated person? What knowledge is of most worth? What do we hope for when we send our children to school? What do we want them to learn and accomplish by the time they graduate from school (p. 230)?

As detailed in chapter two of this dissertation, there isn't one agreed-upon vision or purpose for education. Rather, there are visions with aims and goals that often differ from one another. Questions emerge, including: 1) who decides which vision, goal, or aim is important and which is not?, and 2) which realms of development should be nurtured and which ones neglected? Seldom do we explore beyond what is taught to students explicitly, and examine what students are taught implicitly, and what isn't taught to children in our education system today. There is an increased awareness that the narrow focus on academics that has been shaping many of our educational reform

initiatives has left a negative impact on the lives of students. This has led to many discussions calling for the revival of wholeness in education, and an education system that addresses the needs of the whole student, including: academic, spiritual, social, emotional, and physical needs and development (Dewey, 1938; Ravitch, 2010; Eisner, 1994; Al-Zeera, 2001; Olson, 2009; Miller, J., 2010; ASCD Whole Child Initiative, 2017).

The United States is a diverse country with varied cultural traditions, religious beliefs, and practices. It is worthwhile to examine different communities and their beliefs and views regarding the purpose of education and education reform. One of these communities is the Muslim community within the United States. This dissertation examines educational beliefs, practices, challenges, aspirations, and wholeness in education from the perspective of accredited Islamic schools in communities across the United States.

Background

Statistics collected in 2015 by the Pew Research Center indicate that there were an estimated 1.8 billion Muslims around the globe, which equates to roughly 24% of the world's population. Additionally, Muslims are reported to be the world's fastest growing religious group (Lipka, 2017). Only 20% of the world's Muslim population resides in the Middle East, while the majority of Muslims (62%) live in the Asia-Pacific regions, such as Indonesia (Lipka, 2017). With regard to the demographics of Muslims in the United States, statistics indicate that there are an estimated 3.3 million Muslims, relatively 1% of the U.S. population (Mohamed, 2016). The statistics predict growth in the number of Muslims in the United States, and report that they will make up 2.1% of the United

States' population by the year 2050. In the United States, people of the Muslim faith are reported to be the youngest faith community, with one third of the population being less than 30 years old (Mogahed & Chouhoud, 2017). People of the Muslim faith are believed to be a minority that is susceptible to prejudice and religious discrimination. Based on the ISPU's 2017 report (Mogahed & Chouhoud), 42% of Muslims report that their children have been subjected to bullying in school. As the Muslim population in the United States is continuously growing, there is an increasing demand for Islamic schools. New Islamic schools are being established every year, especially in states with large Muslim populations, such as California, New York, Michigan, Texas, New Jersey, Illinois, and Florida (Senzai, 2007).

According to the Islamic School League of America (ISLA), there are an estimated 286 Islamic schools in the United States (ISLA, 2016). The researcher found that of the 286 Islamic schools, 100 were accredited by regional accrediting bodies. Keyworth (2009) states that seeking accreditation in Islamic schools is a "swiftly developing trend" (p. 32). The oldest Islamic schools in the United States, known as Clara Muhammad schools, emerged from the African American community that diverged from the Nation of Islam movement (Haddad & Smith, 2009; Rashid & Muhammad 1993). In the 1960s, waves of people of the Muslim faith started to immigrate to the United States, and gradually the Muslim community in the United States decided to open Islamic schools that addressed the needs of their children. It is believed that one of the first non-Clara Muhammad Islamic schools in the United States was established in 1977, and is still in existence today. Most Islamic schools are newer institutions, and like 80% of the other non-profit schools in the United States, most have 300 or fewer students

(Keyworth, 2009, p. 27; National Center of the Study of Privatization in Education, 2006, p. 2). The number of Islamic schools in the United States continues to rise, with more schools earning accreditation, education conferences being offered, and an expansion of overall organizational efforts.

Rationale

The literature reviewed in chapter two indicates that the Islamic worldview of education is holistic in nature, promotes wholeness, and aims to nurture the student as a whole being (Al-Attas, 1979; Hassan, et al., 2010; Al-Zeera, 2001; Tauhidi, 2007; Yasin & Jani, 2013; Cook, 1999 & 2010; Nasr, 1987; Ravat, 2001; Siddiqui, 2012; Hatina, 2006; Abdul-Mabud, 2001; Dangor, 2005). The definition of wholeness in this context implies that education from the Islamic perspective is a process that aims for the balanced development of the total person (Al-Attas, 1979). It is a process that aims to nurture all of the aspects of an individual's life, including spiritual, rational, and social dimensions (Cook, 2010). Nasr (1987) states that, "The Islamic educational system never divorced the training of the mind from that of the soul and the whole being of the person" (p. 123). Holiness being related to wholeness, the Islamic worldview of education concerns itself with the whole beings of the people it aims to educate (p. 123).

Within the literature on Islamic education, there are repeated references to three Arabic terms: *tarbiyah*, *talim*, and *tadib* (Cook, 1999 & 2010; Yasin & Jani, 2013; Hassan et al., 2010; Douglas & Shaikh, 2010; Nasr, 1987; Memon, 2013; Yaljin, 1976; Sahin, 2013; Waghid, 2011). *Tarbiya* refers to nurturing of the child (Cook, B., 2010, p. xxvi), training the whole student (Nasr, 1987, p. 123), a process of physical and emotional growth (Yasin & Jani, 2013), nurturing and upbringing of the whole child from

all dimensions—spiritually, physically, mentally, morally, and humanistically (Yaljin, 1976), compared to the Latin word *educere*, which means to bring out (Memon, 2013), the processes that constitute the upbringing, and that include the physical and spiritual (Sahin, 2013, p. 182), rearing and nurturing of a child (Waghid, 2011, p. 2), a process that nurtures the innate in the child to grow and develop to its potential (Tauhidi, 2007), nourishing-increasing-caring (Ravat, 2011), wholeness derived from the divine that is balanced, integrative, flexible, and aims to benefit humanity (Al-Nihlawi, 1999, p. 125). It can be inferred that the essence of *tarbiyah* refers to nurturing the child holistically in all realms of development. Interestingly, the term *tarbiyah* has been used quite frequently and liberally in the Muslim world, as many ministries of education are called the ministries of *tarbiyah* and *talim* (Wazart Al Tarbiyah Wal Talim), with *talim* referring to formal instruction. However, Yasin and Jani (2013) indicate that Muslim societies are “far from properly integrating this definition into the curriculum development and syllabus for different levels of education.” Some of the literature (Yaljin, 1976) refers to *tarbiyah* as the all-encompassing process of development that includes *talim* and *tadib*.

Talim stems from the Arabic root word *ilm*, which translates as knowledge (Cook, 2010, p. xxvi). It is a process of teaching and instruction (Cook, 2010, p. xxvi; Memon, 2013; Sahin, 2013, p. 182; Waghid, 2011, p. 2), cognitive development and dissemination of knowledge through instruction (Yasin & Jani, 2013), and a more deductive learning process to gain the tools necessary for the real purpose of education (Tauhidi, 2007, p. 10). *Tadib* refers to the “social dimensions of a person’s development of sound behavior” (Cook, 2010, p. xxvi). Al-Attas describes *adab* as the disciplining of the mind, body, and soul. Furthermore, it is the reflection of wisdom and the process of putting

knowledge to good use in society (Al-Attas, 1979). He states that *adab* is being aware of one's potentials and capacities intellectually, physically, and emotionally. Other literature sources define *adab* as goodness in action (Waghid, 2011, p. 2), moral discipline (Sahin, 2013, p. 182), the social aspects associated with sound behavior (Cook, 2010, p. xxvi), the inculcation of good moral and ethical behavior (Yasin & Jani, 2013, p. 52), and the process of cultivating comportment (Memon, 2013, p. 77).

Literature on the Islamic worldview of education frequently discusses the knowledge production that stemmed from Muslim civilization, especially the era that is referred to as the Golden Age of Islam, between the eighth and thirteenth centuries. Many of the literature sources that discuss Islamic education and the history of Islamic education also present the notion of the decline of the scope and scale of knowledge production in current Muslim communities compared to the periods when Muslims were at the forefront of knowledge production (Al-Zeera, 2001; Cook, 2010; Yasin & Jani, 2013; Hilgendorf, 2003; Dangor, 2005; Yaljin, 1976; Abusulayman, 2007; Ashraf & Husain, 1979; Al-Attas, 1979). The literature sources attribute the decline to both internal and external forces (Hilgendorf, 2003). Abusulayman (2007) states that the Muslim world is afflicted with the notion of "duplication and imitation" (p. 4). He argues that there is a high degree of educational programs and practices being imitated without consideration for the needs of the Muslim community. Al-Zeera (2001) makes a similar argument: "The education system in Muslim societies is imported and imposed from outside" (p. 55). She argues that these imported educational systems do not take into account the needs of the whole personalities of Muslim students, especially the spiritual needs.

Preliminary questions emerge, such as: 1) Are Islamic schools in the United States addressing this disconnectedness in education? 2) Are they aiming to nurture whole Muslim students based on the Islamic worldview of education? 3) What is the current state of Islamic schools in the United States with regard to educational beliefs, practices, challenges, and aspirations for the future, and addressing the needs of the whole student?

In the course of an extensive review of the available literature, the researcher found only limited and small scale published qualitative research articles and dissertations regarding Islamic education in the United States, and observed a gap in research studies that addressed wholeness in education in Islamic schools in the United States. Therefore, this research with 20 participants from accredited Islamic schools in the United States, 20% of the accredited Islamic school principals, and the analysis of 50 accredited school mission and vision statements, which is 50% of the accredited Islamic schools in the United States, reduces this gap in literature on Islamic education, and between Islamic literature and the literature in holistic education.

Research Question and Sub-questions

The following research question and sub-questions guided this study:

1. What are the educational beliefs and practices espoused by accredited Islamic schools in the United States?
 - a. What are the common themes communicated by principals of accredited Islamic schools in the United States regarding the purpose of education and Islamic schooling?

- b. How are the educational beliefs and practices shared by principals and revealed in mission and vision statements of accredited Islamic schools indicative of educational experiences that address the academic, spiritual, social, emotional, and physical needs of students?
- c. What do principals of accredited Islamic schools identify as some of the common challenges that Islamic schools in the United States currently face?
- d. What do principals of accredited Islamic schools envision for the future of Islamic schooling in the United States?

Nature and Methods of the Study

This qualitative grounded theory dissertation presents evidence-based perspectives from 20 principals of accredited Islamic schools in the United States, and analysis of the mission and vision statements from 50 accredited Islamic schools. The perspectives from the principals and the school documents provide insights regarding the current state of accredited Islamic schools in the United States pertaining to educational beliefs, practices, challenges, and aspirations for the future. The study also explored the notion of wholeness in education and presents a review and analysis of literature regarding the holistic nature of the Islamic worldview of education, as well as examining notions of wholeness in the interviews of principals and in school mission and vision statements.

The data was collected via semi-structured telephone interviews with a randomized purposeful sample of 20 principals (20% of the accredited Islamic school population) from accredited Islamic schools across all four regions of the United States

(Northeast, South, Midwest, and West). Additional data was collected from the published mission and vision statements based on a randomized purposeful sample of 50 regionally accredited full time Islamic schools in the United States (50% of the accredited Islamic school population). The qualitative interview data was approached from a grounded theory viewpoint, and coded according to Creswell's (2013) constant comparative analysis and Saldana's (2013) method of codes with emergent categories and themes.

Qualitative researchers position their research within different qualitative research paradigms and methodologies based on the nature of the inquiries being researched, the level of rigor, their stance, and the implications for the research findings. For this qualitative research inquiry, the grounded theory methodology (Patton, 2015) was followed to ensure that the findings and inferences are grounded in data. Grounded theory emphasizes the iterative nature of qualitative research, using comparative methods, simultaneous data collection and analysis, theoretical sampling, inductive analysis, and basing the theory construction on data (Patton, 2015, p. 111).

Researcher Positionality

As the instrument of data collection and analysis, the qualitative inquirer's credibility and authenticity play a major role in ensuring that perspectives, voices, and stories are reported accurately and interpreted authentically. The researcher's stance as an emic or insider is based on the lived experiences of a practicing Muslim person living in the United States, and as a Kurdish immigrant from Iraq who attended schools in Iraq and public schools in the United States. The emic perspective involves the researcher's active involvement with Nashville International Academy, an accredited Islamic whole

child school. The researcher is also connected with the Islamic school community through the Islamic School League of America (ISLA). Since the literature review entailed Arabic texts and terminology, it is noteworthy to mention that the researcher is fluent in Kurdish and Arabic in addition to the English language. The researcher is conscious of her reflexivity in this qualitative inquiry. Patton (2015) affirms that “Reflexivity reminds the qualitative inquirer to be attentive to and conscious of the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and economic origins of one’s own perspective and voice as well as the perspective and voices of those one interviews and those to whom one reports” (p. 604).

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review explores and describes the nature of the Islamic worldview of education, and frames it within the context of Islamic schools in the United States. The philosophical underpinnings of the research questions called for an extensive and expansive exploration of literature in the areas of Muslims around the world and in the United States, and the Islamic worldview of education in the context of Islamic schools in the United States. Also, an analysis of the philosophical foundations of the modern education system is presented, as well as notions of holistic education.

The literature review begins with the most recent research and statistics on the Muslim population around the world and in the United States. This information helps to clarify misconceptions and provides better understanding regarding the research population. Next, an extensive and thorough review of literature is presented on the Islamic worldview of education, and connections are made between the varieties of literature sources. Third, the researcher exhausted the literature on Islamic schools in the United States and discovered that for some aspects, such as determining the number of accredited Islamic schools in the United States, information was not available. Thus, the researcher took further steps to make this a part of the research methodology. Since Islamic schools exist within the framework of education in the United States, the visions and philosophies of the modern education were explored and presented. This gives the reader a glimpse of the varied goals and visions in our modern education system. Since

there is a consistent theme in the literature regarding the holistic nature of the Islamic worldview of education, an overview of holistic education is presented.

Muslims around the World and in the United States

Since this dissertation sheds light on Islamic education in terms of theory and practice, especially as it pertains to Islamic education and schooling in the United States, the researcher presents some background information regarding Muslims in general, and American Muslims in particular. The researcher utilized the most current research findings from the Pew Research Center (2017) and The Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (2017) to present demographics, religious beliefs and practices, identity, community, and challenges and concerns of Muslims in general and American Muslims in particular. The publication titled *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think* (Esposito & Mogahed, 2007), which is based on the largest Gallup poll on Muslims, was also utilized to present some of the key themes and findings regarding the Muslim population.

Statistics collected in 2015 by the Pew Research Center indicate that there were an estimated 1.8 billion Muslims around the globe, which equated to roughly 24% of the world's population. Additionally, Muslims are reported to be the world's fastest growing religious group (Lipka, 2017). Only 20% of the world's Muslim population resides in the Middle East. The majority of Muslims (62%) live in the Asia-Pacific regions, such as Indonesia (Lipka, 2017). As for the demographics of Muslims in the United States, statistics from the Pew Research Center indicated that there are an estimated 3.3 million Muslims, relatively 1% of the U.S. population (Mohamed, 2016). The predictions from the above sources indicate that Muslims will make up 2.1% of the United States'

population by the year 2050. The Institute for Social Policy and Understanding's (ISPU) report titled "American Muslim Poll 2017: Muslims at the Crossroads" (Mogahed & Chouhoud, 2017) observes that when compared to other faith communities, American Muslims are the most racially and ethnically diverse group. Also, 50% of American Muslims are born in the United States, while the rest are immigrants. In terms of educational attainment, Muslims, Protestants, and Catholic adherents' educational levels are similar, but within the Muslim American community, women are more likely than Muslim men to attain higher educational levels.

Religious Beliefs and Practices. Islam is considered to be the fastest growing religion in the world. Estimates indicate that it will be the majority world religion with the most adherents by the year 2060 (Lipka, 2017). This growth is believed to be related to demographics and the younger Muslim population. In the United States, Muslims are reported to be the youngest faith community, with one third of the population being less than 30 years old (Mogahed & Chouhoud, 2017). In terms of religious denomination, 85% of Muslims are Sunni and 15% Shia (Esposito & Mogahed, 2007). The way Muslims practice their faith differs across the world, as cultural practices are embedded in and intertwined with religious practices. Therefore, cultural practices may be interpreted and perceived as religious practices. In terms of religion and faith, Muslims view their religion as an important part of their life; many regard it as "a spiritual mental map that offers a sense of meaning, guidance, and hope" (Esposito & Mogahed, 2007, pp. 5-6).

Perception of Muslims in the United States. In 2016, the Pew Research Center asked Americans to rate adherents from nine religious groups from 0 to 100—0 for

feeling the coldest towards that group, and 100 feeling the warmest and most positive towards that specific religious group. In the survey, Muslims were rated the lowest amongst the nine religious groups at 48% warmness—an increase from 2014, which was 40% (Pew Research Center, 2017). See Figure 1.

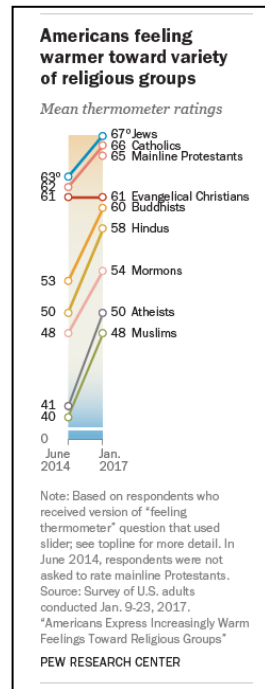


Figure 1. Perception of Muslims in the United States

Muslims are believed to be a minority that is susceptible to prejudice and religious discrimination. Based on the Institute of Social Policy and Understanding's 2017 report (Mogahed & Chouhoud), 42% of Muslims reported that their children have been subjected to bullying in school because of their faith, and in one of every four cases of bullying, a teacher was involved in the bullying. In addition, the same report conveyed that Muslims were 60% more likely to report discrimination based on their faith. This illustrates a need for engagement and understanding among the majority and minority communities within the United States.

Islamic Worldview of Education

In this section of the literature review, the researcher aims to present a synthesis of literature that addresses the notions and dimensions of the Islamic worldview of education. The researcher found a scarcity of literature sources that present the Islamic worldview of education. Since this is repeatedly a driving force behind the establishment of Islamic schools, the author expanded her research beyond academic databases and did an extensive search of other available literature, including articles, recent and older books, and books and articles in both English and Arabic. Some of the sources provided valuable and useful information, while others lacked substance. Some of the main sources of literature included the *Quran* (the Muslim's holy book), authentic *Hadeeth* (traditions of prophet Muhammad), Zahra Al-Zeera's 2001 book titled *Wholeness and Holiness in Education: An Islamic Perspective, Classical Foundations of Islamic Educational Thought* by B. Cook (2010), *Revitalizing Higher Education in the Muslim World* by A. Abusulayman (2007), *Crisis in Muslim Education* by S. Ahsraf (1979), *Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education* by S. Al-Attas (1979), *Traditional Islam in the Modern World* by S. Nasr (1987), *Conceptions of Islamic Education* by Y. Waghid (2011), D. Tauhidi's 2007 *Tarbiya Project*, E. Harder's 2006 book titled *Concentric Circles: Nurturing Awe and Wonder in Early Learning*, A. Tibawi's 1972 book titled *Islamic Education*, Sahin's 2013 book titled *New Directions in Islamic Education*, and S. Alvi's 1988 book titled *Muslim Educational Thought in the Middle Ages*. Sources authored in Arabic that the researcher found to be great pieces of literature included M. Yaljin's 1976 book titled *Khasais al-Tarbiya al Islamiya wa mumayizatan al Assasiyah* (translated: characteristics of Islamic Education and its main features) and A. Nihlawi's

1999 book titled *Osool Al Tarbiyah Al Silamiya* (translated: Principles of Islamic Education). Also, the researcher did an extensive search and review in library databases for academic articles that address Islamic components of Islamic education.

Religious Contexts of Islamic education. When reviewing literature on Islamic education, one sees a consistent reference to the *Quran*, the Muslim's holy book, and the *Hadeeth*, the tradition of prophet Muhammad, as central reference points regarding the essence of the pursuit of knowledge and education (Al-Attas, 1979; Alvi, 1988; Al-Zeera, 2001; Sidiqqi, 2012; Cook, 2010; Yasin & Jani, 2013; Hassan et al., 2010; Douglas & Shaikh, 2010; Hilgendorf, 2003). Within the *Quran*, there are hundreds of references to the importance of knowledge and the exaltation of the learned and scholars (Cook, 2010, p. x). Muslims believe that the first word that was revealed in *Quran* to Prophet Muhammad was "read," which is part of the longer verse "Read! In the name of the Lord who created, created man out of a mere clot, Read! And your Lord is the most bountiful, who taught by the pen, taught man which he knew not." (Quran, Chapter 97, 1-5). Other examples from the *Quran* that exemplify knowledge and learning include, "God will exalt those of you who believe and those who have knowledge to high degrees" (Quran, Chapter 58:11) and "Oh my Lord! Increase me in knowledge" (Quran, Chapter 20:114). In addition to the *Quran*, Muslims adhere to the authentic tradition of Prophet Muhammad, which is referred to as the *Hadeeth*. As with the *Quran*, the *Hadeeth* also has many references to the reverence of knowledge, such as the following *Hadeeth* that many Muslims are familiar with: "Seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim man and woman." Other examples include, "He who leaves his home in search of knowledge walks in the path of God," "A father can confer on his children nothing more

valuable than the gift of education; it is better that a man should secure a good education for his children than he should leave a treasure of gold and silver.”

In their article on Islamic education, Douglas and Shaikh (2004) indicate that seeking knowledge is the first duty of Muslim females and males, as inspired by the scripture. Therefore, knowledge, or *ilm* in Arabic, is seen as a form of worship, since it is ordained by God (Al-Zeera, 2001, p. 43), and a source of nearness to God (Hilgendorf, 2003). Also, in the Islamic worldview, there is no knowledge acquisition for the sake of knowledge only (Hassan et al., 2010), but for higher purpose, and in order to become more connected to the transcendent reality. Thus, “acquiring knowledge in Islam is not meant as an end unto itself, but only as a means to stimulate a more elevated moral and spiritual consciousness leading and righteous action” (Cook, B. 2010, p. xxviii). In the Islamic worldview, seeking knowledge is important since it is essential for balanced growth and development (Hassan et al., 2010). Ashraf and Husain (1979) state that the purpose of knowledge acquisition from an Islamic worldview is “not merely to satisfy an intellectual curiosity or just for material and world gains, but to produce rational and righteous human beings, who are able to meet the spiritual, moral, and physical needs of their families, their people and mankind.” Al-Ghazali, regarded as one of the most prominent Muslim thinkers of all time, emphasized that in seeking knowledge, the criteria should be based on the usefulness of the knowledge in the attainment of ultimate happiness (Al-Zeera, 2001, p. 77). Al-Ghazali has also stated that “Knowledge exists potentially in the human soul like a seed in the soil; by learning the potential becomes the actual” (Tibawi, 1972, p. 40).

Tarbiyah, Talim, and Tadib. When reviewing literature on Islamic education, there is repeated reference to three Arabic terms: *tarbiyah*, *talim*, and *tadib* (Cook, 1999 & 2010; Yasin & Jani, 2013; Hassan et al. 2010; Douglas & Shaikh, 2010; Nasr, 1987; Memon, 2013; Yaljin, 1976; Sahin, 2013; Waghid, 2011).

As for *tarbiyah*, there is not a single and uniform definition in the literature sources, but variations of interpretations embody the same essence. *Tarbiya* refers to nurturing of the child (Cook, B., 2010, p. xxvi), training the whole student (Nasr, 1987, p. 123), a process of physical and emotional growth (Yasin & Jani, 2013), nurturing and upbringing of the whole child from all dimensions, spiritually, physically, mentally, morally, and humanistically (Yaljin, 1976), compared to the Latin word *educere*, which means to bring out (Memon, 2013), the processes that constitute upbringing, and include the physical and spiritual (Sahin, 2013, p. 182), rearing and nurturing of a child (Waghid, 2011, p. 2), a process that nurtures the innate in the child (Tauhidi, 2007), nourishing/increasing/caring (Ravat, 2011), wholeness derived from the divine that is balanced, integrative, and flexible, and aims to benefit humanity (Al-Nihlawi, 1999, p. 125). It can be inferred that the essence of *tarbiyah* refers to nurturing the child holistically in all realms of development. Interestingly, the term *tarbiyah* has been used quite frequently and liberally in the Muslim world, as many ministries of education are called the ministries of *tarbiyah* and *talim* (Wazart Al Tarbiyah Wal Talim). *Talim* refers to formal instruction, but Yasin and Jani (2013) indicate that Muslim societies are “far from properly integrating this definition into the curriculum development and syllabus for different levels of education.” Some of the literature (Yaljin, 1976) refers to *tarbiyah* as the all-encompassing process of development that includes *talim* and *tadib*.

The second term that is referenced frequently when defining Islamic education is *talim*. In terms of defining *talim*, it stems from the Arabic root word *ilm*, which is translated as *knowledge* (Cook, 2010, p. xxvi). It is a process of teaching and instruction (Cook, 2010, p. xxvi; Memon, 2013; Sahin, 2013, p. 182; Waghid, 2011, p. 2), cognitive development and dissemination of knowledge through instruction (Yasin & Jani, 2013), and a more deductive learning process to gain the tools necessary for the real purpose of education (Tauhidi, 2007, p. 10).

Tadib refers to the “social dimensions of a person’s development of sound behavior” (Cook, 2010, p. xxvi). A prominent Muslim scholar, Naquib al-Attas, emphasizes the concept of *adab* or *tadib*, and states that, “Adab is the discipline of body, mind and soul; the discipline that assures the recognition and acknowledgment of one’s proper place in relation to one’s physical, intellectual and spiritual capacities and potentials” (p. 11). Al-Attas (1979) takes a unique perspective on Islamic education in that he places a heavy emphasis on *tadib* as the most prominent tenet in the Islamic worldview of education, which was not evident in other literature reviewed by the researcher. He indicates that the loss of *adab* is a great ailment facing the Muslim world today. Al-Attas describes *adab* as the disciplining of the mind, body, and soul. Furthermore, it is the reflection of wisdom and the process of putting knowledge to good use in society. He states that *adab* is being aware of one’s potentials and capacities intellectually, physically, and emotionally. Other literature sources define *adab* as goodness in action (Waghid, 2011, p. 2), moral discipline (Sahin, 2013, p. 182), the social aspects of sound behavior (Cook, 2010, p. xxvi), the inculcation of good moral and

ethical behavior (Yasin & Jani, 2013, p. 52), and the process of cultivating comportment (Memon, 2013, p. 77).

Holistic Nature of the Islamic Worldview of Education. The literature reviewed indicates that the Islamic worldview of education is holistic in nature, promotes wholeness, and aims to nurture the student as a whole being (Al-Attas, 1979; Hassan et al., 2010; Al-Zeera, 2001; Tauhidi, 2007; Yasin & Jani, 2013; Cook, 1999 & 2010; Nasr, 1987; Ravat, 2001; Siddiqui, 2012; Hatina, 2006; Abdul-Mabud, 2001; Dangor, 2005). The holistic definition in this context implies that education from the Islamic perspective is a process that aims for the balanced development of the total person (Al-Attas, 1979). It is a process that aims to nurture all of the aspects of an individual's life, including spiritual, rational, and social dimensions (Cook, 2010). Nasr (1987) states that, "The Islamic educational system never divorced the training of the mind from that of the soul and the whole being of the person" (p. 123). Holiness being related to wholeness, the Islamic worldview of education concerns itself with the whole beings of the people it aims to educate (p. 123). The Islamic worldview of education with the central transcendent ultimate reality has its cognitive, moral, and spiritual dimensions as interdependent and intertwined (Hassan et al., 2010). Espousing a broad vision, education from an Islamic worldview aims to encourage men and women to reflect, think, ponder, and search open-mindedly within their souls in order to discover who they are and their ultimate purpose in life (Ravat, 2001). Since the Islamic worldview of education espouses a holistic view of human development, it is important to understand the different dimensions of the human being, as presented in the literature. According to Islamic literature, a human being is composed of mind, body, and soul. In order to

function properly, development of one faculty cannot take place at the expense of the others, since they are complementary and inseparable (Al-Zeera, 2001). In the section of this literature review addressing the decline of knowledge in Muslim societies, the researcher presents the literature that indicates this worldview of education is not being implemented fully in Muslim societies. For example, Yaljin (1976) indicates that because of the lack of holistic education and *tarbiya*, we see un-whole human beings who are incomplete.

Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education. Many of the literature sources discuss the aims and objectives of Islamic education, and when doing so, refer to the First World Conference on Muslim Education in Makkah in 1977 (Yasin & Jani; Cook, 1999; Saqeb, 2000; Al-Attas, 1979). This world conference was held in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, where 350 scholars (Saqeb, 2000) from around the world gathered to address the ailments faced by the educational systems in Muslim communities, and to try to devise solutions and frameworks for education of Muslims (Al-Attas, 1979, p. v). The aim was to provide recommendations for a framework for Islamic education amid the decline and secularization of education that happened in the education systems in Muslim countries for various reasons, including colonialism and internal struggles (p. 47). The scholar who is most often referenced in relationship to the conference is the Muslim educational philosopher Dr. Syed Naquib Al-Attas (Al-Attas, 1970; Saqeb, 2000; Cook, 1999 & 2010; Yasin & Jani, 2013; Siddique, 2012). Committees were formed and each committee was tasked to provide action-oriented recommendations to be followed after the conference. Saqeb (2000) summarizes the committee recommendations from the conference as the following:

1. Communicating the aim of the Islamic worldview of education: The aim of education is the balanced growth of the total personality of the student. Education should support the growth of the person from all aspects—intellectual, spiritual, linguist, scientific, imaginative, and etc.
2. Knowledge should be framed within the context of the ultimate reality, God. The spiritual dimension is not to be removed from the educative process.
3. The role and importance of the preservation of the Arabic language.
4. Educational systems need to emphasize and not neglect literature, arts, sciences, mass media, architecture, the importance of sound teacher education, the importance of female education, help Muslim minorities open their own schools, Islamic research, and set up a world union of Islamic schools.
5. The importance and emphasis of revelatory knowledge, establishing Muslim universities, illuminate illiteracy, equal opportunity, youth organizations and providing recreational activities, better textbooks, education in Islamic philosophy, the importance of places of worship, translations of Arabic works, research libraries, and merit-based scholarships for students.

Follow-up conferences were organized in Islamabad in 1980, in Dhaka in 1981, in Jakarta in 1982, in Cairo in 1987, and the sixth in Cape Town in 1996 (Saqeb, 2000).

Reviewing two decades of progress since the First World Conference on Muslim Education in Makkah in 1977, Saqeb (1987) summarizes the key works and organizations that stemmed from the recommendations of the conference, which include the following:

1. World Centre for Islamic Education, later disseminated
2. The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO)

3. Islamic Education Series
4. International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT)
5. International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization
6. The Islamic Academy at Cambridge
7. International Islamic universities
8. Research on Islamic education
9. The Muslim Education Quarterly
10. The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences
11. Increased number of Islamic schools
12. Efforts to reform curriculum and textbooks

After the last world conference in 1996, the researcher did not find in the literature references to a similar international conference to address education in Muslim communities. With regard to the accomplishments that stemmed from the recommendations of the conference, a range of initiatives were implemented to various degrees. Some outcomes of the conference, such as the Muslim Education Quarterly, produced valuable contributions to Islamic education, but were later discontinued.

Historical Context of Islamic Education and the Early Madrasas. Literature on the Islamic worldview of education frequently discusses the knowledge production that stemmed from Muslim civilization, especially the era that is referred to as the Golden Age of Islam, between the eighth and thirteenth centuries. Cook (2010) states that considering the vast contributions by Muslim scholars to the corpus of knowledge, especially between the eighth and thirteenth centuries, to overlook it is to overlook the basic foundation that contributed to Western intellectual advancements (Cook, 2010, p.

ix; Hilgendorf, 2003). The literature sources reported the contributions made in the areas of astronomy, mathematics, medicine, architecture, philosophy, geography, and music during the Golden Age of Islam. Major centers for learning, such as the *Baytul Hikma* (House of Wisdom) in Baghdad, Al-Azhar in Cairo, and Qarawiyyin in Morocco, were established across the Muslim world. Scholars traveled to these centers of learning from across the world. Nasr (1987) states that the governments endowed most of these centers and students received stipends and free room and board (pp. 125-126). Also, aesthetics and beauty were important in the construction of these centers. Most centers were connected to mosques, with architectural intricacies, and gardens with fountains. Nasr (1987) states that, “Since knowledge was never divorced from the sacred and Islam saw in the sacred, especially in its numinous aspect, the aura of Divine Beauty, Islamic education always imparted in an ambience of beauty” (p. 126). Al-Zeera (2001) reports that another characteristic of Muslim scholars was that they were multifaceted in their scholarship and strong believers in God. Al-Zeera states:

It was not a miracle when Islamic civilization flourished and produced great scholars at certain periods. The main reason for such a flow of knowledge in all disciplines was the consistency in the Islamic worldview, philosophy, and epistemology, which was reflected in Islamic education that accommodated both religious and material needs (p. 79).

The Muslim World after the Golden Age of Islam. Many of the literature sources that discuss Islamic education and the history of Islamic education also present the notion of the decline in the scope and scale of knowledge production in current Muslim communities compared to the periods when Muslims were at the forefront of

knowledge production (Al-Zeera, 2001; Cook, 2010; Jasin & Jani, 2013; Hilgendorf, 2003; Dangor, 2005; Yaljin, 1976; Abusulayman, 2007; Ashraf & Husain, 1979; Al-Attas, 1979). The literature sources attribute the gradual decline to both internal and external forces (Hilgendorf, 2003). It is argued that after the works of the great Muslim philosopher Ibn Khaldun (1334–1406), no major works of the same caliber and originality of Muslim philosophers such as Avicenna, Al-Ghazali, and so forth have been produced in the Muslim world. Cook (2010) states that:

Gradually the open and vigorous spirit of enquiry and individual judgment (*ijtihad*), characterized by the era of the Golden Age, gave way to a more insular, unquestioning acceptance (*taqlid*) of the traditional corpus of authoritative knowledge (p. xxi).

The authors presented in this section offer what they think are the factors contributing to the decline of scholarship and educational advancements in the Muslim world. Abusulayman (2007) states that the Muslim world is afflicted with the notion of “duplication and imitation” (p. 4). He argues that a large number of educational programs and practices are being imitated without consideration for the needs of the Muslim community. Al-Zeera (2001) makes a similar argument: “The education system in Muslim societies is imported and imposed from outside” (p. 55). She argues that these imported educational systems don’t take into account the needs of the whole Muslim students, especially the spiritual needs. She postulates that the secularization of education has led to two systems of education, a dichotomy of education: traditional education and religious education. This goes against the Islamic worldview of education that aims to nurture the student whole beings. Thus, the First World Conference on

Muslim Education was “the first attempt of its kind to remove the dichotomy of religious and secular education” (Al-Attas, p. v). Al-Zeera (2001) states that, “The education system should address Muslim learners as a whole person who possesses a body, mind, and soul and prepare various faculties of the person to realize the wholeness of life” (p. 67). A question then arises: are Islamic schools in the United States addressing this disconnectedness in education and are they aiming to nurture whole Muslim students based on the Islamic worldview of education? The next section of this literature review presents available information regarding Islamic schools in the United States. One aim of this dissertation was to explore current trends in education in full-time accredited Islamic schools, and to analyze its alignment with the aims and objectives of the Islamic worldview of education that aspires to wholeness in education.

Islamic Education in the Context of Islamic Schools in the United States

While researching literature on Islamic schools for this dissertation, the researcher observed a gap in scholarly published research on the topic of Islamic schools and Islamic education in the United States. Therefore, the researcher hopes that this dissertation contributes to the literature on Islamic education in the United States.

One important source of information that the researcher utilized was an online database of Islamic schools that is provided by the Islamic School League of America (ISLA, 2017). Another source that the researcher utilized was a book titled *Educating the Muslims of America* edited by Hadad, Senzai, and Smith (2009). This book is a compilation of essays by various authors regarding Islamic schools and Islamic education in the United States. Several published studies on Islamic schools were found, including one titled “The Rise of Islamic Schools in the United States” by Clauss, Ahmed, and

Salvaterra, (2013). In this study, the researchers interviewed participants from two Islamic schools in the United States, one school in North Carolina and the other in Pennsylvania. The researchers' aim was to understand the growth of Islamic schools in the United States; however, the sample included participants from only two Islamic schools in the United States. Another published study that the author reviewed was by Al-Lawati & Hunsaker (2007), titled "Differentiation for the Gifted in the American Islamic Schools". A quantitative survey was distributed to Islamic schools that agreed to participate to understand whether and how Islamic schools meet the academic needs of gifted students. In another published study titled "Teachers' Perspectives on Citizenship Education in Islamic Schools in Michigan" by Saada (2013), the author interviewed four social studies teachers in two Islamic schools in Michigan regarding citizenship education. Another recent published article titled "Being Wholly Muslim and Wholly American: Exploring One Islamic School's Efforts to Educate Against Extremism" by Melanie (2017) included findings from only one Islamic school in the United States. Several dissertations about Islamic schools were also reviewed. The researcher reviewed a book titled *Culture, Identity, and Islamic Schooling* by Merry (2007) from the Netherlands. The author travelled to the United States and interviewed principals, teachers, and staff from six schools, with a convenience sampling of geographical proximity to the researcher. The researcher of this dissertation found that while the author makes strong claims in the book (for example, "Non-Muslim women [teaching at the Islamic schools] must agree to wear the hijab"; p. 32), he does not provide concrete evidence for his claims, and based on the researcher's emic perspective, this particular claim is not true for all Islamic schools. While reviewing the available literature, with the

samples given above, this researcher found no published qualitative research articles or dissertations involving the magnitude of research participants interviewed from accredited Islamic schools in the United States as this dissertation (20 principals), and further accompanied by an analysis of 50 school mission and vision statements from accredited Islamic schools.

Number of Islamic Schools in the United States. According to the Islamic School League of America (ISLA), there are an estimated 286 Islamic schools in the United States (ISLA, 2016). The author did not find information anywhere in the current research regarding the number of accredited Islamic schools in the United States. Thus, part of the research design and methodology in chapter three of this dissertation was to determine the number of accredited Islamic schools that exist, verified by regional accreditation bodies. The regional accrediting bodies include AdvancED (Northern Association of Colleges and Schools, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Northwest Accreditation Commission), Western Association of Colleges and Schools, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, and Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. Keyworth (2009) states that seeking accreditation in Islamic schools is a “swiftly developing trend” (p. 32). As the Muslim population in the United States is continuously growing, there is an increasing demand for Islamic schools. New Islamic schools are being established every year, especially in states with large Muslim populations, such as California, New York, Michigan, Texas, New Jersey, Illinois, and Florida (Senzai, 2007). Most Islamic schools are newer institutions and similar to 80% of non-profit schools in the United States that have 300 students or fewer (Keyworth, 2009, p. 27; National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education, 2006, p. 2).

History of Islamic Schools in the United States. The oldest Islamic schools in the United States, known as Clara Muhammad schools, emerged from the African American community that diverged from the Nation of Islamic movement (Haddad & Smith, 2009; Rashid & Muhammad, 1993). In the 1960s, waves of Muslim immigrants started to immigrate to the United States. Gradually, the Muslim community in the United States decided to open Islamic schools that addressed the needs of their children. It is believed that one of the first non-Clara Muhammad Islamic Schools in the United States was established in 1977, and it is still in existence today. The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) did a survey on Islamic schools in 1989 and found that there were 49 schools at that time (Haddad & Smith, 2009). The number of Islamic schools in the United States continues to rise, with more schools earning accreditation. More Islamic education conferences are being offered, and overall more organizational efforts are being implemented.

Islamic School Organizations. The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) was established in the United States in 1982 in order to support the organization of the Muslim communities in the United States (ISNA, 2017). Today, the mission of ISNA is “To foster the development of the Muslim community, interfaith relations, civic engagement, and better understanding of Islam.” In 1989, ISNA commissioned a survey about Islamic schools in the United States. Next, in 1991, the Council of Islamic Schools of North America (CISNA) was formed and emerged from the parent organization, ISNA, but was established as an independent entity from the parent organization, ISNA. Since then, CISNA has been providing annual conferences and workshops for Islamic school stakeholders, among other services such as accreditation. Currently, the mission

of CISNA is to “improve Islamic schools through accreditation, consultation, and professional development; advocating for Islamic education; and fostering professional relationships with educational institutions and agencies relevant to Islamic education” (CISNA, 2017).

Together with CISNA, ISNA hosts an annual education forum. Spring 2017 marked the eighteenth annual ISNA education forum. Additionally, education forums are conducted in California as the West Coast ISNA Education Forum, marking its seventh annual meeting in 2017. CISNA also holds a partnership with the AdvancEd accreditation agency, and schools can obtain dual accreditation from regional accreditation bodies and CISNA, with CISNA’s role being in the development and observance of adherence to Islamic principles and values.

Another organization that supports the development and organization of Islamic schools in North America is the Islamic School League of America (ISLA, 2017). ISLA is a non-profit organization founded in 1998 by individuals who were passionate about Islamic schooling, with the aim of helping Islamic schools to succeed. Currently, the mission of ISLA states that it “works in partnership with educators, organizations, and universities to foster the development, growth, and quality of Islamic education primarily by establishing networks, providing resources, disseminating knowledge, nurturing leadership, and carrying out critical and foundational research on Islamic education and full time schools” (ISLA, 2017). ISLA’s website contains many resources for Islamic school educators and administrators. Also, ISLA has been able to keep the most current database on Islamic schools in the United States and Canada. In her essay titled *Islamic Schools of America: Data-Based Profiles*, Keyworth (2009) details the process that ISLA

established to gather the initial list of the number of Islamic schools in the United States. Islamic schools can register their schools through ISLA and obtain additional access to resources, such as posting job advertisements that are distributed to all members of the ISLA mailing list. Members of the ISLA mailing list can also share articles and resources that open discussions and conversations among members from many different Islamic schools. Additionally, ISLA holds an annual retreat for individuals who lead Islamic schools (ISLA, 2017).

Purpose of Islamic Schools in the United States. The purpose behind the establishment of Islamic schools in North America is similar to the efforts put forth by other religious congregations and/or minorities in the United States, such as Jews, Catholics, and Protestants, in an effort to provide parochial education that meets the needs of their student populations (Haddad & Smith, 2009). One important function of Islamic schools as described by Memon (2011) is nurturing faith in students through the school's Islamic worldview that is embedded in the schools' teaching practices and the environment that is established in the school. One of the aims of this dissertation was to elucidate the purpose of the existence of Islamic schools, and the results and discussions give concrete evidence regarding what principals of accredited Islamic schools believe is the purpose of Islamic schools.

Modern Education System: Philosophical Underpinnings, Visions, Practices, and Identified Areas for Improvement

While much can be written about the successes of our modern education system, the increased number of students who have access to education compared to previous generations, and the increased resources available to schools, the modern education

system also has challenges and inadequacies. Much has also been written to discuss and attempt to address the challenges. In his book *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs*, Elliot Eisner (1994) opens his book by discussing the “Nation at Risk” report that was published in 1983, and references the increasingly negative perception and alarmist language about how the public education system is failing our students. More than twenty years later, similar language, discussions, and concerns about our education system remain. Over the years, the federal government has enacted policies and reform initiatives in order to attempt to address these challenges. In 2002, the “No Child Left Behind Act” was passed with intentions aimed at solving the educational dilemmas, but for the most part, these federal efforts have been unable to yield the desired results. The approach to educational reform in the last several decades has been positivistic in nature. In her book *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*, Diane Ravitch (2010) shared her learning journey as an educational historian, her concerns and lessons learned over the years regarding the current trends in education that place a heavy emphasis on quantitative measures, standardized test scores, and using these measures for accountability (pp. 16-21). She states:

I saw my hopes for better education turn into a measurement of strategy that had no underlying educational vision at all. Eventually I realized that the new reforms had everything to do with structural changes and accountability, and nothing at all to do with the substance of learning (p. 16).

In her book *Wounded by School: Recapturing the Joy in Learning and Standing up to Old School Culture*, Kristen Olson (2009) presented the case that for many children,

especially those who don't fit the average student mold, the school system creates deeply wounding experiences that children carry throughout their lives. She details the accounts of many people who felt a deep disconnection in school because of many reasons that she discusses in her book, such as being labeled for not doing well on standardized tests, feeling a disconnection because of a lack of purpose in school, not experiencing “*flow*,” not finding joy in learning, discouraged creativity, an atmosphere and culture of compliance, and other “wounds.”

Teaching and learning are complex endeavors, especially in systems of education with large numbers of students, as in the United States. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) estimates that in 2017, the number of students in all levels of elementary and secondary education in the United States will reach 55.6 million. Of those, NCES estimates that 5.1 million will attend private schools. Examining these numbers, one can begin to understand the sheer magnitude of the complexity of our education system. Considering this complexity helps us to navigate the inadequacies and proposed remedial routes. Eisner (1993) references Dewey and states that recipes require uniformity, but the fact of the matter is that children are not uniform and many variables are differ within schools—for example, context, resources, teachers, and so forth (p. 14). Thus, uniform recipes in education are not likely to yield desired results. He also states that “there are competing visions for our schools” (p. 14). Regarding visions for education, Ravitch (2010) states that:

If we want to improve education, we must first of all have a vision of what good education is. We should have goals that are worth striving for. Everyone involved in educating children should ask themselves why educate. What is a

well-educated person? What knowledge is of most worth? What do we hope for when we send our children to school? What do we want them to learn and accomplish by the time they graduate from school (p. 230)?

One of the key issues that this dissertation aimed to explore was the purpose of education, as seen from its different angles and viewpoints. Below, the researcher attempts to present reviewed literature that explores what it means to be an educated person and what the goals of education are, as perceived and communicated by these authors and historical figures.

John Dewey: Traditional vs. Progressive Goals of Education. In his book *Experience and Education*, John Dewey (1938) proposes that our educational thought suffers from extremes that he calls the “Either-Ors”; education from within (progressive) and education from without (traditional) (p. 17). One can compare this to the Latin *educare* and *educere*, discussed earlier in this dissertation. He criticizes traditional education by stating that “Since the subject-matter and the standards of conduct are handed down from the past, the attitudes of people must, upon the whole, be one of docility, receptivity, and obedience” (p. 18). He calls this type of education static, with imposed adult standards that are “taught as a finished product” (p. 19). Dewey also criticizes the notion of progressive education in the sense that it is reactionary to traditional education. He elaborates on education for freedom and democracy and the vital role that experiences play in education. Also important to Dewey is the notion of how experiences are reflective of the society and the real world. He warns that just because there are experiences in education, these experiences aren’t necessarily educative in nature, and to the contrary can be un-educative (p. 25). Thus, not all experiences are

equal, and in order to be educative they must develop students from within, promote positive growth, and awaken curiosity, drive and initiative and purpose in children. Dewey also warns against uniformity and artificiality in education (p. 62), and encourages experiences with genuine purpose (p. 67).

Eisner: The Explicit, Implicit, and Null Curriculum. In his book the *Educational Imagination*, Eisner (1994) opens chapter 4 by quoting Dewey: “Perhaps the greatest of all pedagogical fallacies is the notion that a person learns only the particular thing he is studying at the time” (p. 87). Eisner (1994) elaborates by saying that children spend a large portion of their childhood in school, and within that time, the child is exposed to a lot of explicit and implicit learning and messages. The explicit are the public and communicated goals and objectives of the school and of the planned learning that is going to take place. Then he asks, “Is this all the school has to offer?” “Does this advertised menu exhaust what the schools teach?” “The answer to these questions is a clear: no” (pp. 87-88). Eisner (1994) proposes that subtle and consistent messages that are relayed in books, characters, and other interactions that take place in school beyond the explicit curriculum “socialize children to a set of expectations that some argue are profoundly more powerful and longer lasting than what is intentionally taught or what the explicit curriculum of the school publicly provides” (p. 88). Analyzing the implicit messages that schools send to children, the schools do a good job of preparing students for many jobs on the market with messages that they received in school, such as compliance, one-way communication, hierarchy, routine, and being compliant with another’s purpose (p. 91). Also implicit is the time that is devoted to certain programs, classes, and subjects and not others. For example, art tends to be one

of those subjects that is easily dispensable, compared to math or reading. This message, although perhaps not intentionally conveyed, is nevertheless conveyed in the subconscious of students. So, implicitly, “schools teach far more than they advertise” (p. 92). Implicit messages are sent to students even in the design of the school building, the furniture layout, the type of furniture, and schedules chosen based on efficiency and convenience for adults, rather than children and their learning (pp. 96-97). Likewise, Jorgenson and Vanosdall (2002) present the setting aside of science instruction in the high stakes climate pushing scores on tests of reading and mathematics. This is a subtle and implicit message of value to students that art and science (before the STEM movement of the twenty-first century) are not important.

Besides the implicit and explicit curriculum, another interesting lens that Eisner shares in his book is the notion of the null curriculum (p. 97). By this he means what the school does not teach, and that what is not taught in schools could be as important as what is taught in schools. In discussing the null curriculum or what is not taught in schools, Eisner divides it into two categories: “One is the intellectual processes that schools emphasize and neglect. The other is the content or subject areas that are present and absent in school curricula” (p. 98). As for intellectual processes, schools and educational institutions have greatly emphasized the cognitive intellectual processes, and seldom emphasize the nonverbal, the auditory, the visual, the metaphoric, and so forth. There are important subjects that the majority of schools neglect to teach, deeming it unimportant, such as economics, which is relevant to the students’ lives (p. 103). In order to fully assess the quality of education that students receive and the goals of education that are instilled in students, Eisner’s (1994) arguments make a case for the

importance of assessing the implicit, explicit, and null education that students receive in schools.

Education for Survival in the 21st Century. There is a plentiful amount of educational literature that focuses on the goal of education to foster skills for the twenty-first century. One author who is revered well by teachers is Tony Wagner (2008), with his book *The Global Achievement Gap: Why Even Our Best Schools Don't Teach the New Survival Skills Our Children Need and What We Can Do About It*. Wagner opens his book by presenting some alarming facts about the state of education in the United States versus other developed countries. One of those facts that he presents is that only one third of high school graduates in the United States graduate from high school ready for college (p. xix). Times have changed, but schools have not responded to the drastic changes, making them obsolete—even the ones that are able to produce excellent standardized test results (p. xxi). Another issue with our schools is that they stifle creativity, harbor a culture of disconnectedness, and “boredom continues to be a leading cause of our high school dropout rate” (p. xxv). After visits to many schools and conversations with many corporate CEOs, Wagner identified the twenty-first century survival skills that he promotes in his book. Wagner (2008) calls these skills *The Seven Survival Skills*. In order for students to be prepared for the challenges of the twenty-first century, schools must equip them with the following abilities and skills: 1) critical thinking and problem solving, 2) collaboration across networks and leading by influence, 3) agility and adaptability, 4) initiative and entrepreneurialism, 5) effective oral and written communication, 6) accessing and analyzing information, 7) and curiosity and imagination. Wagner (2008) states that if these essential skills are instilled in our

students, then our students will be able to navigate the workforce and lead productive lives.

Universal Goal of Education and Education for Diversity. Authors who write about goals and visions for education tend to base their recommendations on certain issues, problems, or deficiencies. With this in mind, Garcia (2011) believes in the importance of the multicultural component in education and embracing and appreciating diversity. In *Teaching for Diversity*, Garcia (2011) makes the case that educators can't ignore the increasingly diverse nature of the students who attend American schools. Therefore the main goals of education should be education for citizenship, education for freedom, and overall, a universal education for all students. By universal education, he means "A comprehensive, global, and multifaceted education available to all youth" that can accomplish education for freedom and democracy (p. 40). He further states the purpose of universal education as a means to "assist youth in their development as viable individuals—individuals who are capable of sustaining a good life and growing and developing spiritually, emotionally, and mentally" (p. 40). Universal education doesn't assimilate students to a certain way of life, but integrates them into society in the development of learning autonomy, intellectual effectiveness, and cultural efficacy (p. 46).

Education from the Perspective of Historical Figures. Many prominent historical figures wrote about their beliefs regarding what education is and isn't, and what education should and shouldn't be. Presented below is a summary of three internationally known individuals: Martin Luther King Jr., Eleanor Roosevelt, and Mohandas K. Gandhi.

In one of his essays titled “The Purpose of Education,” Martin Luther King Jr. (1947) explicates the misconception amongst the educated regarding the purpose of education. He articulates the notion that some think education is a weapon that equips one to take advantage of others, while others believe that education is an end goal, and not a means to an end. King (1947) presents the aim of education as an avenue to help individuals achieve greater goals in life, develop effective thinking, uncover unbiased truths, and differentiate right from wrong. Intelligence is not enough, since a criminal in society could potentially be of great intellect. He states:

We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education. The complete education gives one not only power of concentration, but worthy objectives upon which to concentrate. The broad education will, therefore, transmit to one not only the accumulated knowledge of the race but also the accumulated experience of social living.

Another historical figure who has discussed her views regarding the purpose of education is Eleanor Roosevelt. In her essay “Good Citizenship: The Purpose of Education,” Roosevelt (1930) states that attempting to answer the question of the purpose of education “agitates” everyone. The core purpose of education is to produce a good citizen, and “Learning to be a good citizen is learning to live to the maximum of one’s abilities and opportunities, and every subject should be taught every child with this in view.” The teacher’s character and the teacher’s responsibility are of high importance in Roosevelt’s viewpoint. She also believes that this goal can’t be accomplished without partnerships in the home and community.

Mohandas K. Gandhi (1980) held views on education that stemmed from a holistic perspective. He states that true education is one that enables the person to draw the best out of himself or herself (Gandhi, 1982, p. 138). He also felt that literacy is not the end goal of education, but a means to an end and a tool to help individuals become educated. He calls for an all-around development of the person, and states:

I hold that the true education of the intellect can only come through a proper exercise and training of the bodily organs ... unless the development of the mind and body goes hand in hand with corresponding awakening of the soul, the former alone would prove to be a poor lopsided affair (p. 138).

Education for Happiness. In *Happiness and Education*, Nel Noddings (2003) established a case for happiness as an aim of education, and addresses the notion of how schools can help students lead happy and fulfilling lives. Noddings argues that schools have a narrow focus of equipping students for economic stability as an aim of education (p. 84). While that is a legitimate aim, there are many other aims that should be part of education in order to help students realize a path to happiness in life, which include the skills needed to make a home (p. 97), raise children (p. 138), experience character education and spirituality (p. 157), realize interpersonal growth (p. 179), prepare for work (p. 197), and be part of a democratic community and service learning (p. 220). Noddings then makes recommendations and suggestions for ways in which classrooms and schools can foster happiness and become happy places for children, contending that “schools must do much of the work once charged to families,” and the best schools are those that resemble the best homes (p. 260). She describes best homes thus:

The best homes provide continuity of caring relations, attend to and continuously evaluate both inferred and expressed needs, protect from harm without deliberately inflicting pain, communicate so as to develop common and individual interest, work together cooperatively, promote joy in genuine learning, guide moral and spiritual development, contribute to the appreciation of the arts and other cultural achievements, encourage love of place and protection of the natural world, and educate for both self understanding and group understanding (p. 260).

Education for Empowerment and Social Justice. A Brazilian educational philosopher whose educational ideas have influenced people around the world is Paulo Friere (1970). In his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Friere states that education should be a tool for the oppressed to liberate themselves and regain their place and humanization. Such education must not be handed down to the oppressed, but must be established in partnership with the oppressed in order for them to be empowered (p. 48). The type of education that exists in the mainstream lacks greatly, since it treats the educative process as a one-way transaction. The teacher, being in a position of power, is the one who deposits the information that he/she deems important to the minds of students. He calls this the banking method (p. 72). He further states that “The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world” (p. 73). Critical thinking, allowing students to think for themselves, education as a form of freedom, inquiry, and search for meaning and purpose are things that Friere (1970) advocates for and argues can transform education.

Education for Humanity and Purpose. Another author provides a larger lens for broader goals and purpose of education. In *Educating for Humanity: Rethinking the Purposes of Education*, Mike Seymour (2004) theorizes that the heart of the external disconnect that people feel today is a manifestation of a larger disconnect within themselves (p. 11). This disconnect then manifests itself and trickles down to all other forms of disconnection, which also include the great disconnect in school between students, teachers, and other school community members. Things are taught as separate entities rather than being connected to each other. He proposes an educational framework that educates for self, community, Earth, and spirit. For educating for the self, he states, “Educating is about drawing forth the callings within our own deeper nature” (p. 33). He also states that “There is an existential epidemic of people who feel lost or out of harmony with life” (p. 35). He calls for a bigger picture of self and connectedness that transcends cultural and national boundaries. This requires a democratic education that gives voice to students and teachers. Another vital element is authentic community in schools (p. 81). This kind of community is one that encourages its members to be present, has a culture of caring and compassion, values and practices civic engagement and service learning, and encourages diversity (pp. 82-87). Two other components in Seymour’s (2004) framework are ecological awareness and responsibility, and spirit education: “the quest for heart, character, and meaning” (p. 185). He states that although religion can’t be part of public education, it doesn’t mean that it doesn’t exist. The universal essence and values of spirituality and faith are something that the author argues that we must recognize and nurture in children. He states that “Children’s intellectual formation cannot be divorced from their spiritual formation” (p. 188).

Education for Wholeness. Another philosophical approach to education promotes the notion that students are comprised of wholes, and one can't attempt to educate the intellect without addressing and nurturing the child as a whole being (Miller, J., 2010, 2000, 2007, 2006; Miller, R., 1997; Forbes, 2003; ASCD Whole Child Approach, 2017). The "whole child" approach encompasses many different approaches and schools, including Montessori schools, religious schools that adhere to the holistic education philosophy, Waldorf schools, ASCD Whole Child schools, and others. The spiritual dimension of holistic education maybe presented differently. Since this dissertation addresses the Islamic worldview of education as holistic in nature, the researcher explores notions of holistic education in the next section of this literature review.

Holistic Education

Definitions. In defining the philosophical approach to education that promotes wholeness, the terms *holistic*, *whole child*, or *wholistic education* are used. Among many authors, holistic education is the most frequently used in literature. Holistic education aims to educate the child as a whole being, and views the child as part of a larger whole in society, humanity, and the cosmos (Forbes, S., 2005). Stemming from holism, it is "a search for wholeness in a culture that limits, suppresses, and denies wholeness" (Miller, R., p. 7). It is the process of educating the whole person, which includes the intellectual, social, emotional, physical, spiritual, and aesthetic (Nava, 2001, p. 29). A differentiator for holistic education from other educational philosophies or movements is the inclusion of the spiritual dimension (Miller, J., 2005; Nava, 2001, p. 128). To describe the components of holistic education, some authors use mind, body, spirit, soul, and heart,

while others define the components as intellectual, social, emotional, spiritual, and physical; some include the aesthetic dimension. The word *wholistic* seldom appears in holistic education literature. Holistic education advocates for connectedness and discourages fragmentation, and promotes the idea that everything, including the spiritual, is interconnected (Miller, J., 2008; Nava, 2001).

A review of the literature that promotes wholeness in education indicates that the term *holistic* seems to be an all-encompassing word that includes whole child education and wholistic education. For the purposes of this dissertation, *holistic education* will be used to refer to education that promotes wholeness in education, and includes a spiritual dimension of education.

Roots of Holistic Education. Authors of holistic education literature trace the roots of holistic education back to ancient traditions (Miller, J., 2006, p. 16; 2005, p. 1), and human religiosity (Forbes, S., 2005, p. 275). While Asian, Indian, Greek, and Christian religious roots of holistic education are presented and discussed in literature, and because this dissertation discusses the holistic nature of the Islamic worldview of education, it is noteworthy from the researcher's emic (insider) perspective to mention that the dominant academic literature rarely acknowledges the Islamic worldview of holistic education in the conversation about the ancient roots of holistic education.

Figures in Holistic Education. As mentioned earlier in this section of the chapter, authors of holistic education literature contend that the notions of holistic education are ancient. When discussing the modern and especially Western notions of holistic education, authors refer to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, born in France in 1712, as one of the first philosophers to write extensively about holistic education (Forbes, S., 2005;

Miller, R., 1997; Miller, J. 2007). Rousseau wrote a book titled *Emile* in 1762, in which he discussed ideas about human nature and education for wholeness (Forbes, 2005, p. 62; Miller, R., 1997, p. 93; Miller, J., 2007, p. 69). Rousseau presented human beings as innately pure, and advocated for balance, the development of the person as a whole being, learning through discovery, child-lead learning, individualized education, and wholeness in education (Forbes, S., 2005, p. 64; Miller, R., 1997).

Another figure who is discussed in holistic education literature is the Italian and Swiss born Johann Pestalozzi, born in 1746 (Forbes, 2005, p. 107; Miller, R., 1997, p. 94; Miller, J., 2007, p. 71). He was influenced by Rousseau's ideas, and like Rousseau he presented people as innately good, arguing that what corrupts human nature are repressive environments and societies (Miller, R., 1997, p. 94). Unlike Rousseau, who only wrote about education, Pestalozzi was a teacher for most of his life, and mostly of poor children. He sought to create a family environment for children (Forbes, S., 2005, p. 109). Educators from Europe and America visited his school located in Yverdon, Switzerland.

The third figure commonly referenced as an advocate is Friedrich Froebel, born in 1782 and considered the father of kindergarten (Miller, 1997, p. 99). He taught at Pestalozzi's school, and years later opened a school in Prussia that he named Kindergarten (Forbes, 2005, p. 133). Like Rousseau and Pestalozzi, he also presented the human soul as pure by nature. He was also theistic, and "like Rousseau and Pestalozzi, Froebel saw harmony and union with the divine as part of man's destiny" (Forbes, 2005, p. 135). Froebel argued for the importance of play in education, and an avenue for goodness to be nurtured (Miller, J., 2007, p. 73).

In his analysis of holistic education, Scott Forbes (2005) expounds on why he did not include Maria Montessori, the founder of the Montessori schools, and Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf schools, as some of the original holistic education philosophers. He contends that in the case of Maria Montessori, her originality was in creating the Montessori approach to education, but her views were influenced by Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel (p. 6). Her originality was in her application of holistic education philosophies. As for Rudolf Steiner, Forbes states that Steiner did have some original techniques and philosophies, but he “has had little to no influence on other forms of holistic education, and cannot therefore be considered part of holistic education’s intellectual precedents” (p. 6).

Interconnectedness Within Holistic Education. Holistic education authors posit that holistic or whole child education doesn’t exist in a vacuum. In order to nurture whole children, there needs to be wholeness in teaching, wholeness in the curriculum, wholeness in the school, and wholeness in the community.

The Whole Child. The first level of wholeness in holistic education is the whole person (Nava, 2001, p. 29). A person is considered to be an interconnected and integrated being composed of intellectual, physical, emotional, spiritual, social, and aesthetic elements. Other authors including John Miller (2010) use the term *mind-body-spirit connection* to denote the interconnectedness of the faculties (p. 8).

The Whole Teacher. An important part of the whole school is the whole teacher, since teachers are the ones who nurture whole children (Miller, J., 2010). Whole teachers care for their whole being, and employ patience, love, presence, care, and humility (pp. 12-13, 97). The whole child teacher is a soulful teacher who engages in reflective and

contemplative practices, and is mindful and present (p. 132). This type of teacher is cognizant of his/her students' needs, and understands that students are different; hence, their needs are different (Forbes, S., 2005). It is also important for teachers to have sound understanding of pedagogic processes, meaning that the teaching is complex and the teacher needs to facilitate learning, rather than dominate the learning process. Whole teachers treat students with empathy and believe in the students' inherent goodness. Also important is the teacher's self-development (pp. 43-45). As a member of the learning community, the classroom teacher's self-development and self-care bring an important contribution to the holistic learning experience.

Whole Teaching and Curriculum. Holistic education authors describe the whole curriculum as one that is transformative, integrative, multidisciplinary, connected, and focuses on relationships (Miller, J., 2010, pp. 12, 16). This curriculum provides connections between different subjects, connections with the different communities within and outside the school, connections to nature and earth, mind and body connections, intellectual connections, and soulful connections (pp. 61-77). Ron Miller (1997) argues that holistic education emphasizes making meaning more than of accumulation of knowledge, experiential learning, the importance of community and democracy, and an inclusion of the spiritual dimension (pp. 220-221). John Miller (2006) provides another terminology for whole teaching and learning, which he calls *timeless learning*. While many of the components of timeless learning are similar to what has been discussed above, he also adds that timeless learning is characterized by *flow* experiences. *Flow* was coined by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1997) when he argued that

the state of flow is the state of total immersion in an activity or experience, and which he observed is lacking in many of our schools.

The Whole School. Common throughout holistic education literature is the notion of the importance of fostering healthy relationships within the school community. John Miller (2000) refers to a whole school as a soulful school that resembles a sanctuary (p. 109). The soulful school has a deep sense of community, and attention is paid to the environment and the aesthetics of the school. Furthermore, the school is characterized as a close-knit community that has its own stories, celebrations, and rituals among people who practice authenticity, truth, and presence (pp. 109-110).

The ASCD Whole Child Initiative. In the last several decades, there has been a clear rise in initiatives that identify themselves as holistic because increasingly, parents and students are seeking alternatives to mainstream education (Forbes, S., 2005, p.1). Established in 1943, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) is a renowned educational organization with more than 100,000 members in 123 countries around the world (ASCD, 2017). In 2007, ASCD launched its Whole Child Initiative in response to the increasing need and awareness to move beyond schools' narrow focus on academics, to a broader vision for education that promotes wholeness. ASCD developed a model that can be adopted by any school, public or private. Within this model, there are five tenets: healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged (The Whole Child Approach to Education, 2015). Under each tenet, there are ten indicators to help schools implement and assess the degree to which each is implemented. ASCD's motto for whole child education is the *Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child: A Collaborative Approach to Learning* (ASCD, 2015). It recognizes the importance of

community and family partnerships as part of the whole child vision. In the ASCD's whole child model, there is no mention of the spiritual dimension of learning (this may be a consideration for the separation of church and state in public education in the United States). However, there are references to the social and emotional well-being of children.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher presented an extensive review of literature in five individual sections, providing the requisite knowledge base to further understand the research questions, frame the methodology of this dissertation, and further relate the findings back to the literature in order to present gaps, new understandings, and reiterations. The researcher found parallel and disconnected realities among and between various perspectives of holistic education and wholeness in education literature. For example, while there is a consensus in the majority of Islamic education literature regarding the notion that the Islamic worldview of education is holistic in nature, this presentation is almost absent from the mainstream holistic education literature. In the same regard, the Islamic holistic education literature seems to be equally disconnected from the mainstream holistic education literature. Another disconnect that is evident is Islamic schools' understanding of this holistic worldview of education. The researcher found that clear connections can be made between the mainstream holistic education and the Islamic holistic worldview of education.

Also noteworthy to mention is that while reviewing the available literature for this research, the researcher found only limited and smaller scale published qualitative research articles and dissertations. Therefore, this research is of magnitude with participants (20 principals) from accredited Islamic schools in the United States, and the

analysis of 50 school mission and vision statements from accredited Islamic schools, which is half of the accredited Islamic schools in the United States. The researcher has designed the research to reduce the gap between Islamic literature and the current literature in holistic education, and to provide a representative sample of perspectives from accredited Islamic school principals purposefully selected by geographic distribution.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview of Methods

This qualitative study presents informed perspectives from accredited Islamic schools and Islamic school leaders from across the United States. The distribution of school sites provided a diverse geographic sampling from across the United States to gain insight regarding the questions presented in this dissertation. The researcher used a combination of 20 oral interviews with principals and document analysis of 50 mission and vision statements to present triangulated perspectives that elucidate a deeper understanding to address and answer the research questions. The oral interviews were semi-structured phone interviews with open-ended questions conducted with a randomized purposeful sample of 20 principals from accredited Islamic schools in all regions of the United States (Patton, 2015, p. 268). The document analyses examined mission and vision statements from a randomized purposeful sample of 50 accredited Islamic schools in the United States. The primary text analysis of mission and vision statements provided another layer of data to provide evidence-based understanding of the research questions presented, especially those pertaining to the purpose of education and Islamic schooling from the schools' perspectives.

Qualitative researchers position their research within different qualitative research paradigms and methodologies based on the nature of inquiries being researched, the level of rigor, their stance, and the implications for the research findings. For this qualitative research inquiry, the *grounded theory* methodology (Patton, 2015) was observed to ensure that the findings and inferences are grounded in data. Grounded theory

emphasizes the iterative nature of qualitative research, using comparative methods, simultaneous data collection and analysis, theoretical sampling, inductive analysis, and basing the theory construction on data (Patton, 2015, p. 111).

Research Question and Sub-questions

1. What are the educational beliefs and practices espoused by accredited Islamic schools in the United States?
 - a. What are the common themes communicated by principals of accredited Islamic schools in the United States regarding the purpose of education and Islamic schooling?
 - b. How are the educational beliefs and practices shared by principals and revealed in mission and vision statements of accredited Islamic schools indicative of educational experiences that address the academic, spiritual, social, emotional, and physical needs of students?
 - c. What do principals of accredited Islamic schools identify as some of the common challenges that Islamic schools in the United States currently face?
 - d. What do principals of accredited Islamic schools envision for the future of Islamic schooling in the United States?

Pilot Study

A pilot research study was conducted and presented at the 2015 American Educational Research Association's annual conference (Brifkani & Vanosdall, 2015). The study analyzed 31 mission statements of a stratified random sample of 112 Islamic schools in the United States with a minimum enrollment of 90 students, to identify

elements of holistic education. In addition, three principals of full-time accredited Islamic schools were interviewed to gain insight about their views and beliefs regarding the purpose of schooling and holistic education practices. The insights and experience gained from this pilot study in 2014 laid the foundation and groundwork for the 2016-2017 data collection, which included doing a geographic stratified random sampling distribution of schools, sampling from the pool of schools accredited by regional accreditation bodies, increasing the sample size to 20 principals and 50 mission and vision statements, and a refined research methodology.

Research Population

The Islamic School League of American's (ISLA) online database of Islamic schools in the United States (<http://theisla.org/FindASchool>) was used as the foundational participant pool. ISLA is a non-profit organization that was established in 1998 to support Islamic schools and individuals involved in Islamic education in North America (ISLA, 2017). As of the summer of 2016, there were 286 Islamic private schools listed on the ISLA website for the United States, some small and having less than 100 students and others larger and having more than 500 students. ISLA claims to have at least 95% of the Islamic schools in the United States and Canada listed on its website. The listing information includes the name of the school, address, phone number, website, number of students enrolled, accreditation information, and grade levels. Not all of the information is listed for all the schools.

ISLA also facilitates the Islamic Educators Communication Network (IECN), which is a mailing list for individuals involved in Islamic education in the United States. The mailing list serves as a platform for Muslim educators to connect regarding

upcoming conferences and events, share pedagogical strategies, and conduct general dialog on the field of education and Islamic schooling. Members of the ISLA board of directors manage the IECN membership.

Sampling Pool

All of the Islamic schools in the United States listed on ISLA's website were screened by the researcher in order to obtain each school's accreditation status and confirm the existence of the schools (See Figure 2). The flow chart presents the process that the researcher undertook to screen the schools for the sampling pool for principal interviews and mission and vision document analysis. For each school listed on the ISLA website, the listed information was screened and verified by the researcher. If a direct functioning link to the school's website was available, the researcher visited the school's website to gather further information. If no website was available, a Google search was completed to attempt to locate the school's website. As indicated in Figure 2, a total of 233 schools had available functioning websites. A total of 52 schools did not have websites available. For schools without websites, Google searches were done, and it was found that some of these schools had only social media profiles, some schools were no longer in existence, or in some cases the schools resembled small homeschooling circles.

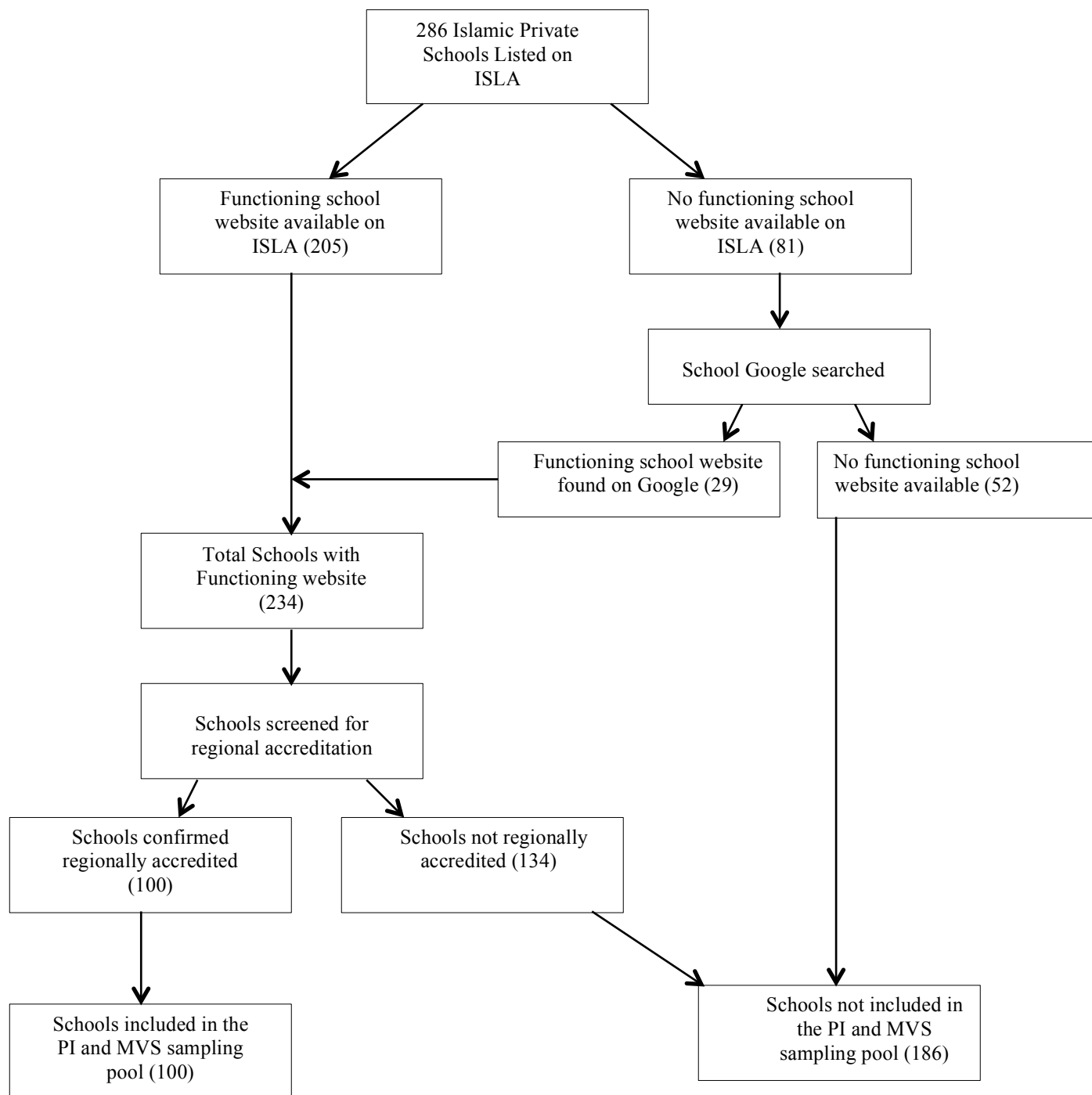


Figure 2. Islamic School Screening Flow Chart

As points for triangulation, all of the 233 schools with available websites were screened and verified for accreditation status on regional accreditation agency websites, depending on the location of the school. The regional accrediting bodies included AdvancED (Northern Association of Colleges and Schools, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Northwest Accreditation Commission), Western Association of Colleges and Schools, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, and Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. A total of 100 schools were confirmed to have regional accreditation. The 100 accredited schools were located across 27 states in the United States and across the four regions defined by the U.S. Census Bureau (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). The name, location, and accreditation agency for each school were listed in a table and used as the sampling pool for principal interviews and document analysis of mission and vision statements. The reasoning behind this purposeful sampling strategy (Patton, 2015, p. 268) of using accredited Islamic schools for the sample is that the regional accreditation process requires that schools undergo a thorough and collective examination of their purpose and document plans for continuous school improvement (AdvancED, 2011). Also, in aspirational terms, achieving regional accreditation has become the aim of many Islamic schools in the United States (Keyworth, 2007, p. 32). Thus, studying these schools may give more sound conclusions and answers to the research questions.

A random number generator website (<http://www.random.org>) was used to randomize the list of 100 accredited schools that were used for the principal interview selection and mission and vision statement document analysis.

Principal Interviews

Selecting the Sample. The randomized list of 100 accredited schools in the United States was used to select 20 principals of full time accredited Islamic schools to participate in the interviews. This is 20% of the accredited school population. For grounded theory qualitative studies, having 20 participants meets the recommendations set forth by Creswell (2007, p. 157) to reach a point of saturation and establish a theory. The aim was to recruit 20 participants who were representative of schools from the four different regions of the United States as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau (2011). Table 1 and Figure 3 represent the number of accredited Islamic schools in the United States by region. In order to avoid oversampling from any one state, no more than three principals from a state were interviewed.

Table 1

Geographic Distribution of Accredited Islamic Schools in the U.S.

U.S. Census Region	Number of Accredited Islamic Schools
Northeast	11
South	47
Midwest	20
West	22

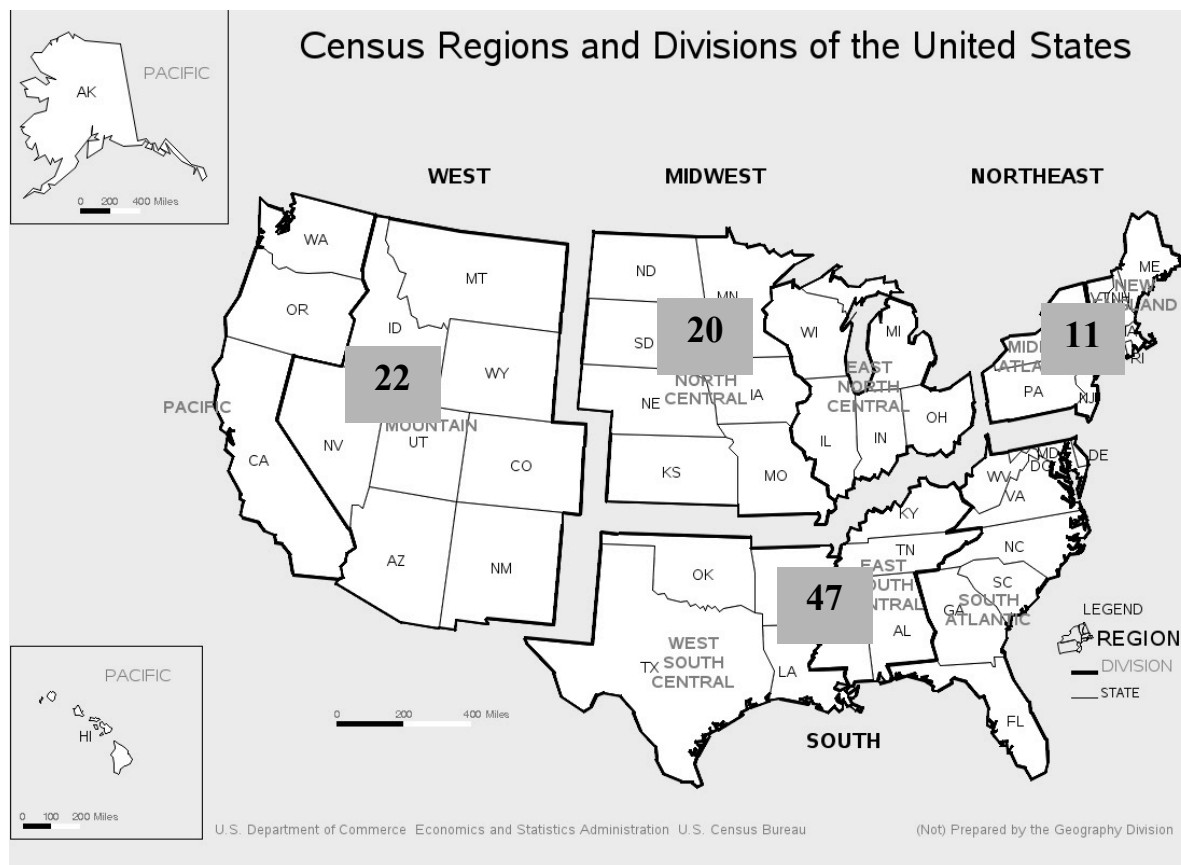


Figure 3: Geographic Distribution of Accredited Islamic Schools in the U.S.

Recruitment of Principals. Recruitment emails were sent in cycles from the randomized 100 accredited Islamic school list until 20 principals were recruited and agreed to participate in the phone interviews. Schools from all regions and all 27 states were selected to participate in the interviews. A total of 85 school principals were emailed until 20 participants were successfully recruited. Chapter 4 lists the number of principals interviewed per region.

In order to decrease researcher bias, the Islamic school that the researcher works with was excluded from the interview protocol. Also, schools that previously

participated in the pilot study were excluded from the interview pool. The interviewer had no previous established relationships with any the principals who were interviewed.

Recruitment emails were sent to principals explaining the purpose of the study, the procedures, confidentiality policy, and permission to withdraw from the research study at any time. Informed consent forms were emailed to the principals and oral consent was received from each participant before beginning the interviews. For each participant, only one interview was conducted. Interviews averaged 30 minutes. The principals were informed that the interviews would be recorded for the purposes of transcription and analysis and that confidentiality would be maintained per Middle Tennessee State University policies and procedures.

Data Collection. The interview process and protocol in this dissertation followed Patton’s (2015) guidelines and recommendations. Each interviewee was presented with a standard set of open-ended questions to ensure that “each person gets the same stimulus and interviewer effects are minimized” (Patton, 2015, p. 433). The participants were asked a series of open-ended questions in a semi-structured interview that lasted approximately 30 minutes. All of the interviews were conducted via phone due to geographic distance. Several background questions were asked at the beginning of the interview in order to gain insight about the educational background and professional work history of each principal. The background questions were followed by 10 open-ended interview questions about the principals’ beliefs and attitudes towards the purpose of education, schooling, challenges currently faced by Islamic schools in the United States, and the future of Islamic schools in the United States. Following is the list of the 10 interview questions:

1. What do you believe is the purpose of education?
2. What do you believe is the purpose of Islamic schools?
3. In what ways is your school different from public schools and other private schools?
4. What do you think a model Islamic school looks like?
5. What steps have you taken as a principal to better fulfill the mission and vision of your school?
6. What are some of the most important programs or services that you think every Islamic school should provide to its students?
7. There are schools that are academic focused and schools that aim to educate the whole child (holistic). Where do you think your school fits?
8. What do you envision for the future of Islamic education in the United States?
9. What do you think are some of the main challenges that Islamic schools in the United States are currently facing?
10. What is your vision for students that graduate from your school? What do you hope that they carry with them?

Analysis Plan. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher and emailed to the participants for member checking in order to confirm and verify the interview data. The interview data was approached with a grounded theory viewpoint, and coded according to Creswell's (2013) constant comparative analysis and Saldana's (2013) method of codes with emergent categories and themes. A combination of coding techniques and strategies were used in the first cycle of coding, which included values coding (Saldana, 2013, p. 110), in vivo coding (Saldana, 2013, p. 91), attribute coding

(Saldana, 2013, p. 69), and holistic coding (Saldana, 2013, p. 142). A process was designed for data analysis in order to increase the validity and trustworthiness of the data analysis procedures. For each individual, a participant ID (1-20) was created and used to track the responses of the participants. The data was organized in an Excel spreadsheet, and was analyzed extensively by interview question. A separate spreadsheet was created for each interview question in the initial first cycle coding process, and participant responses to interview questions were extracted from the transcripts and inserted into the spreadsheet rows by participant ID. In the column section, emergent codes were assigned and color-coded. The initial coding was analyzed by interview question. The interview data for each question was analyzed in three iterative cycles in order to reach a saturation point with the data. Emergent codes were initiated from the data by interview question. Frequency counts were established and were marked when the principals discussed certain codes, then tallied by code. After this process was completed for all the questions, the color codes from all the questions were compiled in a new spreadsheet for a holistic coding process. The researcher then established categories, themes, and patterns for the data in the second cycle of coding (Saldana, 2013, pp. 208, 209, 223) for analysis and conclusions. See Appendix C for the complete data set of mission and vision statements pool.

Trustworthiness of the Principal Interview Analysis. The researcher took the following intentional steps to increase Patton's (2015) perspective of validity and reliability of the principal interview data analysis. First, the researcher interviewed principals from a randomized purposeful sample of regionally accredited Islamic schools. Second, the sampling size of 20 principals increased the validity and credibility from

multiple perspectives. Third, member checking for accuracy and message clarity by participants and iterative cycles of coding from the grounded theory standpoint increased the likelihood that the findings would be established in data. Furthermore, the researcher's emic perspective and familiarity with Islamic school context and culture may increase the likelihood that an authentic and contextually relevant analysis was conducted.

Limitations and Delimitations. The researcher acknowledges that being the instrument of data collection and analysis, the study will not be free from preconceived notions and biases considering the nature of naturalistic inquiry (Patton, 2015). The delimitations of the principal interviews include the fact that this research inquiry presents the analysis of interviews from the perspective of a sample of accredited Islamic school principals who do not represent the entire Islamic school population. Twenty principals out of 100 were interviewed due to limitations of time and resources.

Mission and Vision Statements

Selecting the Sample. A document analysis (Patton, 2015, p. 136) of mission and vision statements of 50 accredited full time Islamic schools in the United States was conducted. The mission and vision statement document analysis was completed with the purposeful sample of regionally accredited full time Islamic schools in the United States listed on the Islamic School League of America website. (See chapter four for more specific details related to the selection process.) The same randomized list of 100 accredited Islamic schools that was used for the principal interviews was used for selecting schools for mission and vision analysis. The reasoning behind this purposeful sampling strategy (Patton, 2015) of analyzing the mission and vision statements of only

accredited Islamic schools is to increase the probability that the mission and vision statements were developed intentionally and purposefully by multiple members of the school organization. The regional accreditation process requires that schools go through a collective process of examining their purpose and creating/updating their mission and vision statements (AdvancED, 2011). The researcher is making the assumption that this reduces the likelihood that the mission and vision statements posted on school websites were representative of a single person or a fraction of the school community.

From the list of 100 accredited schools, a purposeful random sampling strategy similar to the protocol for principal interviews was used to select schools for analysis. Figure 2 presents the number of accredited Islamic schools in the United States by region. The U.S. Census Regions map was used to define the regions and the states included in each region: Northeast, South, Midwest, and West. Mission and vision statements from schools in all regions were included in the sample, as were mission and vision statements from at least one accredited school in each state. Also, in order to distribute the sample equitably across the states, no more than three schools from each state were included in the sample.

Data Collection. The data collection process for mission and vision statements included visiting each school's website, obtaining the mission and vision statements from the website or the school's accreditation report, and compiling all mission and vision statements in a word processing file for analysis. See Appendix C for the complete list of mission and vision statements.

Analysis Plan. The mission and vision statements were analyzed using a grounded theory viewpoint with codes, categories, and themes emerging from the text to

reveal the purpose of education and Islamic schooling, as presented in the mission and vision statements. The mission and vision data was reviewed and analyzed in iterative cycles by the researcher in order to gain better insight and understanding, as recommended by Patton (2015) and Creswell (2013, p. 183). The emerging codes were placed in columns and color-coded. The data was coded according to Creswell's (2013) constant comparative analysis and Saldana's (2013) method of codes with emergent categories and themes. A combination of coding techniques and strategies was used in the first cycle of coding, which included values coding (Saldana, 2013, p. 110), in vivo coding (Saldana, 2013, p. 91), attribute coding (Saldana, 2013, p. 69), and holistic coding (Saldana, 2013, p. 142). The researcher then established categories, themes, and patterns for the data in the second cycle of coding (Saldana, 2013, pp. 208, 209, 223) for analysis and conclusions.

Trustworthiness of the Mission and Vision Statement Analysis. The researcher took several intentional steps to increase Patton's (2015) perspective of the validity and reliability of the mission and vision statement analysis. First, the researcher randomly selected schools from a purposeful sample of regionally accredited Islamic schools. By choosing accredited schools for the sampling, the researcher increased the probability that members of the school community developed the mission and vision statements collectively and intentionally, since it is one of the indicators for regional accreditation. Second, to ensure representation from all 27 states with accredited Islamic schools, every state with at least one school was represented in the sample. Third, the random selection of schools from states with more than one accredited school decreased research bias in the selection process. Fourth, iterative cycles of coding from the

grounded theory standpoint increased the likelihood that the findings would emerge from the data. Fifth, the researcher's emic perspective and familiarity with the Islamic school context and culture may have increased the likelihood that an authentic and contextually relevant analysis was conducted.

Limitations and Delimitations. The researcher acknowledges that being the instrument of data collection and analysis, the study will not be free from preconceived notions and biases considering the nature of naturalistic inquiry. The delimitations of the mission and vision statement analysis included the fact that the analysis involved a sample of accredited Islamic schools and not the entire Islamic school population. Fifty schools out of 100 accredited schools were selected due to limitations of time and resources.

Researcher Positionality

As the instrument of data collection and analysis, the qualitative inquirer's credibility and authenticity play a major role in ensuring that perspectives, voices, and stories are reported accurately and interpreted authentically. The researcher's stance as an emic or insider is based on the lived experiences of a practicing Muslim person living in the United States, and as a Kurdish immigrant from Iraq who attended schools in Iraq and public schools in the United States. The emic perspective involves the researcher's active involvement with a localan accredited Islamic whole child school. The researcher is also connected with the Islamic school community through the Islamic School League of America (ISLA). Since the literature review entailed Arabic texts and terminology, it is noteworthy to mention that the researcher is fluent in Kurdish and Arabic in addition to the English language. The researcher is conscious of her reflexivity in this qualitative

inquiry. Patton (2015) affirms that “Reflexivity reminds the qualitative inquirer to be attentive to and conscious of the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and economic origins of one’s own perspective and voice as well as the perspective and voices of those one interviews and those to whom one reports” (p. 604).

CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Overview

The researcher conducted semi-structured phone interviews with a randomized purposeful sample of 20 principals from accredited Islamic schools across all four regions of the United States (Northeast, South, Midwest, and West). All the interviews were conducted from September to November of 2016. The same interview protocol was used for all the participants, as described in chapter three. All interviews were transcribed by the researcher and sent to the participants for member checking. The qualitative interview data was approached from a grounded theory viewpoint, and coded according to Creswell's (2013) constant comparative analysis and Saldana's (2013) method of codes with emergent categories and themes. A combination of coding techniques and strategies was used in the first cycle of coding, which included values coding (Saldana, 2013, p. 110), in vivo coding (Saldana, 2013, p. 91), attribute coding (Saldana, 2013, p. 69), and holistic coding (Saldana, 2013, p. 142). The interview data comprised more than 47,000 words, and was analyzed in iterative cycles until a saturation point was reached. Similar procedures were followed for the analysis of the 50 accredited Islamic school mission and vision statements, as described in chapter 3.

Research Question and Sub-questions

1. What are the educational beliefs and practices espoused by accredited Islamic schools in the United States?

- a. What are the common themes communicated by principals of accredited Islamic schools in the United States regarding the purpose of education and Islamic schooling?
- b. How are the educational beliefs and practices shared by principals and revealed in mission and vision statements of accredited Islamic schools indicative of educational experiences that address the academic, spiritual, social, emotional, and physical needs of students?
- c. What do principals of accredited Islamic schools identify as some of the common challenges that Islamic schools in the United States currently face?
- d. What do principals of accredited Islamic schools envision for the future of Islamic schooling in the United States?

Principal Interviews

The Sample. As presented in chapter three, the researcher compiled data on all of the 286 Islamic schools from the Islamic School League of America's (ISLA) website and verified the accredited schools with regional accreditation agency websites. The flow chart in Figure 2 (chapter three) outlines the process that the researcher undertook to complete this process. Of the 286 Islamic schools listed on ISLA's website (<https://theisla.org/schools>), a total of 100 schools were found to be accredited by regional accreditation agencies. These 100 schools were randomized and principals from all regions of the United States (Northeast, South, Midwest, and West) were recruited to participate in the study. Refer to chapter three for a detailed account of this research protocol. No identifiable information about any participants is shared in this dissertation.

The 20 principals were each given a randomly generated identifier number that was used for the analysis, references, and quotes.

Geographic Location of Principals. Recruitment emails were sent in cycles from the randomized 100 accredited Islamic school list until 20 principals were recruited and agreed to participate in the phone interviews. Schools from all regions were selected to participate in the interviews. Table 2 displays the number of principals who agreed to participate in the research study by region of the United States.

Table 2

Number of Accredited Islamic Schools by U.S. Region and Number of Interviewed Principals per Region

U.S. Region	Total Number of Accredited Islamic Schools in Region	Number of Principals Interviewed for this Study
Northeast	11	3
South	47	8
Midwest	20	5
West	22	4
Total	100	20

Gender of Principals. Table 3 presents the gender of the principals from accredited Islamic schools who participated in the interviews. A research protocol was created to identify the gender of all of the principals of accredited Islamic schools in the United States. This was intended to help identify one of the trends of leadership in Islamic schools. The researcher used tools such as the AdvancED school look-up tool which lists the name of the head of school and school websites. The researcher called one school for which the information was not located in either of these locations, to obtain the information. Table 3 represents the genders of accredited Islamic school

principals: 66% female and 34% male. The proportion of the gender of participants in the sample for this dissertation is well aligned and correlated with the sample pool: 65% female and 35% male.

Table 3

Gender of Accredited Islamic School Principals and Gender of Interviewed Principals

Gender	Gender of Accredited Islamic School Principals	Gender of Interviewed Principals
Female	66 (66%)	13 (65%)
Male	34 (34%)	7 (35%)
Total	100	20

Education Level and Experience. At the beginning of each of the 20 interviews, the principals were asked several background questions in order to gain insight about their educational experience and background. Table 4 presents the number of years in the field of education and the number of years as principal in their current position for each participant. All of the principals had more than 5 years of experience in the field of education, and eight principals had more than 20 years of experience in the field. With regard to the number of years as principal in their current position, more than half (11) have been in their current position for 5 years or less. Only one principal reported being in the current position for more than 20 years.

Table 4

Participants' Level of Experience in Education and Leadership

Range of Years	Experience in the Education Field	Number of Years as Principal in the Current Position
0-5 years	0	11
6-10 years	3	5
11-15 years	3	3
16-20 years	6	0
20 plus years	8	1
Total	20	20

(N= Number of Principals)

Half of the principals interviewed indicated that they have experience working outside of Islamic schools, including public schools and other faith-based schools. Fewer than half have worked mainly at Islamic schools. With regard to their reason for becoming principals of Islamic schools in the United States, participants shared different reasons. Eight of the principals shared that they were approached to take the leadership position, and had not intended to pursue the leadership career path. Many principals indicated that they believe it is their calling from God to improve Islamic schools and help the Muslim community and Muslim children.

Data Analysis of Principal Interviews

Overview. A process was designed for data analysis in order to increase validity and credibility of the data analysis procedures. After all the interviews were transcribed and sent to participants for member checking, the data was organized into a spreadsheet and analyzed by interview question. For each participant, a participant ID (1-20) was assigned and used to track the responses of the participants. A separate spreadsheet was created for each interview question in the initial first cycle of the coding process, and

participant responses to interview questions were extracted from the transcripts and inserted into spreadsheet rows according to participant ID. In the column section, emergent codes were assigned and color-coded. The initial coding was analyzed by interview question. The interview data for each question was analyzed in more than three iterative cycles in order to reach a saturation point with the data. Emergent codes were derived from the data. Frequency counts were established and were marked when the principals discussed certain codes, then tallied by code. After this process was completed for all the questions, the colors were assigned to codes and compiled from all the questions in a new spreadsheet for a holistic coding process. The researcher then established categories, themes, and patterns for the data in the second cycle of coding (Saldana, 2013, pp. 208, 209, 223) for further analysis.

Analysis of the Interview Questions. One of the main questions in this dissertation was to shed light on the educational beliefs and practices of principals of accredited Islamic schools in the United States. In this dissertation, educational beliefs and practices refer to the educational ideologies, educational philosophies, and overall educational beliefs and practices of the principals. In order to answer all the research questions, the researcher formulated 10 open-ended interview questions that asked principals to reflect on philosophical and practical topics. Following the data analysis from the interview questions, a holistic analysis is presented to answer the research questions and draw conclusions from the study. Below is a list of the interview questions:

1. What do you believe is the purpose of education?
2. What do you believe is the purpose of Islamic schools?

3. In what ways is your school different from public schools and other private schools?
4. What do you think a model Islamic school looks like?
5. What steps have you taken as a principal to better fulfill the mission and vision of your school?
6. What are some of the most important programs or services that you think every Islamic school should provide to its students?
7. There are schools that are academic focused and schools that aim to educate the whole child (holistic). Where do you think your school fits?
8. What do you envision for the future of Islamic education in the United States?
9. What do you think are some of the main challenges that Islamic schools in the United States are currently facing?
10. What is your vision for students that graduate from your school? What do you hope that they carry with them?

In the following subsections, the researcher presents an analysis and synthesis of the principal responses for each interview question.

Interview Question 1. The first question that was presented to the principals was a philosophical question that prompted the principals to reflect on what they believe to be the purpose of education. The principals were asked, “What do you believe is the purpose of education?” The principals approached the question in different ways, but some common themes arose from the analysis. Table 5 presents the different topics raised by this question, with the tally marks representing the number of principals who

discussed that particular topic as being part of the purpose of education. All of the principals indicated that the purpose of education is not academics only, and that education entails a much larger purpose. It is important to mention that the principals were not prompted with these topics, but rather presented them in their answers. Many of the principals discussed the notion of nurturing and developing well-rounded individuals in the many dimensions of development. As presented in Table 5, the topics included academics, citizenship and service to the community, personal development and finding one's purpose in life, life skills, character education and values, social and emotional skills, and college and career readiness.

Table 5

Analysis and Codes for Interview Question 1

Question Specific Code Groups	Number of Principals
Not just academics, Multipurpose, Balanced	20
Good citizens, Contribute to society, Serve community	12
Academics, Knowledge, Critical thinking	12
Personal development, Self exploration, Find their purpose	10
Skills, Tools, Prepare for life	10
Character education, Values	8
Socio-motional skills, Collaboration	6
Preparation for college and career	4

Note: This table presents groups of codes for this specific question.

Below are quotes from participants that highlight the types of responses that were given to this question:

Participant 3: “Everyone seeks education to better themselves academically, socially, behaviorally, and even emotionally and to attain the tools needed to not only survive in a social world but also to become productive and contributing citizens.”

Participant 4: “Develop a balanced individual who can serve the community that is around him and lead a healthy and balanced life for himself/herself.”

Participant 11: “To raise well rounded students to be productive citizens with a high moral compass.”

Participant 12: “Access the world in a way that will fulfill their own purpose in life.”

Participant 15: “Unless we are properly educated in all realms, or as many realms as possible, having a degree is not a criteria for education only.”

Participant 16: “Allow students time and space for self discovery and exploration, and to use the knowledge taught in school to help them find their higher purpose.”

Interview Question 2. The second question presented to the 20 principals was to reflect on the purpose of Islamic schools. The principals were asked, “What do you believe is the purpose of Islamic schools?” The principals approached the question in different ways, and some common themes arose from the analysis, as presented in Table 6. The majority of principals shared the importance of having the time, place, and space to incorporate spiritual education within the educational process—in essence, not separating the secular from the sacred in education. The principals pointed out that they want to nurture God-conscious individuals who understand the higher purpose of their life, and hope that this higher purpose is what inspires students to strive for excellence. The principals shared the importance of not compromising academic excellence and nurturing engaged and productive American citizens.

Table 6

Analysis and Codes for Interview Question 2

Question Specific Code Groups	Number of Principals
Islamic foundation, character education, spiritual	16
Good citizens, American Muslim, positive members of society	13
Academic excellence, life long learning, career success	12
Socio-emotional, environment, safety	11
Purpose in life, God conscious	6
Islamic framework, integration, not separating sacred from secular	5
Balanced Individual, Tarbiya	5

Note: This table presents groups of codes for this specific question.

Below are quotes from participants that highlight the types of responses that were given to this question.

Participant 3: “Islamic schools are meant to develop a Muslim American citizen.”

Participant 7: “I always believe that Muslims have been losing our identity. We need to go back, see who we are and what we did in the 11th century and what happened. We have lost that because we are not emphasizing education as much. We need to be educated. We need to help our kids be critical thinkers and do things to be leaders.”

Principal 10: “Intellectual capacity so they are successful in this world, and the intellectual capacity to make sure that they are benefiting the hereafter.”

Participant 11: “Create students that are balanced, can integrate their personality, their identity: Islamic, American, cultural ... we teach love and mercy and character education.”

Participant 20: “Building that strong foundation of identity and your place in the world. Being mindful.”

Interview Question 3. Each of the 20 principals was prompted to reflect on what differentiates the school that she/he leads from other public and private schools. The principals were asked, “In what ways is your school different from public schools and other private schools?” The responses to this question help to clarify why it is that these

Islamic schools exist and what it is that they provide that differentiates them from other schools. Table 7 lists the common topics discussed by the principals while describing their schools. The overwhelming majority discussed the importance of expanding education beyond academics and providing a safe and nurturing environment in which students can learn and practice their faith freely. They discussed the importance of nurturing the American Muslim identity and providing opportunities for students to become productive members of society by involving them in community service and service learning activities. Academic excellence is something that the principals continuously strive for, and having qualified teachers who expand their role beyond teaching and serve as mentors for the students.

Table 7

Analysis and Codes for Interview Question 3

Question Specific Code Groups	Number of Principals
Islamic foundation, spiritual education, character education	12
Academic excellence, high expectations	12
Socio-emotional, environment, safety	11
Tarbiya, balanced individual, whole child	10
Good citizens, American Muslim, positive members of society	8
Identity	8
Shared values, family like, mentors	6
Extracurricular activities	6
Integration, not separating sacred from secular	5
Highly qualified staff	4

Note: This table presents groups of codes for this specific question.

Below are some of the direct quotes from principals related to this interview question:

Participant 1: “We provide a space for students where they can live their faith and it is the norm.”

Participant 5: “They are not in the need to hide their Islamic identity. They are proud. They are practicing it freely.”

Participant 10: “We provide all the academic necessities to make sure these kids are ready for high school and college careers. At the same time ... building character and developing minds.”

Participant 14: “We have a strong focus on character development and really recognizing that education is not just about academics, but really about the whole child.”

Participant 15: “We expect our children to go over and beyond to serve humanity, to provide service to community, to engage themselves in giving, to become members of the larger community”.

Interview Question 4. All the 20 principals were asked to reflect on what they believe a model Islamic school is like and what it provides to the students and the community. The principals were asked, “What do you think a model Islamic school looks like? Why?” Similar themes emerged in this question, such as providing an excellent academic education and a strong Islamic foundation, but many of the principals reiterated the importance of the American Muslim and the importance of teaching religion within the context of where the students live. Many principals indicated the importance of involvement in the community, arguing that Islamic schools need to reach out more, integrating their students into society instead of sheltering them in a microcosm.

Table 8 lists the common categories that arose from principal responses to this question, followed by some direct quotations.

Table 8

Analysis and Codes for Interview Question 4

Question Specific Code Groups	Number of Principals
Religious education, morals and values, love of God, purpose	16
Balanced education, holistic, good humans	13
Good citizens, American Muslim, positive members of society	10
Academic excellence, high expectations	8
Integration, not separating sacred from secular	6
Family-like, relationships	7
Identity	7
Environment, safety	7
Not sheltered, integrated	7
Involve stakeholders, community partnerships	4

Note: This table presents groups of codes for this specific question.

Participant 1: “It should have everything that the students need to be successful in all areas of their education.”

Participant 2: “Simultaneously build the intellectual capacity and maintaining the Islamic values so that they create a model citizen.”

Participant 6: “Citizenship is integral to our curriculum and daily practices and preaching because our children are Muslim, but they are Americans.”

Participant 12: “Having the diversity within the school, meaning having teachers that are Muslim and of other faith traditions would be important because they are going to leave our school and go to the world where they are going to see a lot of other faith traditions.”

Participant 13: “Strong academics and a strong Islamic program that focuses on the holistic child.”

Interview Question 5. Each principal was asked to reflect on her/his school’s mission and share what steps she/he has taken as a leader of the school to better fulfill the mission of the school. The principals were asked, “What steps have you taken as a principal to better fulfill the mission and vision of your school?” The responses of all the 20 principals indicated that they are mission-driven and place high importance on the

mission of the school. Many principals maintained that they consider it important to involve the stakeholder in developing and implementing the mission of the school. With regard to what steps they have taken to better fulfill the mission statement, more than half of the principals observed that it is very important for them to ensure that the students are well integrated into the community at large. Many principals indicated that they fulfill this goal by engaging the students in a lot of community service and engaging with other schools, especially interfaith schools, such as Jewish and Christian schools. Table 9 lists the common themes that emerged from the responses to this question. The direct quotes from the principals provide the reader with types of answers that were given to this question.

Table 9

Analysis and Codes for Interview Question 5

Question Specific Code Groups	Number of Principals
Mission driven	20
Public service, community involvement	14
Integrated, interfaith	13
Academic excellence, high expectations	10
Good citizens, American Muslim, positive members of society	10
Spiritual components, character education, Islamic framework	10
Stakeholder involvement	9
Extracurricular activities, competitions, PE, art	8
Empowerment, leadership programs	7
Balanced education, whole child	5

Note: This table presents groups of codes for this specific question.

Participant 1: “We teach the vision, we teach the mission, and we teach the kids what that means, and we give them opportunities to practice those things.”

Participant 4: “We have provided students with opportunities to have an enriched curriculum that focuses on holistic child development.”

Participant 5: “I have started a partnership with one of the Jewish schools and two of the Catholic schools, many relationships with the local charter schools and public schools.”

Participant 7: “We have introduced a lot of outreach programs for our students ... We don’t want to live in a bubble. We want to be in the society outside and we have invited many times people to come to our school.”

Participant 9: “We had a mission and vision statement but when I came and I asked everybody what does that mean, nobody had even read it. So we had to revisit. We developed it with my staff.”

Participant 16: “We are taking steps to take it back to our vision. We have derailed from the vision as a new school, a little bit because of the pressure of trying to reach enrollment, and trying to make numbers match and trying to keep donors happy.”

Interview Question 6. Each principal was asked to identify the important programs and services that they think every Islamic school should provide for its students. The principals were asked, “What are some of the most important programs or services that you think every Islamic school should provide to its students?” Many of the principals maintained that many Islamic schools are at a point where they have attained accreditation and are providing good academics, and now they envision taking the schools to the next level of excellence. Table 10 lists the common topics discussed by the principals regarding important programs and services. The principals also indicated the importance of a relevant religious studies curriculum. They mentioned that many times, the religious studies teachers are the ones who are least qualified and are not receiving sufficient professional development. The principals also pointed out the importance of meeting the social and emotional needs of children by providing mentors, a school counselor, and a healthy school environment. Some of the principals mentioned that they wished to have more resources in order to open their doors to all students, including ELL students and students with special needs. Lack of resources often prevents

these schools from providing sufficient physical education, art, and other extracurricular and enrichment activities.

Table 10
Analysis and Codes for Interview Question 6

Question Specific Code Groups	Number of Principals
Academic excellence, college and career readiness	14
Relevant spiritual education, character education	13
Socio-emotional health, counselor, safe environment	12
Good citizens, American Muslims, positive members of society	9
Extracurricular activities, PE, art, enrichment	8
Integrated, interfaith	6
Stakeholder involvement, teamwork, relationships	6
Empowerment, leadership programs	5
Meet the needs of all students, ELL, special needs, gifted	5
Identity	4

Note: This table presents groups of codes for this specific question.

- Participant 3: “I think ESL and learning disabilities and special needs children programs are really important services that we should offer in the school.”
- Participant 6: “I think all Islamic schools today have taken major strides when it comes to academics and when it come to a lot of things, but I think the one thing that we still need to push for, you know, is getting our kids out there and making them feel like they are part of the fabric of the community.”
- Participant 8: “Aside from the typical ones, academic and Islamic, I think character development and citizenship involvement kind of activities and something that I have in mind, but I did not see yet an opportunity for it, which is along the journalism club for upper school, some kind of involvement in the politics of the day.”
- Participant 11: “I see the benefit of what a rigorous athletic program can do for a child: rejuvenation, strength, endurance, perseverance, listening, direction, and I don’t think our kids get it enough because they don’t participate.”
- Participant 17: “We always have the mission and vision in every classroom, in every board meeting we have it and whenever we are making a decision, we are like okay, go back to the mission and vision.”

Interview Question 7. Each principal was presented with a question that asked him/her to reflect on whether the school that he/she is leading is more academic centered or more aligned with the holistic philosophy of education. The principals were asked, “There are schools that are academic focused and schools that aim to educate the whole child (holistic). Where do you think your school fits?” Sixteen out of the 20 principals indicated that they believe, hope, or strive for their schools to be aligned with the holistic philosophy of education. Four of the principals indicated that they believe they are in between. Some of the principals claimed that there is pressure from parents and the society to have certain academic standards and a certain emphasis on standardized test scores. Some of the principals stated that they are able to apply more holistic education pedagogy like Montessori in elementary grades, but once the students enter middle school, the pressure of academic achievement makes it harder to accomplish. See Table 11 below for this question.

Table 11

Analysis and Codes for Interview Question 7

Question Specific Code Groups	Number of Principals
Holistic education is goal, trying to be holistic, balanced	16
Academic excellence, critical thinking	14
Character development, spiritual, soul, moral	12
Socio-emotional, positive relationships	9
Physical education, well-being	7
In between of holistic and academic centered	4

Note: This table presents groups of codes for this specific question.

Participant 3: “I think in our early childhood groups, from three to about 2nd grade, I would say that our school is more holistically focused.”

Participant 14: “I think we aim to be more holistic. I do think that there are some things that we could do better, for example like with physical development.”

Participant 16: “I think absolutely our goal is to educate in a holistic way. I think that word is very liberally used and I don’t think that people really know what it means.”

Participant 18: “I think we are more holistic because although we care a lot about the academics, it is not what pushes the school.”

Participant 19: “I think we are better at the academic part sometimes, but we do want our kids to be a unit, and not just based on one or the other thing. We are trying to raise leaders and good people. That is actually most important.”

Participant 20: “It is always a struggle because the parents want to be the highest academically achieving and we try to stress to them that is not everything.”

Interview Question 8. The principals were prompted to share what they envision for the future of Islamic schools in the United States. The principals were asked, “What do you envision for the future of Islamic education in the United States?” Seventeen of the principals offered an optimistic outlook for more growth and more demand for Islamic schools in the United States. Three of the principals were unsure about growth and indicated that there might be changing demands as the Muslim population grows. Some principals observed that they envision Islamic schools being more integrated and providing such a high quality education and environment that people of other faiths may be attracted to these schools, citing examples of how some children of Muslim families attend Catholic schools. More than half of the principals claimed that they feel disconnected from other Islamic schools and Islamic school leaders. They feel that they are “all islands in ourselves.” Many indicated that they would like to be more connected, especially accredited Islamic schools, which are aiming to reach for the next level of

excellence. The principals agreed that they envision schools having more qualified staff and better retention rates. They are optimistic about a younger generation of candidates working in Islamic schools. Table 12 presents the common themes and topics discussed by principals regarding this question.

Table 12
Analysis and Codes for Interview Question 8

Topics Question Specific Code Groups	Number of Principals
Optimistic, growth, more demand	17
Islamic schools more connected, networking, less competition	12
Integrated, interfaith, model for other schools, not for Muslims only	9
More qualified staff, younger generation, retention, support staff	9
Nurture good human beings, peaceful, character education	6
Excellent education, curriculum	5
More funding and resources	4
Uncertainty, political climate	3
Unsure, changing demands	3

Note: This table presents groups of codes for this specific question.

Below are some of the direct quotes from the principals in response to this question.

Participant 2: “An organization that can provide them [students] to go to the top level, maintain a good character so that when you come out graduated from there, you will be a good practicing role model citizen of the United States.”

Participant 9: “There is a positive movement in the U.S. regarding the Islamic education. Also, we still need to work on it. We have a lot of work to do.”

Participant 10: “I think we are at the second steep turn right now. First, we were just trying to start the process, now it is like how do you take it and make it more professional? How do you take it to the next level?”

Participant 11: “I would love to work with more principles. Number one, I don’t feel like we have a support group or support network ... So, we are all islands in ourselves.”

Participant 17: “I envision for all Muslim schools, my vision is that they are knowledgeable, that they have a strong base of Islam, an open Islam, not the cultural Islam.

Interview Question 9. The principals were asked, “What do you think are some of the main challenges that Islamic schools in the United States are currently facing?” Table 13 lists the common challenges identified by the principals. The most common challenge that the principals addressed was the financial challenge. The principals stated that they have to maneuver a delicate balance of how much tuition they can charge because they want to be affordable and don’t want to create the perception that Islamic schools are only for the elite in the community. They also feel that having more financial resources and stability will help them in many aspects, including teacher retention. One of the challenges that was named with frustration by half of the principals is the negative perception that they receive from within their own Muslim community. They feel that there is a certain perception on the part of community members that might stem from the early years of Islamic school establishment and hasn’t diminished within the community. The interviews were conducted between September and November of 2016, around the time of the U.S. election. Some of the principals shared concern for the safety and security of their schools. They indicated a level of uncertainty that they feel. Some of the principals also observed that they don’t want to be in a microcosm and want to connect with the larger community.

Table 13

Analysis and Codes for Interview Question 9

Question Specific Code Groups	Number of Principals
Financial struggles, resources	15
Hiring and retaining qualified staff, dedicate manpower, training	11
Not valued, negative perception from Muslim community, stigma	10
Tuition based, not only for elite	8
Safety, current events, negative perception about Muslims	6
Not integrating enough, connecting with the larger community	5
Uncertainty, political climate	3
Parent expectations, academic centered	3

Note: This table presents groups of codes for this specific question.

Below are some of the direct quotes from principals with regard to this question.

Participant 4: “We need dedicated Muslims willing to sacrifice more: manpower ... dedicated to the concept of Islamic education.”

Participant 8: “Number one, financing issues. Number two, resources ... The third issue is the perception in the community. There are still a lot of people who feel that Islamic schools are only about teaching Islamic materials.”

Participant 9: “The challenges are enormous. I think the number one challenge that I had to deal with as a principal was to make myself being recognized by my own community.”

Participant 17: “Funding is the biggest issue because of the teacher turnover.”

Participant 19: “When you are in Islamic schools, you wear many hats.”

Interview Question 10. The principals were asked to share the aspirations and visions they have for the graduates of their schools. Table 14 lists the common themes and categories that were shared by the principals regarding this question. Almost all the principals expressed the importance of their graduates being God-centered and maintaining their faith. They wish for their graduates to be well-rounded, balanced, and good human beings. Many of the principals pointed to the importance of the American

Muslim identity, being good citizens, and giving back to the community at large. They want the students to be academically empowered and equipped to be successful in life and in their careers. Below are some of the direct quotations from the principals in response to this question.

Table 14

Analysis and Codes for Interview Question 10

Question Specific Code Groups	Number of Principals
God centered, good character, represent their faith	17
Academically empowered, successful	11
American Muslims, proud of their identity	10
Well-rounded, balanced, good human beings	10
Citizenship, give back to the larger community, contribute	10
Twenty-first century skills	5
Leadership, activism	5
Integrated	3

Note: This table presents groups of codes for this specific question.

Participant 1: “Our vision is that they would leave here dedicated to their faith and be able to articulate their faith really well, and they are academically empowered to do whatever they would like to wish to do in this life.”

Participant 2: “Not only will they [students] maintain their academic excellence, but also preserve the Islamic morals and values.”

Participant 5: “My vision for my students graduating from this school to be very good Muslim American citizens in the sense of, they are proud of their Islamic identity, they are proud of their national identity.”

Participant 14: “I would hope that they would leave with a sense of confidence in their Muslim identity, and being comfortable in their skin, recognizing their obligation to serve God and to serve humanity, and just having that sense of taqwa (piety).”

Participant 20: “I think it is that sense of self, who I am as a Muslim, who am I as a Muslim American, who am I as a citizen.”

Patterns and Themes Across Principal Interview Data. After analyzing the data by interview question, a holistic coding of all the data was completed and all the codes were consolidated. Table 15 presents the progression of codes to categories and then to themes. The codes were categorized, then the categories were assigned phrases grounded in data and representative of the codes. Each category has a frequency count indicating how many of the principals addressed that category throughout the interview data. The categories were then combined to form themes. It is important to note that general and non-leading interview questions were asked, and that principals were not prompted to address the codes listed in the table. For example, the principals were not prompted to discuss citizenship, yet they addressed it quite often, voluntarily. The categories and themes are discussed below. Distilling large amounts of data is considered reductionist in nature, and has its strengths and weaknesses. This process was necessary in order to present information to build understanding and awareness of the principal interview findings.

The following table presents the codes, categories, and themes across all interview data.

Table 15

Codes, Categories, and Themes across All Interview Data

Codes →	Categories→	Themes
Not just academics, Balanced, Well rounded, Personal development, Self exploration, Finding their purpose, Tarbiya, Whole child, Reflective, Holistic, Good humans, Holistic goal, Comprehensive personality, Balanced Muslims, Skills, Tools, Prepare for life, Integrated education, Not separating secular and sacred education	Balanced Education (20)	Meeting the Spiritual, Academic, Social, Emotional, and Physical needs of American Muslim students
Good character, Moral compass, Values, Religious education, Islamic framework, Integration, Islamic foundation, Love Allah, True Islam, Purpose of life, Faith, Relevant spiritual education, Soul, Heart, Ihsan, Moderate Islam, Peaceful, God-centered, Grounded in faith, Maintain faith, Arabic	Spiritual and Character Education (20)	
Academic excellence, Lifelong learning, Knowledge, Career success, High expectations, Rigor, Scholarship, state requirements, Critical thinking, Curriculum, Secular education, Achievement, Intellectual, 21 st Century skills, Similar to regular schools in academics	Academic Excellence (20)	
Identity, Social and emotional health, Proud and comfortable of their identity, American Muslims, Sense of belonging, Counselor	Emotionally Healthy American Muslims (18)	
Physical education, Health, Physical wellbeing, Sports	P.E. & Health (14)	
Art, Extracurricular activities, Clubs, Competitions	Art & Extracurricular (10)	
Good citizens, Contribute to society, Serve the community, American Muslims, Responsibility to others, Public service, Engaged citizens, Citizenship, Give back	Productive and Engaged American Muslim citizens (18)	Engaged and Productive American Muslims in Larger Community
Not sheltered, Exposed to the outside world, Interfaith, Not insular, Partnership with other schools, Not only for Muslims, Tolerance More inclusive, Better relationships	Engaged, Interfaith (17)	
Leadership programs, Empowerment, Leadership qualities, Activism, Representatives of their faith	Leaders (14)	
Environment, Safety, Positive climate	Environment (16)	Environment & Relationships
Family like, Mentors, Strong relationships, Teamwork	Role Models & Relationships (14)	
Community needs, Involve stakeholders, Parent education	Stakeholder Involvement (14)	
Financial struggles, Funding, More resources, Tuition based, Finding a balance- not only for elite	Financial Struggles (18)	Internal and External Challenges for Islamic Schools
Have more qualified staff, Teacher retention, Professional development, More support staff	Hire and Retain Qualified Staff (14)	
Not valued enough, Negative perception from internal and external community, Stigma, Parent expectations, Parents academic centered	Negative Perception from Internal and External Community Members (12)	
Need to be more connected, More established, More networking with other I.S., More streamlined, Accreditation, Stability	Establish and Connect (10)	
Have resources to accommodate all students, More focus on students that need Ell and special needs services, Diversity	Accommodate all Students (9)	
Optimistic about growth of I.S., More demand for Islamic Schools, Elementary Grades, Need for I.S., Next Level	Islamic School Growth in the U.S. (17)	
Unsure about Growth, Many challenges, Changing demands, Uncertainty, Political climate	Little or No Growth (3)	Islamic School Growth in the United States

Theme 1: Meeting the Spiritual, Academic, Social, Physical and Emotional

Needs of Muslim Students. The principals of Islamic schools addressed not only the academic dimension of learning, but also other realms of development including spiritual, academic, social, and emotional needs of students, as highlighted in Table 16 below, in varying frequencies. More than half of the principals addressed providing physical education, health, art, and extracurricular activities for their students. The categories in this theme are discussed below, and direct quotations from the principals are provided. Table 16 lists the categories for this theme.

Table 16

Principal Interviews Theme 1: Meeting the Spiritual, Academic, Social, Emotional, and Physical Needs of American Muslim Students

Categories →	Theme →
Balanced Education (20)	Meeting the Spiritual, Academic, Social, Emotional, and Physical needs of American Muslim students
Spiritual and Character Education (20)	
Academic Excellence (20)	
Emotionally Healthy American Muslims (18)	
P.E. & Health (14)	
Art & Extracurricular (10)	

A balanced education. All of the principals indicated that they aim to provide an educational experience for their students that addresses not only academics, but also other important dimensions of development. Some of the codes used were “well rounded education,” “personal development,” “holistic,” “integrated,” “tarbiya,” “comprehensive,” and many others, as listed in Table 15 above.

Participant 4: “Develop a balanced individual who can serve the community that is around him [student] and lead a healthy and balanced life.”

Participant 6: “What sets us apart is that real focus on character building.

Participant 12: “We are looking at the academic, the spiritual, the physical, the socio-emotional. All those areas of the child are important and equally important to us.”

Participant 15: “We should be focusing on the whole child and not just only one aspect.”

Participant 19: “I think we are better at the academic part sometimes, but we do want our kids to be a unit, and not just based on one or the other thing. We are trying to raise leaders and good people. That is actually most important.”

Spiritual and character education. All of the principals identified an important function of Islamic schools, which is to provide an environment that practices and celebrates spiritual and character education. Some of the codes used by principals for this category were “character education,” “spiritual education,” “God-consciousness,” “*Ihsan* (excellence driven by faith),” “peaceful,” and others, as listed in Table 15. Many of the principals mentioned the vision of integrating spirituality within the curriculum, as oppose to creating two separate entities. They aim to make education less compartmentalized.

Participant 1: “We get to tie everything to God you know, when the kids are learning science, we can refer to Allah and talk about his creation.”

Participant 4: “A statement that we often repeat, and that is the heart of education is the education of the heart.”

Participant 10: “One thing is why we say character is the whole idea is what we call *tarbiya* training and having them understand their whole purpose.”

Participant 13: “Educate our own kids and educate the world on the beauty and truth of Islam and how you can live a whole life and not think that religion and science are separate.”

Participant 15: “Offer the best education, but integrate it under the umbrella of Islam itself, principles and values.”

Participant 19: “Be very strong in teaching the values of Islam, giving a strong base, but we should teach it with the context of how the kids are living here and now.”

Academic excellence. All of the principals emphasized the importance of academic excellence and preparing students for success. The principals felt disappointed that many people have a negative perception about Islamic schools in this regard. They stated that many think that they only teach Islamic subjects and don't offer academic excellence and rigor. The principals observed that their students do very well on standardized tests, and outperform students in the local public schools.

Participant 2: “Academic excellence in an Islamic environment.”

Participant 6: “A focus on academics and we encourage the student's academic achievement.”

Participant 15: “I would want our Islamic schools to offer the best possible academics, best possible rigorous curriculum to allow our students to go to the best universities in USA or abroad.”

Participant 18: “I think academically alhamdulillah, we are doing better than the state.”

Participant 19: “Offer high academics because we are trying to raise leaders.”

Emotionally healthy American Muslims. Eighteen of the 20 principals pointed to the importance of identity development and developing a positive identity as an American Muslim. Some of the common codes that the principals used to describe this category are “identity,” “American Muslim,” “social and emotional,” and others.

Participant 5: “They [students] are not in the need to hide their Islamic identity. They are proud. They are practicing it freely. They don't feel that they are a minority at the school.”

Participant 7: “We have to have programs that they [students] can be a part of so they can develop an identity, a strong identity of a Muslim American.”

Participant 12: “All our kids have their strong identity as American Muslims.”

Participant 14: “I would hope that they [students] would leave with a sense of confidence in their Muslim identity, and being comfortable in their skin, recognizing their obligation to serve God and to serve humanity, and just having that sense of taqwa (piety).”

Participant 20: “Building that strong foundation of identity and your place in the world. Being mindful. Not only being strong in who you are, but being present and being, and having the ability to be present for others.”

The principals see Islamic schools as a place where students develop a positive sense of self and don't have to conform in order to fit in.

Physical education and health. Physical education and health were addressed by 14 of the principals across the interview data. The principals mentioned the importance of providing sports and physical education for students. A few of the principals indicated that even though they see the value and importance of physical education and health, the scarcity of funds and resources limits full implementation in this area.

Participant 6: “We provide them obviously with gym. It is only twice a week unfortunately because the schedule doesn't allow for more than that, but we have after school sports, we have fencing, we have tennis practice.”

Participant 11: “Our jump rope team goes and performs at different schools and we compete in different athletic programs like cross country.”

Participant 13: “We can't forget about PE. We can't forget about art. I feel like it is hard to put everything in a day, but let's not forget children are still children and they need that time to be, have a campus where they can really run and play sports and draw.”

Participant 14: “There are some things that we could do better, for example like with physical development. You know, we have PE and Karate, but you know it is not everyday. It is twice a week. So, just having more of that, but definitely the conversations that we have with our staff are all about trying to address all aspects of child development.”

Participant 20: “The wellness program is really more mental health and we also have physical health and in that family life education.”

Art and extracurricular activities. Across the interview data, 10 of the 20 principals discussed art and other extracurricular activities. Some principals saw this as a

very important area, while others did not address it. Like physical education, this is one of the areas that are affected by funds and resources.

Participant 2: “We also provide the students with competitions, like we go for the regional science fair, we go for the mathematics competition ... American Mathematics Competition ... Olympiads for chemistry, we also go for the history fair, our students are involved in the spelling bee too, and then the debate.”

Participant 3: “We have added arts competitions, so we have like an art gallery every year, and we encourage students who are not academically, they are not necessarily the elite in the academic world, but they are elites in the artistic world. So, we have provided them an avenue to focus on their artistic side.”

Participant 11: “I really see the benefit of having a strong athletic program and having a strong arts program.”

Participant 13: “We can’t forget about art.”

Participant 18: “I think the school needs to provide its students with extra curricular activities and other type of fun activities that are built in, like thematic activities.”

Theme 2: Engaged and Productive American Muslims. This theme encompasses the categories of nurturing productive and engaged American Muslim citizens, being engaged in the larger community outside of the Islamic school, and fostering leadership qualities to bring about positive change in the lives of students and in the community. The categories in this theme are discussed below, with direct quotations from the principals provided. Table 17 lists the categories for this theme.

Table 17

Principal Interviews Theme 2: Engaged and Productive American Muslims in the Larger Community

Categories →	Theme →
Productive and Engaged American Muslim citizens (18)	Engaged and Productive American Muslims in Larger Community
Engaged, Interfaith (17)	
Leaders (14)	

Productive and engaged American Muslim citizens. Throughout the interview data, 18 of the principals addressed the notion of the productive and engaged American Muslim citizen. The principals cited the importance of fostering citizenship in their students and providing opportunities for children to give back to the larger community.

Participant 6: “We decided that citizenship is integral to our curriculum and daily practices and preaching because our children are Muslim, but they are Americans. So, making sure that, striking the balance, and that is the model Islamic school between our Islamic teachings obviously and us being Americans.”

Participant 9: “A place that allows them to celebrate being an American.”

Participant 10: “The necessary tools to become life long learners, to be good citizens for the society.”

Participant 17: “Our mission and vision talks about being American Muslims and also talks a lot about service learning. So our kids, any community event that is here, [this school] brings the most students.”

Participant 19: “We are also trying to make sure that our kids are good citizens and they care about other people.”

Engaged, interfaith. Across the interview data, 17 of the principals maintained that they believe it is important for Islamic schools to become better engaged with the community at large. The principals identified the importance of students being involved in experiences and activities where they work and interact with people in the larger community and outside of the Islamic school through interfaith activities, community service activities, academics, sports, and so forth.

Participant 1: “They [students and Islamic schools] need to reach out more and connect with those around them.”

Participant 5: “We [Islamic schools] should not bring them up in a box.”

Participant 7: “We have introduced a lot of outreach programs for our students. We take our students to clean the public parks, we take them to homeless shelters, senior citizen housing. We actually go and spend time meeting the elderly. So we have evolved, we don’t want to live in a bubble.”

Participant 15: “We expect our children to go over and beyond to serve humanity, to provide service to community, to engage themselves in giving,

to become members of the larger community, not just the Muslim community, but become members of the larger community.”

Participant 17: “We are really strong interfaith.”

Leaders. Nurturing leadership qualities and providing leadership opportunities was mentioned by 14 of the principals. Principals cited the importance of fostering leadership skills both within and outside the school. For example, students are given opportunities to give sermons on Fridays, and to be involved in programs like model UN outside of the school.

Participant 6: “Leadership programs that have also been introduced into the school also foster that sense of leadership, such as student council and our National Elementary Honor Society.”

Participant 7: “That is our aim for them to be confident enough to stand up and be who they are.”

Participant 9: “The programs for example, we are involved in Model UN, we are involved in so many different programs, leadership programs and it is all directly related to our mission and vision.”

Participant 14: “We have different programs where like different service oriented programs, starting from a very young age so that students understand that they have a commitment to give back to others and so for example like, for every grade level, we have the Children Of Charity project where children come up with a service project that they will conduct over the course of the year.”

Participant 20: “We have programs developed in our school where they are leadership programs so there is a lot of mentoring here.”

Theme 3: Environment and Relationships. When discussing Islamic schools, many principals cited environment and relationships. The categories in this theme include school environment, positive role models and relationships, and stakeholder involvement. Many of the principals mentioned the importance of a positive Islamic environment as one of the basic needs that Islamic schools need to meet. The categories in this theme are discussed below, with direct quotations from the principals provided.

Table 18 lists the categories for this theme.

Table 18

Principal Interviews Theme 3: Environment and Relationships

Categories →	Theme →
Environment (16)	Environment & Relationships
Role Models & Relationships (14)	
Stakeholder Involvement (14)	

Environment. Sixteen of the principals discussed the importance of the environment as a differentiating factor for Islamic schools. The schools aim to provide an Islamic environment that meets the spiritual, safety, and emotional needs of children.

Participant 2: “Academic excellence in an Islamic environment.”

Participant 9: “Provide students with a safe Islamic environment where they can learn and grow without compromising their core values and to be bothered with the pressures that the kids their age face.”

Participant 15: “Providing health and safety to all children in an Islamic environment.”

Participant 16: “A more individual, more relaxed environment where people have the space to really achieve and reach their potential.”

Participant 17: “Provide them a safe environment and to provide them targeted instruction for each child.”

Role models and relationships. Sixteen of the principals cited the importance of positive relationships and mentorship in the school. They aim to provide the students with loving and caring relationships based on faith.

Participant 7: “It is more like a family, a school is more like a family where the kids feel close to the teachers and so we are an extension of their family at home. So it is this sense that they are very genuine, very caring, and loving.”

Participant 8: “A child is not just a student, but part of the school family.”

Participant 10: “The idea of getting kids involved and using positive energy, positive attitudes.”

Participant 18: “That community, faith based kind of relationship and family exist in this facility.”

Participant 19: “We get to be more like a family unit because the goals for raising our kids is the same as the parents.”

Stakeholder involvement. Fourteen of the principals mentioned the importance of stakeholder involvement in the school. Some principals discussed this involvement in terms of formulating the mission and vision; others discussed it in terms of feedback, or making parents part of the school's learning community.

Participant 5: "The programs and services that should be provided to those kids should start as I say from the community. The community sent these kids to this school for a reason. So, I have to design some programs to serve the purpose of having this school and for this community."

Participant 6: "We allow parents to give us feedback."

Participant 12: "A lot of parent education and teacher education and trying to get everyone's buy in the vision, the bigger vision."

Participant 15: "Break down the mission and vision and discuss it with all the staff, with the parents, with the community. I believe that who we are, we must send the message out and communicate with all our stakeholders."

Participant 20: "Strong partnerships with teachers to students, teachers to teachers, include the parents, include community organizations, not just the masjid."

Theme 4: Internal and External Challenges. When discussing challenges facing Islamic schools in the United States, the one mentioned most often was the financial challenge. Another challenge that principals reported was negative perceptions from within the community. The principals cited the isolation that they feel from other Islamic schools. Detailed descriptions by category are provided below. Table 19 lists the categories for this theme.

Table 19

Principal Interviews Theme 4: Internal and External Challenges for Islamic Schools

Categories →	Theme →
Financial Struggles (18)	Internal and External Challenges for Islamic Schools
Hire and Retain Qualified Staff (14)	
Negative Perception from Internal and External Community Members (12)	
Establish and Connect (10)	
Accommodate all Students (9)	

Financial struggles. When asked to discuss some of the challenges for Islamic schools, 18 of the principals cited financial struggles as a hindering factor to the growth of Islamic schools. They observed that they continuously have to balance between being affordable to the Muslim community at large, while at the same time being able to provide resources and qualified staff in order to fulfill their vision.

Participant 4: “Anyone you are going to ask this question working in Islamic schools is going to start immediately pointing to the financial issue, but believe me it is not going to be an issue if we have the will as a community.”

Participant 12: “I would say funding probably more than anything else to be honest with you because I think money can do a lot of things for a school.”

Participant 13: “It’s always finding that balance of making it affordable for parents so that Islamic schools are not for elite Muslims, that Islamic schools can be for all Muslims.”

Participant 17: “Funding is the biggest issue.”

Participant 19: “We have to keep our tuition at a certain level because of our families. We have families here with six kids. It is kind of a family school. So, we have to be affordable also.”

Hire and retain qualified staff. Fourteen of the 20 principals discussed the challenge of hiring and maintaining qualified staff as part of the challenges facing Islamic schools in the United States. Teacher turnover is an issue that many Islamic schools face. Some principals maintained that many times it stems from the low salaries, considering

that Islamic schools struggle with financial resources. Others claimed that if teachers feel that the school environment and culture are positive and growth-centered, then the teachers are more likely to stay, even with less pay.

Participant 4: “Manpower that is dedicated to Islam first and foremost and dedicated to a sense of mission, and not somebody that just kind of stops by, spends some time and moves on to another place, and then another place and so on, but somebody who is dedicated to the concept of Islamic education.”

Participant 12: “Having teachers that are Muslim and of other faith traditions would be important because they are going to leave our school and go to the world where they are going to see a lot of other faith traditions.”

Participant 9: “We need to hire qualified educators, preferably, educators who are born, raised and educated in America and then they come back and teach our children and for that you need money.”

Participant 11: “Teacher shortage, not having enough qualified Muslim teachers. It really inhibits our growth.”

Participant 20: “Finding teachers, finding qualified teachers who are either trained in the philosophy that your school uses, or are willing to be open to that approach because it is not your traditional teaching approach.”

Negative perception from internal and external community members. When discussing challenges, 12 of the principals cited the challenge of negative perception from the Muslim community and the community at large. According to the principals, the Muslim community often doesn't see the value that Islamic schools provide to the community, and many times the community looks down upon the school in light of how the school might have operated in the past.

Participant 3: “Fighting this image that we are just really good at Islamic teachings but the subjects, core academic areas are still subpar.”

Participant 9: “I think the number one challenge that I had to deal with as a principal was to make myself being recognized by my own community. So, to earn the respect from their own community.”

Participant 8: “There are still a lot of people who feel that Islamic schools are only about teaching Islamic materials. It is a perception out there.”

Participant 17: “Another thing I think in challenges is being accepted by others. A lot of people ask what do you teach? They are always asking you what do you teach?”

Participant 18: “Negative criticism of the families that don’t enroll their children in the program. It is not the community that is enrolled, it is the community that is not enrolled.”

Establish and connect. Ten of the principals discussed the desire to be more connected with other Islamic schools. Several of the principals cited the need for more organization and leadership within the Islamic school community, and gave examples of Catholic schools.

Participant 1: “I like to see us more organized, more connected and more financially stable too.”

Participant 11: “We are all islands in ourselves.”

Participant 12: “It would be nice if we had our own association so we can share resources with each other ... especially among accredited Islamic schools to help us develop better boards, to prepare our principals and heads of schools.”

Participant 16: “There is no person or authority or organization ... some sort of organization that can see the higher purpose for Islamic schools.

Participant 18: “I like to see the Islamic schools form more of a unity, like their own, you know like how the Catholic schools have, I think we need to unite more and collaborate.”

Accommodate all students. Nine of the principals discussed the importance of striving to accommodate all students and not turning students away because of a lack of services. Due to limited resources, many Islamic schools are not able to accommodate students who need additional services, such as ELL and special needs students.

Participant 1: “It is also essential that we have services, and this is the part that we struggle as Islamic schools, is because we have limited resources ... giving students and additional help, like tutoring services and additional services for kids who may have learning disabilities, as well as providing for those gifted students, providing them chances to be challenged and flourish.”

Participant 3: “ELL and learning disabilities and special needs children programs are really important services that we should offer in the school.”

Participant 4: “I think some of the services that we should have is for example programs for new immigrants, ESL students, new Muslim students, programs for our special Ed. group, which again as our population is growing, those needs are growing as well.”

Participant 14: “The resources to be able to meet the needs of diverse students.”

Participant 16: “Helping each individual child reach their potential and supporting the parents and the students in every way, of course in our capacity.”

Theme 5: Islamic School Growth in the United States. The principals were prompted to reflect on the future and growth of Islamic schools in the United States. Seventeen of the principals were optimistic about growth, while three were hesitant. Table 20 lists the categories for this theme.

Table 20

Principal Interviews Theme 5: Islamic School Growth in the United States

Categories →	Theme →
Islamic School Growth in the U.S. (17)	Islamic School Growth in the United States
Little or No Growth (3)	

Islamic school growth in the United States. Seventeen of the 20 principals indicated that they envision growth and acceptance of Islamic schools in the United States.

Participant 5: “I am sure that Islamic education in the United States is booming ... even though we have difficulties, such as funding and such things but I think we are growing steadily.”

Participant 8: “I would hope that sometime, the Islamic schools would be a magnet to non-Muslim students, we do so good of a job ... without converting to Islam, they would say the best thing for my child is to send them to an Islamic school.”

Participant 13: “Just like Muslims would go to Catholic and Muslims would go to others, could we be at a point where we are that strong as in educating the whole child and in character and in academics that even non-Muslims would want to attend our schools. To see how strong of a character and leader these children are. I really wish for that. That we are a model to others.”

Participant 15: “I think Islamic schools should have a very strong place in the United States.

Participant 19: “The thing that is most exciting to me is to see the younger generation taking up on it and making it even better.”

Little or no growth. Three of the principals expressed some hesitation about the growth of Islamic schools in the United States, citing reasons such as political climate and changing community dynamics.

Participant 3: “With the new election, who knows what is going to happen next year? That is also another reason why I don’t know what is going to happen in the future. We don’t know if we are even going to be allowed to have it or not.”

Participant 14: “I do sense that the demand for Islamic schools is changing and what people envision Islamic schools to be perhaps might be changing.”

Table 21

Summary of Categories and Themes across All Principal Interviews Data

Categories→	Themes
Balanced Education (20)	Meeting the Spiritual, Academic, Social, Emotional, and Physical needs of American Muslim students
Spiritual and Character Education (20)	
Academic Excellence (20)	
Emotionally Healthy American Muslims (18)	
P.E. & Health (14)	
Art & Extracurricular (10)	Engaged and Productive American Muslims in Larger Community
Productive and Engaged American Muslim citizens (18)	
Engaged, Interfaith (17)	
Leaders (14)	Environment & Relationships
Environment (16)	
Role Models & Relationships (14)	
Stakeholder Involvement (14)	Internal and External Challenges for Islamic Schools
Financial Struggles (18)	
Hire and Retain Qualified Staff (14)	
Negative Perception from Internal and External Community Members (12)	
Establish and Connect (10)	
Accommodate all Students (9)	
Islamic School Growth in the U.S. (17)	Islamic School Growth in the United States
Little or No Growth (3)	

Table 22

The Number of Times Each Principal is Quoted in Chapter 4

Participant ID	Number of Times Quoted	Participant ID	Number of Times Quoted
1	8	11	8
2	6	12	8
3	8	13	6
4	8	14	8
5	7	15	9
6	8	16	6
7	6	17	8
8	5	18	6
9	8	19	9
10	6	20	8

Mission and Vision Statement Analysis and Findings

Overview. A document analysis (Patton, 2015, p. 136) of mission and vision statements for 50 accredited full time Islamic schools in the United States was conducted. The mission and vision statement document analysis was completed with the purposeful sample of regionally accredited full time Islamic schools in the United States listed on the Islamic School League of America website. The randomized list of 100 accredited Islamic schools that was used for the principal interviews was also used for selecting schools for mission and vision analysis. From the list of 100 accredited schools, a purposeful random sampling strategy similar to the protocol for principal interviews was used to select schools for analysis. Mission and vision statements from schools from all regions were included in the sample, as were mission and vision statements from at least one accredited school in each state. Also, in order to distribute the sample equitably across states, no more than three schools from each state were included in the sample. The data collection process for mission and vision statements involved visiting each school's website, obtaining the mission and vision statements from the website or the school's accreditation report, and compiling all mission and vision statements in a word processing file for analysis. If no mission and vision statement was available for a school, a philosophical statement was substituted. See Appendix C.

The Sample. As presented in chapter three, the researcher compiled data on all of the 286 Islamic schools from the Islamic School League of America's (ISLA) website and screened the schools with regional accreditation agency websites to identify and verify the accredited schools. The flow chart in Figure 2 (chapter three) outlines the process that the researcher undertook to complete this process. A total of 100 schools

were found to be accredited by regional accreditation agencies. Mission and vision statements for schools from all regions were included in the sample, and mission and vision statements from at least one accredited school in each state were included in the sample. Also, in order to distribute the sample equitably across the states, no more than three schools from each state were included in the sample. See Appendix C for a list of the mission and vision statement sampling pool.

The mission and vision statements were analyzed from a grounded theory viewpoint with codes, categories, and themes emerging from the text. The mission and vision data was reviewed and analyzed in more than three iterative cycles by the researcher in order to gain better insight and understanding, as recommended by Patton (2015) and Creswell (2013, p. 183). The emerging codes were placed in columns and color-coded. The data was approached from a grounded theory viewpoint, and coded according to Creswell's (2013) constant comparative analysis and Saldana's (2013) method of codes with emergent categories and themes. A combination of coding techniques and strategies was used in the first cycle of coding, which included values coding (Saldana, 2013, p. 110), in vivo coding (Saldana, 2013, p. 91), attribute coding (Saldana, 2013, p. 69), and holistic coding (Saldana, 2013, p. 142). The researcher then established categories, themes, and patterns for the data in the second cycle of coding (Saldana, 2013, pp. 208, 209, 223) for analysis and conclusions.

A process was designed for data analysis in order to increase validity and credibility of the data analysis procedures. A spreadsheet was created and the mission and vision statements for each school were listed. In the column section, emergent codes were assigned and color-coded. The data was analyzed in three iterative cycles in order

to reach a saturation point with the data. Emergent codes were derived from the data. Frequency counts were established and were marked when the mission and vision statements contained certain codes, then tallied by code. After this process was completed for all the mission and vision statements, the color codes from all the questions were compiled in a spreadsheet for a holistic coding process. The researcher then established categories, themes, and patterns for the data in the second cycle of coding (Saldana, 2013, pp. 208, 209, 223) for analysis and conclusions.

Table 23

Reaching the Sample of 50 Accredited Islamic Schools for Mission and Vision Statement Analysis

1st Cycle of Selection	2nd Cycle of Selection	3rd Cycle of Selection	Total
The first school that appears on the randomized list from each state. (27)	For states with more than one accredited school, the second school that appears on the list. (16)	For states with more than two accredited school, the second school that appears on the list, until 50 schools were selected. (7)	
27	50	7	50

Patterns and Themes Across Mission and Vision Statements. After analyzing the mission and vision statements from the sample of 50 accredited Islamic schools in the United States, a holistic coding of all the data was completed and all the codes were consolidated. Table 24 presents the progression from codes to categories and then to themes. The codes were categorized, then categories were assigned phrases grounded in data and representative of the codes. Each category is represented by a frequency count indicating how many of the schools' mission and vision statements addressed the

category throughout the data. The categories were then combined to form themes.

Distilling large amounts of data is considered reductionist in nature and has its strengths and weaknesses. This process was necessary in order to present information to build understanding and awareness of the findings from the mission and vision statement analysis.

Table 24

Codes, Categories, and Themes across Mission and Vision Statements

Codes →	Categories→	Themes
Spiritual, Islam, Religion, Good character, Morals, Values, Religious education, Islamic framework, Islamic foundation, Faith, Soul, Heart, Ihsan, Peaceful, God-centered, faith, Arabic, Islamic studies	Spiritual and Character Education (49)	Meeting the Spiritual, Academic, Social, Emotional, and Physical needs of American Muslim students
Academic excellence, Lifelong learning, Knowledge, Career success, High expectations, Scholars, Curriculum, Intellectual, 21 st Century skills, Critical thinking, Learning styles, College Readiness	Academic Excellence, Intellectual Education (48)	
Balanced education, Well rounded, Personal development, Total Person, Not just academics, Finding their purpose, Tarbiya, Whole child, Holistic, Good humans, Comprehensive, Balanced, Skills and tools, Prepare for life, Integrated education	Balanced Education (31)	
Identity, Social and emotional, Proud and comfortable of their identity, American Muslims	Social and Emotional, Identity (30)	
Physical education, Health, Physically, Sports	P.E. & Health (19)	
Good citizens, Contribute to society, American Muslim citizens Serve Community, Responsibility to others, Community service, Citizenship	Productive and Engaged American Muslim citizens (44)	Engaged and Productive American Muslims in Larger Community
Interfaith, Tolerance, Community Engagement	Engaged, Interfaith (26)	
Leadership, Empowerment, American Muslim Leaders, Leadership skills, Righteous leaders	Leaders (24)	
Environment, Safety	Positive Environment (31)	Environment & Relationships
School as a community, Relationships	School Community, Relationships (15)	
Qualified teachers and staff, Mentors	Staff as Mentors (9)	
Parental involvement, Stakeholder involvement	Stakeholder Involvement (8)	
Diversity, Multicultural, Global awareness, Global citizens, Global issues, Serve humanity	Multicultural Education and Global Awareness (26)	Global Mindedness

Theme 1: Meeting the Spiritual, Academic, Social, Physical and Emotional Needs of Muslim Students. The mission and vision statements of Islamic schools addressed not only the academic dimension of learning, but also other realms of development including spiritual, academic, social, and emotional needs of students, as highlighted in the table below, in varying frequencies. The categories for this theme are discussed below, with direct quotations from the principals provided. Table 25 lists the categories that will be discussed in this theme.

Table 25

Mission and Vision Statements Theme 1: Meeting the Spiritual, Academic, Social, Emotional, and Physical Needs of American Muslim Students

Categories→	Themes
Spiritual and Character Education (49)	Meeting the Spiritual, Academic, Social, Emotional, and Physical needs of American Muslim students
Academic Excellence, Intellectual Education (48)	
Balanced Education (31)	
Social and Emotional, Identity (30)	
P.E. & Health (19)	

Spiritual and character education. Forty-nine out of the 50 schools referenced spiritual and character education, in a variety of different ways. Examples of codes that were present in the mission and vision statements regarding this category include “Spiritual,” “Islam,” “Good character,” “Morals,” “Faith,” “Soul,” “Ihsan,” “God-centered,” and others, as listed in Table 24.

School 12: “Educate and prepare each student with faith, knowledge, wisdom, character, and life skills.”

School 13: “Excellence in both Islamic and academic education.”

School 22: “Seeks to develop in each Muslim student a positive identity as an American Muslim who is prepared intellectually, socially,

emotionally, spiritually, and physically to succeed in tomorrow's world.”

School 24: “Provide a high quality Islamic education through a holistic approach to child development.”

School 38: “Cultivating leaders of righteous and noble character who contribute to the betterment of our American Society.”

Academic excellence. Forty-eight out of the 50 schools referenced academic excellence and the intellectual domain of learning, in a variety of different ways. Examples of codes that were present in the mission and vision statements regarding this category include “Academic excellence,” “Knowledge,” “Scholars,” “College readiness,” “21st Century skills,” “Critical thinking,” and others, as listed in Table 24.

School 16: “Develop strong Muslims, nurtured to excel academically and capable of being productive members of society.”

School 26: “Seeks to provide a foundation of academic excellence.”

School 29: “Academically equipped to succeed and excel in an increasingly competitive and challenging world.”

School 30: “Academic excellence and prepares them to be morally and socially responsible citizens

School 44: “Prepare generations of scholars with a strong Islamic identity, leadership, and academic excellence who make a positive contribution to the global community.”

Balanced education. Thirty-one of the 50 schools referenced providing a balanced and wholesome education. Examples of codes that were present in the mission and vision statements regarding this category include “Balanced education,” “Whole child,” “Tarbiya,” “Integrated education,” “Holistic,” and others, as listed in Table 24.

School 3: “To achieve academic excellence by educating the whole child: physically, socially, spiritually, intellectually and emotionally.”

School 4: “Offers a comprehensive balanced program to enhance the learners’ potentials and skills to raise upright, tolerant and law-abiding citizens to be leaders of the future.”

School 8: “Our focus is to provide a holistic approach to education by addressing the spiritual, academic, social, and emotional needs of a child.”

School 33: “Our curriculum is designed to educate the whole student by addressing development of the moral, physical, spiritual and social qualities of each student.”

School 14: “To develop in each student a positive identity as a Muslim, who is prepared intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically for the betterment of family, community and humanity.”

Social and emotional, identity. Thirty of the 50 schools’ mission and vision statements addressed social and emotional and identity development. Examples of codes that were present in the mission and vision statements regarding this category include “Social and emotional,” “Identify,” “American Muslims,” and others.

School 5: “We strongly believe that the purpose of Islamic education is to guide our children toward the full realization of their spiritual, intellectual, physical, mental, emotional and social potentials.”

School 14: “To develop in each student a positive identity as a Muslim, who is prepared intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically for the betterment of family, community and humanity.”

School 17: “It strives to provide the highest level of academic, spiritual, and physical education, while focusing on child’s social, emotional, financial and intellectual needs.”

School 37: “Well-rounded, socially and spiritually developed human beings.”

School 25: “The Academy provides a fertile environment for maximum social, emotional, physical and academic development according to the values of Islam.”

Physical education and health. Nineteen of the 50 schools’ mission and vision statements addressed the topic of physical education and health. Examples of codes that were present in the mission and vision statements regarding this category include “Physical education,” “Health,” “Sports,” and others.

School 4: “To provide positive reinforcement for our youth through healthy sports and social programs.”

School 6: “Fosters a creative, caring environment that emphasizes the social, emotional, spiritual, physical, and intellectual growth and development of each student.”

School 7: “Aims to promote human excellence by cultivating students, in every grade level, to possess a well-trained mind, healthy body, good manners, and exceptional character.”

School 14: “Prepared intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically for the betterment of family, community and humanity.”

School 17: “It strives to provide the highest level of academic, spiritual, and physical education, while focusing on child’s social, emotional, financial and intellectual needs.”

Theme 2: Engaged and Productive American Muslims. The mission and vision statements of Islamic schools addressed fostering citizenship, and betterment of and engagement with the community at large. The mission and vision statements addressed being a productive and engaged American Muslim citizen, interfaith activities and engagement with the larger community, and fostering leadership skills, in varying frequencies. The categories for this theme are discussed below, with direct quotations from the principals provided. Table 26 lists the categories for this theme.

Table 26

Mission and Vision Statements Theme 2: Engaged and Productive American Muslims in the Larger Community

Categories →	Theme →
Productive and Engaged American Muslim citizens (18)	Engaged and Productive American Muslims in Larger Community
Engaged, Interfaith (17)	
Leaders (14)	

Productive and engaged American Muslim citizens. Forty-four of the 50 schools’ mission and vision statements addressed the notion of productive and engaged American Muslims. The mission and vision statements revealed the importance of fostering citizenship in their students and providing opportunities for children to give back to the larger community. Examples of codes that were present in the mission and vision

statements regarding this category include “Good citizens,” “American Muslim citizens,” “Serve the community,” and others.

School 6: “In this way, students become united, dedicated citizens who demonstrate great character and ultimately become agents of social change.”

School 9: “Prepare our students to be morally and socially responsible citizens.”

School 30: “To empower students to become model citizens.”

School 39: “Building generations of balanced and academically excellent Muslim-American citizens.”

School 48: “Our students will be academically successful, practicing Muslims and productive citizens.”

Engaged, interfaith. Twenty-six of the 50 schools’ mission and vision statements addressed the importance of engagement in the community and interfaith activities. The principals cited the importance of fostering citizenship in their students and providing opportunities for children to give back to the larger community. Examples of codes that were present in the mission and vision statements regarding this category include “Interfaith,” “Tolerance,” and “Community engagement.”

School 2: “Strives to create an Islamic environment where students will learn to love learning, serve others, and become tolerant individuals.”

School 10: “Provides an academically challenging and safe environment that fosters creativity, academic excellence and community engagement.”

School 11: “Are morally and socially responsible citizens, and are well-equipped to interact with the community around them and the world at large.”

School 20: “Comfortable and confident collaborating with people from a myriad of social, religious, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds.”

School 45: “Inculcate in our children Islamic values, habits, attitudes, high moral and ethical standards, tolerance, and patience that are characteristics of a good Muslim.”

Leaders. Twenty-four of the 50 schools’ mission and vision statements addressed the importance of fostering and nurturing leadership qualities in children, and providing opportunities for students to engage in leadership practices. Examples of codes that were

present in the mission and vision statements regarding this category include

“Leadership,” “Empowerment,” and “Righteous leaders.”

School 15: “Help students to develop the leadership potential and balanced character.”

School 21: “Our Lord, make us leaders of the righteous.”

School 31: “Provide a nurturing environment where students aspire for excellence in education, integrity and leadership skills to better serve humanity.”

School 41: “[This school] strives to be a center for excellence in academics, leadership and Islamic conduct.”

School 47: “Graduate students with academic excellence, leadership skills and distinguished moral principles who contribute to society and fully live the values of Islam.”

Theme 3: Environment and Relationships. One of the themes evident in mission and vision statements for Islamic schools was environment and relationships. The categories in this theme include positive environment, school community and relationships, staff as mentors, and stakeholder involvement. The categories for this theme are discussed below, with direct quotations from the principals provided. Table 27 lists the categories for this theme.

Table 27

Mission and Vision Statements Theme 3: Environment and Relationships

Categories→	Themes
Positive Environment (31)	Environment & Relationships
School Community, Relationships (15)	
Staff as Mentors (9)	
Stakeholder Involvement (8)	

Positive environment. Thirty-one of the 50 schools’ mission and vision statements addressed the school environment. Examples of codes that were present in the

mission and vision statements regarding this category include “Environment,” “Safety,” and “Positive climate.”

School 23: “Strives to create an environment that encourages the development and flourishing of an Islamic identity.”

School 28: “We will create and foster an environment, in which all children and adults are welcomed, respected, trusted and are an important part of the school.”

School 40: “Deliver superb, holistic academic and spiritual education within an Islamic environment that will nurture our children’s hearts and minds, build their character, develop their identities, and prepare them for their role in life as stewards of Earth and humanity.”

School 42: “Dedicated to providing its students with excellent academic education in an Islamic environment.”

School 49: “Provide a safe and stimulating learning environment that promotes an atmosphere of cooperation, trust, and dignity.”

School community, relationships. Fifteen of the 50 schools’ mission and vision statements addressed the school as a community and the relationships within the school.

School 1: “Richly blended community, is to ensure that students positively contribute to our global society.”

School 3: “To base our practices on teamwork and collaboration.”

School 8: “Our students belong to a community of faith, including parents and teachers, which strengthens their identity as Muslims.”

School 32: “It is in this nurturing, safe community that your child will master the skills essential for success academically and throughout every facet of their lives.”

School 49: “Provide a safe and stimulating learning environment that promotes an atmosphere of cooperation, trust, and dignity.”

Staff as mentors. Fifteen of the 50 schools’ mission and vision statements made explicit references to having qualified teachers and staff members who serve as mentors and role models for the students.

School 19: “It is fruitless in education to ask children to adhere to anything unless role models exist around them, showing not only that adherence to these ideals is possible, but also that direction, stability, peace, and happiness cannot be achieved otherwise.”

School 24: “Aims to provide an integrated approach to Islam, meaningful life experiences, and effective adult mentorship.”

School 33: “School staff are important role models for the students and should at all times model appropriate behavior.”

School 41: “Our qualified administrators and teachers work hard at instilling strong Islamic values according to Quran and Sunnah teachings, highest moral standards, and the latest academic skills available to our students.”

School 45: “Our students belong to a community of faith, including parents and teachers, which strengthens their identity as Muslims.”

Stakeholder involvement. Eight of the 50 schools’ mission and vision statements referenced parental and stakeholder involvement.

School 5: “Together with parents, [this school] will prepare our students to function effectively in an ever-changing world.”

School 15: “Provide sufficient opportunities for parental and other stakeholder involvement.”

School 34: “Foster Islamic Character by implementing a Character Education Curriculum in partnership with all stakeholders (school board, staff and faculty, parents, and students).”

School 39: “The stakeholders really envisioned our graduates as being well-rounded students with a balanced understanding of themselves, their faith, and their role in the world.”

School 45: “Extend to the greater community, through partnership with parents a genuine appreciation of the value of excellence in education.”

Theme 4: Global Mindedness. Twenty-six of the schools’ mission and vision statements referenced global mindedness. The category for this theme was multicultural education and global awareness. The codes in this category included “Diversity,” “Multicultural,” “Global awareness,” “Global citizens,” and “Global issues.” Table 28 lists the categories for this theme.

Table 28

Mission and Vision Statements Theme 4: Global Mindedness

Categories→	Themes
Multicultural Education and Global Awareness (26)	Global Mindedness (26)

School 35: “To educate and inspire students in an Islamic environment to excel in a diverse society.”

School 27: “The goal of the school is to develop students who are empowered by their Islamic faith and practice to live as effective, conscientious, and upright citizens in the national and international community contributing to the betterment of life.”

School 36: “[To] become contributors to the global community by representing diverse cultures, learning awareness of our environment, and participating in service to the community.”

School 43: “Educate the whole child in an Islamic environment where students are spiritually nurtured, challenged academically, engaged, healthy, safe, and supported in order to contribute positively in a diverse society.”

School 46: “The school continues to enhance the Character Education program in order to help them become exemplary citizens of our global society.”

Table 29

The Number of Times a School's Mission or Vision Statement Was Quoted in Chapter 4

School #	# of Times Quoted	School #	# of Times Quoted
1	1	26	1
2	1	27	1
3	2	28	1
4	2	29	1
5	2	30	1
6	2	31	1
7	1	32	1
8	2	33	1
9	1	34	1
10	1	35	1
11	1	36	1
12	1	37	1
13	1	38	1
14	1	39	2
15	2	40	1
16	1	41	2
17	2	42	1
18	1	43	1
19	1	44	1
20	1	45	1
21	1	46	1
22	1	47	1
23	1	48	1
24	2	49	1
25	1	50	1

Summary

Interviews were conducted with 20 principals from across all regions of the United States. Thirteen of the principals interviewed were female and eight were male, which is proportionate to the gender of principals of accredited Islamic schools in the United States. All of the principals had more than 5 years of experience in the field of education, with eight principals having more than 20 years of experience in the field.

With regard to the number of years as principal in their current position, more than half (11) principals have been in their current position for 5 years or less. Only one principal reported being in their current position for more than 20 years. Half of the principals interviewed indicated that they have experience working outside of Islamic schools, including public schools and other faith-based schools, with less than half having worked mainly at Islamic schools. The reasons they decided to become Islamic school principals in the United States differed. Eight of the principals claimed that they were invited to take the leadership position without having intended to pursue a leadership career path. Many principals reported that they believe it is their calling from God to improve Islamic schools and help the Muslim community and Muslim children.

The interviews were first coded by interview question in the first cycle of coding, and then coded holistically for emergent categories and themes. The data was subsequently organized by categories and themes. A table listing the categories and themes that emerged from the principal interview analysis is provided below.

Table 30

Themes from Principal Interviews

Principal Interviews Themes
1. Meeting the Spiritual, Academic, Social, Emotional, and Physical needs of American Muslim student
2. Engaged and Productive American Muslims in Larger Community
3. Environment & Relationships
4. Internal and External Challenges for Islamic Schools
5. Islamic School Growth in the United States

Mission and vision statements from 50 accredited Islamic schools across the United States were analyzed in iterative cycles to establish the codes, categories, and themes. The themes and categories that emerged from the data are listed in the table below.

Table 31

Themes from Mission and Vision Statement Analysis

Mission and Vision Statement Themes
1. Meeting the Spiritual, Academic, Social, Emotional, and Physical needs of American Muslim students
2. Engaged and Productive American Muslim Citizens in Larger Community
3. Environment and Relationships
4. Global Mindedness

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

This qualitative dissertation presents evidence-based perspectives from 20 principals of accredited Islamic schools in the United States, and analyses of the mission and vision statements from 50 accredited Islamic schools. The perspectives from the principals and the schools provide insights regarding the current state of accredited Islamic schools in the United States schools pertaining to educational beliefs, practices, and challenges, and aspirations for the future. The study also explored the notion of wholeness in education and presented a review and analysis of literature regarding the holistic nature of the Islamic worldview of education, and examined notions of wholeness in the interviews of principals and in school mission and vision statements. In this chapter the researcher discusses the findings, and presents recommendations and implications based on this research and on the researcher's emic perspective.

The data was collected from semi-structured telephone interviews with a randomized purposeful sample of 20 principals from accredited Islamic schools across all four regions of the United States (Northeast, South, Midwest, and West). Additional data was collected from the published mission and vision statements using a randomized purposeful sample of 50 regionally accredited full time Islamic schools in the United States. The qualitative interview data was approached from a grounded theory viewpoint, and coded according to Creswell's (2013) constant comparative analysis and Saldana's (2013) method of codes with emergent categories and themes.

Accredited Islamic School Leadership

The researcher found that 66% of the principals of accredited Islamic schools are female, and 34% male. Of the principals who were interviewed, 13 were female and 7 were male. All of the interviewed principals had more than 5 years of experience in the field of education, with 8 principals having more than 20 years of experience in the field. More than half of the principals have been in their current position for 5 years or less. Only one principal reported being in their current position for more than 20 years. Half of the principals interviewed reported having experience working outside of Islamic schools, including public schools and other faith-based schools, with fewer than half having worked mainly at Islamic schools. Their reasons for becoming principals of Islamic schools in the United States varied. Eight of the principals reported that they were invited to take the leadership position, without having intended to pursue the leadership career path. Many principals expressed the belief that it is their calling from God to improve Islamic schools and help the Muslim community and Muslim children.

Answers to Research Questions

Main Research Question. What are the educational beliefs and practices espoused by accredited Islamic schools in the United States? In chapter four, the researcher presented layers of analyses of the data derived from the 20 principal interviews and the analyses of mission and vision statements from 50 accredited Islamic schools. The following is an evidence-based distillation regarding the educational beliefs and practices espoused by accredited Islamic schools, as evident in the principal interviews and mission and vision statement analysis:

1. Provide a balanced and multi-faceted education: Throughout the 20 principal interviews, all of the principals indicated that education entails more than academic excellence (20 principals), and addressed not only the academic dimension of learning, but also other realms of development— spiritual and character education (20 principals), social emotional needs of students (18 principals), physical education (14 principals), and art and extracurricular activities (10 principals). With regard to the mission and vision statements, similar patterns were discovered: academic excellence (48 schools), spiritual and character education (49 schools), social and emotional needs of students (30 schools), and physical education and health (19 schools). This demonstrates that Islamic schools in the United States strive to provide a balanced education for their students, and aim to fulfill the spiritual, academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of their students.
2. A commitment to academic excellence and spiritual education: The most frequent and explicit references in the principal interviews and mission and vision statements pertained to academic excellence (20 principals and 48 schools) and spiritual education (20 principals and 49 schools). One can conclude that Islamic schools in the United States share a commitment to provide academic excellence and spiritual education, and that these two components are the basic and important tenets of these schools.
3. Nurturing American Muslim citizens to engage with and give back to the larger community: Throughout the interviews and mission and vision statement data, 18 of the principals and 44 school mission and vision statements addressed the notion

- of the productive and engaged American Muslim citizen. The principals cited the importance of fostering citizenship in their students and providing opportunities for children to give back to the larger community. Seventeen of the principals expressed the belief that it is important for Islamic schools to become better engaged with the community at large. The principals indicated the importance of students to be involved in experiences and activities outside of the Islamic school in which they work and interact with people in the larger community through interfaith activities, community service activities, academics, sports, and so forth.
4. The school's important role in empowering and fostering leadership qualities in children: Fourteen of the principals and 24 school mission and vision statements addressed student empowerment, and the importance of nurturing leadership qualities in students. Principals mentioned the importance of fostering these leadership skills both within and outside the school environment through various activities, such as Model UN. The principals mentioned that leadership qualities can help students become good stewards of their faith, and make positive contributions to the society at large.
 5. The importance of a safe and nurturing school environment: A safe and nurturing school environment was a factor that was addressed by 16 principals and 31 school mission and vision statements. One can conclude that accredited Islamic schools aim to provide an Islamic environment that meets the spiritual, safety, and emotional needs of children.
 6. The function of positive role models and healthy relationships within the school: Sixteen of the principals and 15 of the school mission and vision statements

- indicated the importance of positive relationships and mentorship within the school community. References were made to a family-like environment that nurtures students through positive relationships within the school community.
7. The importance of qualified teachers and staff: Fourteen of the 20 principals discussed the importance and challenge of hiring and maintaining qualified staff as part of the challenges facing Islamic schools in the United States. Hiring and retaining qualified staff is of importance to Islamic schools in the United States.
 8. Stakeholder involvement in education process: Fourteen of the principals and eight of the school mission and vision statements discussed the importance of stakeholder involvement in the school. The principals discussed this involvement in terms of formulating the mission and vision; others discussed it in terms of feedback, or making parents part of the school's learning community. Stakeholder involvement was more evident in principal responses than in mission and vision statements.
 9. The student as a global citizen: Twenty-six of the schools' mission and vision statements referenced global mindedness. The school mission and vision statements addressed the school's role in preparing global citizens with multicultural education, appreciation for diversity, and awareness of global issues.

Sub-questions. The following is the presentation of findings for the four sub-questions explored in this study.

Sub-question A. What are the common themes communicated by principals of accredited Islamic schools in the United States regarding the purpose of education and Islamic schooling? The purpose of this sub-question was to uncover some of the common

philosophical beliefs espoused by accredited Islamic school principals regarding the purpose of education, and to delve further into the purpose of Islamic schools. All of the 20 principals indicated that the purpose of education is not academics only, and that education entails a much larger purpose. The principals discussed the notion of nurturing and developing well-rounded persons in the many realms and dimensions of development. The purpose of education from the principals' responses includes gaining knowledge and academic excellence (12 principals), citizenship and service to the community (12 principals), personal development and finding one's purpose in life (10 principals), life skills (10 principals), character education and values (8 principals), social and emotional skills (6 principals), and college and career readiness (6 principals).

When asked to reflect on the purpose of Islamic schools, the majority of principals shared the importance of having the time, place, and space to incorporate spiritual education within the educational process (16 principals). In essence, they cited the importance of not separating the secular from the sacred in education. The principals reported that they aim to nurture God-conscious individuals who understand the higher purpose in their life, and hope that this higher purpose inspires students to strive for excellence in all that they pursue in life. The principals indicated the importance of not compromising academic excellence (12 principals), and the Islamic school's role in nurturing productive American citizens (13 principals).

Sub-question B. How are the educational beliefs and practices shared by principals and revealed in mission and vision statements of accredited Islamic schools indicative of educational experiences that address the academic, spiritual, social, emotional, and physical needs of students? Out of the 20 principals, 16 indicated that they

believe, hope, or strive for their schools to espouse wholeness in education and to be holistic in nature. Four of the principals expressed the belief that they are in between (the academic and holistic spectrum). Some of the principals reported pressure from parents and society to maintain certain academic standards, and the heavy emphasis on standardized test scores. Some of the principals stated that they are able to apply more holistic education theories and pedagogical practices like Montessori in elementary grades, but once students reach middle school grades, the pressure of academic achievement makes it harder to maintain this wholeness in education. With regard to the mission and vision statements, 31 schools referenced in different ways the notion of providing a balanced education. Refer to chapter four of this dissertation for evidence and further discussion regarding this theme, along with direct quotations from participants.

Sub-question C. What do principals of accredited Islamic schools identify as some of the common challenges that Islamic schools in the United States currently face? When asked to discuss some of the challenges currently facing Islamic schools in the United States, 18 of the principals described financial struggles as a very hindering factor. They reported having to continuously to balance affordability for the Muslim community at large with providing resources and hiring qualified staff in order to fulfill their mission and vision. When discussing challenges, 12 of the principals cited negative perceptions from the Muslim community and the community at large. The principals observed that many times, the Muslim community doesn't recognize and value what the Islamic schools provide to the community, and often the community looks down upon the school in light of how the school might have been in the past. Ten of the principals

expressed the desire to be more connected with other Islamic schools, and to have more organization and leadership within the Islamic school community. Several pointed to the organization of Catholic schools as examples.

Sub-question D. What do principals of accredited Islamic schools envision for the future of Islamic schooling in the United States? The principals were prompted to reflect on the future and growth of Islamic schools in the United States. Seventeen of the principals were optimistic about growth, while three were hesitant and unsure. Seventeen of the 20 principals indicated that they envision growth and acceptance of Islamic schools in the United States. Three of the principals expressed some hesitation about the growth of Islamic schools in the United States, sharing reasons such as the current political climate and changing community dynamics.

Below are tables listing the categories and themes distilled from the principal interviews (Table 32) and mission and vision statement analyses (Table 33) as a reiteration and references for the above findings.

Table 32

Summary of Categories and Themes across All Interview Data

Categories→	Themes
Balanced Education (20)	Meeting the Spiritual, Academic, Social, Emotional, and Physical needs of American Muslim students
Spiritual and Character Education (20)	
Academic Excellence (20)	
Emotionally Healthy American Muslims (18)	
P.E. & Health (14)	
Art & Extracurricular (10)	
Productive and Engaged American Muslim citizens (18)	Engaged and Productive American Muslims in Larger Community
Engaged, Interfaith (17)	
Leaders (14)	
Environment (16)	Environment & Relationships
Role Models & Relationships (14)	
Stakeholder Involvement (14)	
Financial Struggles (18)	Internal and External Challenges for Islamic Schools
Hire and Retain Qualified Staff (14)	
Negative Perception from Internal and External Community Members (12)	
Establish and Connect (10)	
Accommodate all Students (9)	
Islamic School Growth in the U.S. (17)	
Little or No Growth (3)	

Table 33

Codes, Categories, and Themes across Mission and Vision Statements

Categories→	Themes
Spiritual and Character Education (49)	Meeting the Spiritual, Academic, Social, Emotional, and Physical needs of American Muslim students
Academic Excellence, Intellectual Education (48)	
Balanced Education (31)	
Social and Emotional, Identity (30)	
P.E. & Health (19)	
Productive and Engaged American Muslim citizens (44)	Engaged and Productive American Muslims in Larger Community
Engaged, Interfaith (26)	
Leaders (24)	
Positive Environment (31)	Environment & Relationships
School Community, Relationships (15)	
Staff as Mentors (9)	
Stakeholder Involvement (8)	
Multicultural Education and Global Awareness (26)	Global Mindedness

Interpretation and Implications of Findings

Contextualizing the Findings within Literature. This dissertation explored the nature of the Islamic worldview of education, and framed it within the context of Islamic schools in the United States. The exhaustive and extensive review of literature on the Islamic worldview of education indicated that the Islamic worldview of education is holistic in nature, promotes wholeness, and aims to nurture the student as a whole being (Al-Attas, 1979; Hassan et al., 2010; Al-Zeera, 2001; Tauhidi, 2007; Yasin & Jani, 2013; Cook, 1999 & 2010; Nasr, 1987; Ravat, 2001; Siddiqui, 2012; Hatina, 2006; Abdul-Mabud, 2001; Dangor, 2005). The term *holistic* in this context implies that education from the Islamic perspective is a process that aims for the balanced development of the total personality (Al-Attas, 1979), and a process that aims to nurture all of the aspects of an individual's life, including spiritual, rational, and social dimensions (Cook, 2010).

When reviewing literature on Islamic education the researcher observed repeated references to three Arabic terms: *tarbiyah*, *talim*, and *tadib* (Cook, 1999 & 2010; Yasin & Jani, 2013; Hassan et al., 2010; Douglas & Shaikh, 2010; Nasr, 1987; Memon, 2013; Yaljin, 1976; Sahin, 2013; Waghid, 2011). *Tarbiya* refers to nurturing of the child (Cook, B., 2010, p. xxvi), training the whole student (Nasr, 1987, p. 123), a process of physical and emotional growth (Yasin & Jani, 2013), nurturing and upbringing of the whole child from all dimensions, spiritually, physically, mentally, morally, and humanistically (Yaljin, 1976) in contrast with the Latin word *educere*, which means to bring out (Memon, 2013), the processes that constitute the upbringing, and that include the physical and spiritual (Sahin, 2013, p. 182), rearing and nurturing of a child (Waghid,

2011, p. 2), a process that nurtures the innate in the child to grow and develop to its potential (Tauhidi, 2007), nourishing-increasing-caring (Ravat, 2011), wholeness derivative from the divine that is balanced, integrative, flexible and aims to benefit humanity (Al-Nihlawi, 1999, p. 125). It can be inferred that the essence of *tarbiyah* refers to nurturing the child holistically in all realms of development.

Talim stems from the Arabic root word *ilm*, which is translated as knowledge (Cook, 2010, p. xxvi). It is a process of teaching and instruction (Cook, 2010, p. xxvi; Memon, 2013; Sahin, 2013, p. 182; Waghid, 2011, p. 2), cognitive development and dissemination of knowledge through instruction (Yasin & Jani, 2013), and a more deductive learning process to gain the tools necessary for the real purpose of education (Tauhidi, 2007, p. 10). As for *tadib*, it refers to the “social dimensions of a person’s development of sound behavior” (Cook, 2010, p. xxvi). A prominent Muslim scholar, Naquib al-Attas, emphasizes the concept of *adab* or *tadib*, and states that “Adab is the discipline of body, mind and soul; the discipline that assures the recognition and acknowledgment of one’s proper place in relation to one’s physical, intellectual and spiritual capacities and potentials” (p. 11)

Many of the literature sources discuss the aims and objectives of Islamic education, and when doing so, refer to the First World Conference on Muslim Education (Yasin & Jani, 2013; Cook, 1999; Saqeb, 2000; Al-Attas, 1979). In this world conference held in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, 350 scholars (Saqeb, 2000) from around the world gathered to address the ailments that are facing the educational systems in Muslim communities, and to try to devise solutions and frameworks for education of Muslims (Al-Attas, 1979. p. v). The aim was to provide recommendations for a framework for

Islamic education amid the educational struggles in the Muslim communities. A consistent theme across the literature regarding one of the outcomes of this conference was defining the aims and objectives of Islamic education. The conference recommended that the aim of education is the balanced education of the total person and the whole being.

Also in the literature is the discussion of the ailments facing educational institutions in Muslim societies, and the notion of the decline of education and the caliber of knowledge production in the Muslim communities, compared to periods when Muslims were at the forefront of knowledge production (Al-Zeera, 2001; Cook, 2010; Yasin & Jani, 2013; Hilgendorf, 2003; Dangor, 2005; Yaljin, 1976; Abusulayman, 2007; Ashraf & Husain, 1979; Al-Attas, 1979). The term *tarbiyah* is used quite frequently and liberally in the Muslim world, as many ministries of education are called the ministries of *tarbiyah* and *talim* (Wazart Al Tarbiyah Wal Talim), with *talim* referring to formal instruction. However, authors such as Yasin and Jani (2013) indicate that Muslim societies are “far from properly integrating this definition into the curriculum development and syllabus for different levels of education.” The literature sources attribute the gradual decline to both internal and external forces (Hilgendorf, 2003). The authors present what they believe to be the factors contributing to the decline of scholarship and educational advancements in the Muslim world. Abusulayman (2007) states that the Muslim world is afflicted with the notion of “duplication and imitation” (p. 4), with a high degree of educational programs and practices being imitated and basically copied and pasted without consideration for the needs of the Muslim community. Al-Zeera (2001) makes a similar argument and states that these imported educational

systems don't take into account the needs of the whole Muslim student, especially the spiritual needs. The secularization of education has led to two systems of education, a dichotomy of education: traditional education and religious education. The authors believe that this goes against the Islamic worldview of education that aims to nurture the student as whole. Thus, the First World Conference on Muslim education was "the first attempt of its kind to remove the dichotomy of religious and secular education" (Al-Attas, p. v). Al-Zeera (2001) states that "The education system should address Muslim learners as a whole person who possesses a body, mind, and soul and prepare various faculties of the person to realize the wholeness of life" (p. 67). Refer to chapter two for a detailed literature review and analysis of the notions of the holistic nature of the Islamic worldview of education.

Regarding Wholeness in Islamic Education. From a philosophical perspective, all of the principals interviewed indicated that education entails more than academic excellence (20 principals), and addresses not only the academic dimension of learning, but also other realms of development, such as spiritual and character education (20 principals), social and emotional needs of students (18 principals), physical education (14 principals), and art and extracurricular activities (10 principals), in varying frequencies. In the mission and vision statements, similar patterns included academic excellence (48 schools), spiritual and character education (49 schools), social and emotional (30 schools), and physical education and health (19 schools). This indicates that Islamic schools in the United States *strive* to provide a balanced education to their students.

While many of the principals are striving for and believe in wholeness in education, the researcher interprets from her emic lens that there is no unified

understanding of what wholeness means and entails within the leadership of the Islamic school community. Some of the principals expressed frustration at having to maneuver and balance pleasing academically centered parents, educating and changing the mindsets of their stakeholders, and the disconnectedness and segmentation within the whole of the education system. While the principals were in agreement regarding the importance of wholeness in education and the fact that education entails more than academics, the researcher posits that the principals' understanding of the parts of wholeness is greater than their understanding of how to bring the parts together for a whole and holistic education. In essence, the principals find themselves in a compartmentalized system that aims to address the different dimensions of wholeness: academic, spiritual, social, emotional, and physical. In holistic education, the vision of wholeness in education is larger than the sum of the parts that make up that whole. Also, some parts of this whole can't be developed at the expense of other parts. For example, many times, physical education and health are eliminated from the curriculum to make time for other subject areas and to accommodate limited financial resources.

After completing an extensive literature review on Islamic education and wholeness in Islamic educational thought, with the researcher's lived experience of being involved in Islamic schooling in the United States for more than 10 years, the researcher posits that there is an evidence-based disconnect between the Islamic research community and Islamic schools. In the education field, we often see a disconnect between research and practice, and the same might be evident in this case.

Regarding a Unified Vision, Leadership, and Collaboration Among Islamic Schools. A notion that was discussed by the principals was the desire to be more connected to other Islamic schools, and the example of Catholic schools was cited often. One of the principals observed that it feels as if Islamic schools are islands unto themselves, each one trying hard to accomplish its vision and goals. Others hoped for more collaboration and more connection between schools. Some principals indicated that at this time a culture of competition exists between Islamic schools, making it harder to share information and collaborate. At this point in time, there are organizations that support Islamic schools, such as the ISLA (Islamic School League of America) and CISNA (Council for Islamic Schools of North America), which are described in detail in chapter two and three. These organizations have provided support in helping Islamic school educators and leadership collaborate through mailing lists, retreats, annual conferences, and accreditation processes. The principals expressed a desire for more organizational effort among Islamic schools towards a shared vision and direction for Islamic education in the United States.

Regarding the American Muslim Citizen. Even though the principals were not prompted to reflect on the topic of the American Muslim citizen, this was one of the high frequency count themes discussed by the principals. Eighteen of the principals and 44 school mission and vision statements addressed the notion of nurturing the productive and engaged American Muslim citizen. This is one of the themes that the principals felt passionate about; it emerged organically as part of the conversations with the principals, and was evident in the mission and vision statements. The principals shared examples of how they engage students in activities and programs that promote citizenship and giving

back to the community at large. They promote the idea of the American Muslim identity through programs such as interfaith activities and leadership skills to equip students to become positive stewards of their faith. Also evident in half of the mission and vision statements was global mindedness and the global citizen.

Regarding the Importance of the School Environment and Relationships.

Sixteen of the principals discussed the importance of the environment as a differentiating factor for Islamic schools, and 31 of the 50 schools' mission and vision statements addressed the importance of the school environment. The schools aim to provide an Islamic environment that meets the spiritual, safety, and emotional needs of children. The principals discussed a family and nurturing environment where positive relationships and mentoring are evident. They discussed having an environment where students can be themselves, their whole selves, without feeling rejection or alienation, and can practice their faith freely. Principals also asserted that the goal is not to isolate students from the community, since they try to provide activities that allow students to engage with the community and with students from other schools. Based on the researcher's emic perspective, some students who leave the close-knit environment of the Islamic school community feel culture shocked when they go to much larger public schools. Islamic schools need to continue to explore ways to better transition students who leave their schools. Having explicit transitioning programs and establishing relationships with public and private schools in the area can be a positive step toward enabling these children to have better transitional experiences.

Regarding the Current Challenges for Islamic Schools. The principals reported that the biggest challenge they continuously face is financial struggles, and maneuvering

a balance of how much tuition they charge parents, and continue being affordable to not only the families that are financially capable to pay higher amounts in tuition. The shortage of financial resources puts a strain on the leadership of the school to spend additional time on fundraising efforts, as well as making decisions about which expenditures are priorities and which are not in times of financial difficulties. As one principal observed, an Islamic school principal has to wear many hats, and has to fulfill many roles. Based on the researcher's emic perspective, Islamic schools are gradually increasing their tuition in order to hire more qualified teachers, and provide more resources, better facilities, and better educational opportunities for children. Currently, the tuition charged by Islamic schools is often times less than half of that charged by other private schools in the local area.

The principals also reported that often the Muslim community doesn't recognize and value what the Islamic schools provide for the community, and many times the community looks down on the school in light of how the school may have operated in the past. A principal explained that one of the hardest issues that he/she had to deal with was being valued by his/her own community. Based on the researcher's emic perspective, this might be due to the fact that when Islamic schools were first being opened 10, 20, and 30 years ago, they experienced many challenges in order to establish their credibility. Islamic schools in the United States have improved greatly in the last decade, and the increasing number of accredited Islamic schools is proof of that fact. One principal explained that negativity towards Islamic schools is mostly demonstrated by people who don't bring their children to the school. Many have the misconception that Islamic schools only teach religious subjects, which is not the case for these accredited schools,

since they meet the requirements for regional accrediting bodies. Perceptions on the part of the community at large can be viewed similarly.

Regarding the Growth of Islamic Schools. Seventeen of the principals shared an optimistic outlook for more growth and demand for Islamic schools in the United States. Three of the principals were unsure about growth and indicated that demands might change as the Muslim population continues to grow. Some principals revealed that they envision Islamic schools having more connections with the community, and providing such a high quality education and healthy environment that people of other faiths will become attracted to these schools without feeling that they will be pressured to follow the Muslim faith. They cited examples of how some children of Muslim families attend Catholic schools. Several of the principals reported that they attended Catholic schools as children. Based on the emic perspective of the author of this dissertation, Islamic schools are on the gradual road to continuous improvement. As more and more Islamic schools become accredited by regional accreditation bodies, the author predicts that accredited Islamic schools will want to strive for the next level of excellence, as mentioned by some of the principals.

Recommendations for Further Research

Given that there is an evident gap in academic research and literature on Islamic education in the United States, below is a list of questions that may guide further research. More inquiries of this kind may increase awareness and understanding, and provide meaningful recommendations to strengthen and support the impact on student learning.

1. How do Islamic school leaders feel about establishing a shared vision for Islamic education in the United States based on principles of wholeness in Islamic education?
2. What do Islamic school board members, parents, and teachers define as the qualities of a good Islamic school?
3. What steps can the Islamic school community take to increase the level of collaboration among the different Islamic schools in the United States?
4. How can Islamic schools become more financially stable?
5. What perceptions does the mainstream American community have about Islamic schools in the United States? What frames these perceptions?
6. What steps can Islamic schools take to alleviate negative perceptions within their own community and the larger community?
7. How can Islamic schools create positive relationships with schools in their communities, especially those schools where their students will transition into?
8. How do the Islamic school alumni fare academically, spiritually, socially and emotionally after they leave Islamic schools? What do the alumni share as the strengths and weaknesses of attending Islamic schools?
9. What impact does Islamic schooling have on nurturing a healthy American Muslim identity?
10. How do Islamic schools in the United States compare to Islamic schools in Europe? How are they similar and how are they different, and what lessons may be learned by school leaders across geopolitical boundaries?

Scope and Magnitude of the Research

Doing an extensive and exhaustive review of the available literature, the researcher found only limited and smaller scale published qualitative research articles and dissertations. Therefore, this research is substantial with 20 participants from accredited Islamic schools in the United States, 20% of the accredited Islamic school principals, and the analysis of 50 accredited school mission and vision statements, which is 50% of the accredited Islamic schools in the United States. The researcher designed the research to reduce the gap in literature on Islamic education, and between Islamic literature and current literature on holistic education. The representative geographic distribution provides a broad view and the largest qualitative study yet completed on accredited Islamic schools in the United States.

Summary of Recommendations for the Islamic School Community

The researcher presents the following brief recommendations for the Islamic school community to consider based on the researcher's emic perspective and the implications of results of the research completed for this dissertation.

- Considering that the Islamic worldview of education supports wholeness in education, the researcher recommends that members of the Islamic school community take steps to insure that they provide a balanced education by nurturing the students academically, spiritually, socially, emotionally, and physically.
- The researcher recommends that there be more collaboration among Islamic schools. Perhaps this can happen on the state level if there is more than one Islamic school in the state, or among schools with similar visions. Considering

that the Islamic worldview of education supports wholeness in education, collaboration can happen among schools based on this vision.

- Many of the interviewed principals gave great examples of how they nurture the American Muslim identity through service learning and partnerships with local schools and community organizations. As many of the principals expressed, Islamic school students shouldn't feel isolated from the community. There should be ample opportunities to interact with students from other faiths and students from public and private schools through projects, sports, and service learning. On this point, Islamic schools should take concrete steps to insure that their students transition well to the local schools once they graduate from the Islamic schools. This can happen through regular visits and partnerships with the schools, and creating mentoring programs.
- Considering the negative perceptions that were expressed by the principals about Islamic schools within the Muslim community and the community at large, Islamic schools should take steps to reduce these negative perceptions through more engagement, outreach, and marketing within and beyond the Muslim community.
- Financial stability remains one of the biggest challenges for Islamic schools. Within the Islamic school community, more conversations need to happen regarding ways Islamic schools can become more financially stable. This is another point of collaboration among Islamic schools. The more established and financially stable Islamic schools can mentor the new Islamic schools or Islamic schools that struggle financially.

- The researcher recommends that Islamic schools engage in strategic planning and long-term goal setting. In doing so, the boards of Islamic schools, principals, teachers, and parents will build a series of common understandings regarding their specific roles within the school. Having clear policies and procedures that define the roles can help in this regard.

Concluding Summary

This qualitative naturalistic inquiry explored the world and the realities of accredited Islamic schools in the United States, with the aim of presenting informed and evidence-based perspectives from these schools regarding educational beliefs, practices, challenges, and aspirations for the future. The overarching theory or theme explored in this study was wholeness in education and its representations in Islamic educational thought. A thorough, exhaustive, extensive and comparative analysis of literature on Islamic education affirmed for the author of this dissertation that the Islamic worldview of education aims to nurture students as whole beings, in an educational environment that supports wholeness in its many dimensions: academic, spiritual, physical, social, and emotional. The data from the interviews with the principals and the mission and vision statement analyses provided evidence and perspectives regarding important questions raised in this dissertation. It also shed an important light on the state of accredited Islamic schools. Currently, it is estimated that there are more than 286 Islamic schools in the United States, and of those this study found that 100 are accredited by regional accreditation bodies. Further, the study revealed that women lead the majority of accredited Islamic schools in the United States. Based on the research findings, accredited Islamic schools in the United States strive for wholeness in education, even

though there may not be a unified understanding and vision of what that wholeness means and what it entails. Islamic school principals expressed the need for and importance of a shared vision for Islamic schools, and for more collaboration between these schools to occur across the United States. Academic excellence and spiritual education are two of the areas that seem to be the nonnegotiable for accredited Islamic schools.

Overwhelming evidence from this research suggests that accredited Islamic schools in the United States aim to nurture the American Muslim citizen who contributes positively to the community at large. Islamic schools in the United States continue to face challenges, including financial stability and negative perceptions on the part of internal and external communities. Nevertheless, accredited Islamic school principals are optimistic about the growth of Islamic schools and the positive contributions that these schools can make to the United States, and the world.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL

IRB
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
 Office of Research Compliance,
 010A Sam Ingram Building,
 2269 Middle Tennessee Blvd
 Murfreesboro, TN 37129



IRBN001 - EXPEDITED PROTOCOL APPROVAL NOTICE

Friday, July 22, 2016

Investigator(s): Isra Brifkani (Student PI) and Rick Vanosdall (FA)
 Investigator(s)' Email(s): ib2b@mtmail.mtsu.edu; rick.vanosdall@mtsu.edu
 Department: Assessment, Learning, and School Improvement - College of Education

Study Title: ***An analysis of the holistic nature of the Islamic worldview of education and perspectives from Islamic schools across the United States***
 Protocol ID: **16-296**

Dear Investigator(s),

The above identified research proposal has been reviewed by the MTSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) through the **EXPEDITED** mechanism under 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110 within the category (7) *Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior*. A summary of the IRB action and other particulars in regard to this protocol application is tabulated as shown below:

IRB Action	APPROVED for one year	
Date of expiration	7/13/2017	
Sample Size	70 (SEVENTY)	
Participant Pool	Adults who are either Principals at US Islamic Schools (10 for interview) or those who are involved with Islamic Schools in US (50 for online survey)	
Exceptions	Permitted to obtain oral consent and receive consent through online survey	
Restrictions	Mandatory informed consent	
Comments	NONE	
Amendments	Date	Post-approval Amendments
	7.22.2016	Sample size increase to 20 Islamic School Principals

This protocol can be continued for up to THREE years (7/13/2019) by obtaining a continuation approval prior to 7/13/2017. Refer to the following schedule to plan your annual project reports and be aware that you may not receive a separate reminder to complete your continuing reviews. Failure in obtaining an approval for continuation will automatically result in cancellation of this protocol. Moreover, the completion of this study **MUST** be notified to the Office of Compliance by filing a final report in order to close-out the protocol.

Continuing Review Schedule:

Reporting Period	Requisition Deadline	IRB Comments
First year report	6/13/2017	INCOMPLETE
Second year report	6/13/2018	INCOMPLETE
Final report	6/13/2019	INCOMPLETE

IRBN001

Version 1.3

Revision Date 03/06/2016

The investigator(s) indicated in this notification should read and abide by all of the post-approval conditions imposed with this approval. [Refer to the post-approval guidelines posted in the MTSU IRB's website](#). Any unanticipated harms to participants or adverse events must be reported to the Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918 within 48 hours of the incident. Amendments to this protocol must be approved by the IRB. Inclusion of new researchers must also be approved by the Office of Compliance before they begin to work on the project.

All of the research-related records, which include signed consent forms, investigator information and other documents related to the study, must be retained by the PI or the faculty advisor (if the PI is a student) at the secure location mentioned in the protocol application. The data storage must be maintained for at least three (3) years after study completion. Subsequently, the researcher may destroy the data in a manner that maintains confidentiality and anonymity. IRB reserves the right to modify, change or cancel the terms of this letter without prior notice. Be advised that IRB also reserves the right to inspect or audit your records if needed.

Sincerely,

Institutional Review Board
Middle Tennessee State University
Email: irb_information@mtsu.edu (for questions)
irb_submissions@mtsu.edu (for documents)

Quick Links:

[Click here](#) for a detailed list of the post-approval responsibilities.
More information on expedited procedures can be found [here](#).

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

Principal Investigator: Isra Brifkani

Study Title: *An Analysis of the Holistic Nature of the Islamic Worldview of Education and Perspectives from Islamic Schools across the United States*

Institution: Middle Tennessee State University

The following information is provided to inform you about the research project and your participation in it. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask any questions you may have about this study and the information given below. You will be given an opportunity to ask questions, and your questions will be answered. Also, you will be given a copy of this consent form.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You are also free to withdraw from this study at any time. In the event new information becomes available that may affect the risks or benefits associated with this research study or your willingness to participate in it, you will be notified so that you can make an informed decision whether or not to continue your participation in this study.

For additional information about giving consent or your rights as a participant in this study, please feel free to contact the MTSU Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918.

1. Purpose of the study:

The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding regarding the nature of the Islamic worldview of education through the lens of Islamic school leaders.

2. Description of procedures to be followed and approximate duration of the study:

The participants will be asked broad and open-ended questions in an interview that will last approximately 30 minutes. The participants will be informed that the interview will be recorded for transcription purposes. Pseudonyms will be used, and other information will be kept at a general level so no one would be able to identify the participants. Once the recorded interviews have been transcribed and verified, the recordings will be erased. No personally identifiable markers will remain on the transcriptions or written narratives.

3. Expected costs:

There is no cost associated with participating in this study.

4. Description of the discomforts, inconveniences, and/or risks that can be reasonably expected as a result of participation in this study:

No risks or benefits beyond the standard risks and benefits associated with any professional conversation.

5. Compensation in case of study-related injury:

It is expected that no injury will take place due to participating in this study. In the unlikely event that any injury results from this interview protocol, MTSU will not compensate study-related injuries.

6. Anticipated benefits from this study:

- a) The potential benefits to science and humankind that may result from this study are that there is limited research on Islamic schooling in the United States. The researcher hopes that this study can contribute to the research on Islamic education and Islamic schooling in the United States.

7. Alternative treatments available:

N/A

8. Compensation for participation:

Participating in this study is voluntary. The participants will not be compensated for their time.

9. Circumstances under which the Principal Investigator may withdraw you from study participation:

**Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board
Informed Consent Document for Research**

Due to the low risk nature of the study, the researcher doesn't anticipate to withdraw anyone from the study, unless the researcher feels that the interview process is causing unintended negative consequences to the participant.

10. What happens if you choose to withdraw from study participation:

Participation in this research study is voluntary and you can withdraw your participation from it at any time without any penalty or consequences.

11. Contact Information. If you should have any questions about this research study feel free to contact **ISRA BRIFKANI (615-364-8203, ib2b@mtmail.mtsu.edu, isra@brifkani.com)** at MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY or my Faculty Advisor, **Dr. RICK VANOSDALL** at (rick.vanosdall@mtsu.edu).

12. Confidentiality. Pseudonyms will be used, and other information will be kept at a general level so no one would be able to identify the participants. Once the recorded interviews have been transcribed and verified, the recordings will be erased. No personally identifiable markers will remain on the transcriptions or written narratives. All efforts, within reason, will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private but total privacy cannot be promised. Your information may be shared with MTSU or the government, such as the Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board, Federal Government Office for Human Research Protections, if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.

13. STATEMENT BY PERSON AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I have read this informed consent document and the material contained in it has been explained to me verbally. I understand each part of the document, all my questions have been answered, and I freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this study.

I, the participant of this study, have read this consent form and I am giving my consent to participate in the study verbally to the researcher over the phone before participating in the phone interview.

8-22-2016
Date

Isra Brifkani
Principal Investigator Signature

APPENDIX C

100 MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

Note: The following accredited Islamic school mission, vision, or belief statements are public documents that were obtained either from school websites or school accreditation reports in 2016. The names of the schools are redacted for anonymity. A randomized purposeful sample of 50 of the following schools were used for the mission and vision statement analysis.

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
1	AdvancED	<i>to ensure that students positively contribute to our global society by providing an education which maximizes learning potential in a safe, stimulating, Islamic environment.</i>	<i>Core Values: Academic excellence Learning styles Arabic and Islamic Foundation Self-Discipline Responsibility Productive Environment Respect Cooperation</i>
2	AdvancED	<i>believes that all children should have an opportunity to become well-rounded individuals and to mature to their fullest human potential in an Islamic environment that promotes high academic achievement and moral excellence based upon the guidance of the Quran and Sunnah.</i>	<i>strives to create an Islamic environment where students will learn to love learning, serve others, and become tolerant individuals.</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
3	AdvancED	<i>aims to focus on our students' specific skills and strengths, challenging them to think critically, in order to develop higher personal morals, understanding, and promote diversity through multicultural and language exposure to ultimately be contributing, competitive, and competent citizens in an ever changing world.</i>	<i>To seek and hire dedicated and highly qualified educators. To frequently assess our curriculum and ensure that it is rigorous for our students and encouraging critical thinking skills. To inspire our students to work toward lifelong academic and Islamic learning. To achieve academic excellence by educating the whole child: physically, socially, spiritually, intellectually and emotionally. To celebrate diversity and be conscientious of the varying needs of our student body. To base our practices on teamwork and collaboration. To provide visionary leadership through data driven decision making. To promote and welcome parent and community involvement.</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
4	AdvancED	<i>promotes excellence in academic, religious and behavioral education; and offers a comprehensive balanced program to enhance the learners' potentials and skills to raise upright, tolerant and law-abiding citizens to be leaders of the future.</i>	<i>To promote moral values based on the authentic teachings of Islam with an emphasis on responsibility and self-reliance. To promote high standards of education as measured by National Achievement Assessments. To integrate Islamic, Arabic, and Common Core standards in a comprehensive curriculum. To incorporate college courses to prepare students for a college and a career. To teach interfaith tolerance, respect, and harmony. To promote sharing and cooperation across socio-economic levels, and to create a model for multi-cultural communities. To provide positive reinforcement for our youth through healthy sports and social programs.</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
5	AdvancED	<p>provide an Islamic learning environment that assures the highest academic quality and Islamic personal development. Together with parents, Noor Academy of Arizona will prepare our students to function effectively in an ever-changing world.</p>	<p>a recognized leader in quality k-12 Islamic and academic education in North America We strongly believe that the purpose of Islamic education is to guide our children toward the full realization of their spiritual, intellectual, physical, mental, emotional and social potentials to serve Allah (SWT). The primary goal of Noor Academy is to create a comprehensive program of teaching and learning experiences for our students within a truly Islamic environment. This program should include the core subjects, the electives, the Islamic Studies and related courses as well as enriched co-curricular activities. Our aim is to develop the Islamic personality in our students so that they will be able to lead their daily lives according to the principles established in Al-Qur'an and exemplified in the words and actions of Prophet Muhammad (SAW).</p>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
6	WASC	<p><i>strives to build a strong Islamic and academic foundation in the minds of its students. fosters a creative, caring environment that emphasizes the social, emotional, spiritual, physical, and intellectual growth and development of each student. works to instill a clear Muslim identity in its students. This will enable them to understand, appreciate, and apply Islam as a way of life, thereby becoming contributing members of society. School promotes academic excellence and success by developing effective instructional strategies that accommodate students' individual needs and learning styles. The school's curriculum includes Arabic in order to assist students with understanding Quranic and Islamic studies curriculum effectively.</i></p>	<p><i>students will achieve academic excellence while they learn to love and practice Islam as a way of life. students will be highly effective communicators who can connect to global and local communities, impacting them in positive and meaningful ways. In this way, students become united, dedicated citizens who demonstrate great character and ultimately become agents of social change.</i></p>
7	WASC	<p><i>have an educational institution that teaches and nurtures the "whole" child - intellectually, emotionally and physically, and to instill in each student the principles of submission to the Will of Allah as an essential element in achieving excellence academically and personally.</i></p>	N/A

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
8	WASC	<i>To Adhere to the Highest Moral Beliefs Integrating Curriculum with Comprehensive Enrichment Programs in an Engaging Learning Environment...</i>	<i>Be a leader in Secondary Education through Personal Transformative Opportunities.</i>
9	WASC	<i>OUR MISSION is to create an environment in which the intellectual and spiritual principles of human beings blossom.</i>	<i>we aim to cultivate future leaders, scholars and intellectuals . We are proud of our alums, who serve in the public and private sectors. We prepare our students for competitive universities and lucrative careers, all while being driven by principle. We are dedicated to rigorous academics. In addition to a competitive academic curriculum, we offer daily courses in Quran, Ethics, and Arabic. We are also sensitive to the needs of our ESL community and help develop English for those with an alternative native tongue.</i>
10	WASC	<i>to provide quality academic and Islamic education in a community that nurtures a strong Muslim identity, fosters brotherhood, and strengthens moral character.</i>	<i>N/A</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
11	WASC	<p><i>committed to providing our students with the means for intellectual development through a rich academic program that is rooted in the classic tenets of American and Islamic scholarship.</i></p> <p><i>As an institution we seek to provide the highest quality of education, with an emphasis on the development of strong moral character under the auspices of an Islamic environment. The teaching methodology and focus of instruction serve to address the spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual needs of all our students. We aspire to enable our students to make positive contributions to their own communities, and to the world around them.</i></p> <p><i>It is our aspiration to expand each student's understanding of the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, which are preserved in the Arabic linguistic forms. Finally, the penultimate task undertaken by I.C.C Community School is to provide students with a strong Arabic Language program, whose goal it is to effectively broaden every student's understanding and acumen in the Qur'anic Studies.</i></p>	<p><i>Our aim is the cultivation of a student body comprised of well-balanced individuals who consistently demonstrate the qualities of both competent scholarship and productive citizenship.</i></p> <p><i>As an academic institution, we are, above all, committed to the scholastic development of each student. Our ultimate vision is to provide society with strong, knowledgeable Muslim leaders who have the capacity to make positive contributions to their generation and beyond.</i></p>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
12	WASC	<i>committed to providing students with Sustainable Quality Faith Based Education that prepares students for the 21st century.</i>	<i>Our aim is to prepare students to effectively deal with the challenges of a modern technologically advanced society. The school seeks to develop in each student a positive identity as an American Muslim who is equipped physically, intellectually, and spiritually to compete in today's world, and to establish within each student a strong commitment to family, community and humanity.</i>
13	WASC	<i>facilitate the intellectual, psychological, physical, and spiritual development of all its students within a supportive, nurturing environment. The school is committed to ensuring that learning occurs for all students and to including all stakeholders in a team approach to accomplish this goal. We endeavor to produce students that will contribute positively to humanity and the global environment.</i>	<i>It is expected that upon graduation from ... all students will: I – Implement Islam daily by understanding and applying the principles. S – Solve problems, think critically, and communicate ideas effectively. L – Lead as active, respectful, and engaged community members. A – Achieve academic proficiency and be self-motivate learners. M – Make use of knowledge and technology for beneficial purposes.</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
14	WASC	<i>committed to providing students with an excellent academic education and firm grounding in moral and ethical values. New Horizon fosters a dedication to God through virtuous living in a progressive Islamic environment.</i>	<i>seeks to develop in each student a positive identity as an American Muslim. Our goal is for students to be prepared intellectually, socially, emotionally, spiritually, and physically to succeed as leaders in tomorrow's world. ...students are expected to integrate academic skills, Qur'anic principles, and ethical behavior in order to make positive contributions to the global community. aims to develop in each student a balanced character enriched with knowledge, inspired to excellence, and committed to the betterment of family, community, and humanity.</i>
15	WASC	<i>committed to providing students with an excellent academic education and firm grounding in moral and ethical values. The school fosters a dedication to God through virtuous living in a balanced Islamic environment.</i>	<i>a positive identity as an American Muslim who is prepared intellectually, socially, emotionally, spiritually, and physically to succeed in a diverse and ever-changing world. We strive to cultivate in every ... student an excellent character supported by Qur'anic principles, enriched with knowledge, and committed to the betterment of family, community, and humanity.</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
16	WASC	<i>to inspire excellence through rigorous academics and the promotion of universal moral values in a progressive Islamic environment. We nurture a positive American Muslim identity, a devotion to God, and a strong commitment to family and diversity in a global community.</i>	<i>Our School's philosophy is based on the developmental approach in preschool and a more traditional academic approach in our elementary program. Learning is maximized in an active learning environment that involves experimentation, exploration, and discovery. Academic excellence is best achieved through critical thinking, problem solving, discussion, and communication skills. Growth in social skills through positive peer and adult interaction, with an emphasis on Islamic values, will help our children develop a positive self-image as American Muslims.</i>
17	WASC	<i>committed to providing students with high quality academic and character education. New Horizon is dedicated to nurturing spiritual growth and developing God consciousness through the teachings of Islam. New Horizon aims to create a safe and nurturing environment that stimulates intellectual curiosity and independence.</i>	<i>seeks to empower its students with independence, moral strength, and the education necessary to successfully contribute in a dynamic contemporary world. aims to develop for its student's self-assurance as American Muslims with a commitment to honoring family, community involvement, and respecting others. We strive to foster ethical values in our students towards becoming productive and responsible members of our global society.</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
18	WASC	<i>aims to promote human excellence by cultivating students, in every grade level, to possess a well-trained mind, healthy body, good manners, and exceptional character.</i>	<i>Our vision is to establish a school that powerfully combines both spiritual education and academic education so that all students who enter ... School live balanced and healthy physical and spiritual lives. It is our sincere hope that graduates of ... School will not only be successful students, but will also possess a consciousness of God and a love of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to serve as a compass—guiding their decisions during their school years and beyond.</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
19	WASC	<p><i>to provide students with academic and moral excellence in an Islamic environment. Our programs address the spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual needs of students. In addition, ... strives to guide students through balanced character and Islamic education programs.</i></p>	<p><i>provide an enriched environment where students, faculty, and staff seek the pleasure of Allah (swt) by His grace, His mercy, and complete awareness of His presence. Guided by the primary sources of Islam, the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the Seerah of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), ... is dedicated to providing its students with a learning environment of the highest caliber. As a belief that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is still the best model of character, we strive to support our students by giving them the tools to follow in his footprints in ensuring that they will be successful in this life and the eternal Hereafter. We strive to develop students who have a positive self-identity as Muslim-Americans and who will become confident and successful citizens in the world. Students excel in all aspects of their personality and school-wide achievements. They are expected to use their gained knowledge and skills to provide peace and benefit to themselves and to the creation of the Creator, Allah (swt). With this we aim to provide an optimal environment that develops in each student a sound understanding of Islamic character enhanced with a motivation for the acquisition of knowledge.</i></p>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
20	WASC	<p>provides a rich dual-curricular education in Islamic studies and academic knowledge that encourages ethical decision-making, critical thinking, and a lifelong love of learning. We inspire our students to become active, dedicated, ethical, and informed leaders who are committed to the example set forth by Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings upon him, sound Islamic traditions, and excellence through knowledge.</p>	<p>Our vision is that our students will chose to become doctors, lawyers, historians, artists, poets, writers, illustrators, journalists, mothers, fathers, engineers, teachers, bakers, businessmen/women, tailors, tech savvy web developers, researchers, imams, social workers, community organizers, masjid board members, nurses, correspondents, newspaper editors, pilots, space research analysts, coaches, therapists, with the light of Allah in their hearts!</p>
21	WASC	<p>provide a holistic approach to education by addressing the spiritual, academic, social, and emotional needs of a child. Our curriculum stresses excellence in core academic subjects and in Islamic studies taught by caring and qualified teachers. Our students belong to a community of faith, including parents and teachers, which strengthen their identity as Muslims. Students are encouraged to be leaders and to strive to improve themselves, their families, their communities, and their environment.</p>	<p>graduates are well rounded individuals who excel in core academics and posses skills to read, write, and speak not just English, but also Arabic as it is the language of the Quran. They emerge as God conscious leaders who seek the pleasure of their Creator through service to humanity.</p>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
22	WASC	<i>inspire academic learning, build student character, and foster the Islamic way of life. It is our goal that each student reach his/her highest academic potential while displaying respect, honesty, and responsibility. We encourage our students to apply critical thinking and problem solving skills in both academic and daily life. Our mission is to equip our students with academic, social, and Islamic skills to take on any of life's challenges and to become positive, productive members of society.</i>	<i>We believe that every child has the ability to achieve higher learning. We, as teachers, are dedicated to help each student develop to his/her full academic potential. Our goal is to teach our students, using all learning modalities, to meet and exceed the standards set by the State of California and the Islamic principles.</i>
23	AdvancED	<i>provide a safe, nurturing and stimulating Islamic atmosphere to enable students to achieve a solid foundation of Islamic understanding according to the Quran, and life of Prophet Mohamed (SAW) with a true sense and pride of their Islamic identity. We want our students to achieve academic excellence and prepare our students to be morally and socially responsible citizens.”</i>	<i>Islam enjoins learning from the cradle to the grave. As an Islamic school, ... strives to fulfill this command. ... purpose is rooted in the belief that every student has the right to the best quality of education available, and that education is a process which encompasses all experiences students encounter in their school. ... philosophy is also entrenched in the belief that classroom instruction is only one small aspect of a student's educational experience, and that students learn from the behavior and actions of the adults around them more than they learn from books. Finally, it is rooted in the belief that students' knowledge and pride in their religion and heritage are essential to their well-being and success.</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
24	NEASC	<i>provides an academically challenging and safe environment that fosters creativity, academic excellence and community engagement. ... Academy students will develop strong character based on the Islamic faith and excel in academics.</i>	<i>to graduate generations of scholars who have a strong Muslim identity and ready to compete in the global society. ... Academy is dedicated to equipping students with the necessary tools and resources needed to be globally competitive, college and career ready, and productive Muslim citizens.</i>
25	AdvancED	<i>provide a safe, nurturing, and stimulating Islamic environment to produce future leaders, who will have achieved academic excellence, are morally and socially responsible citizens, and are well-equipped to interact with the community around them and the world at large.”</i>	<i>Islam enjoins learning from the cradle to the grave. Islam also enjoins a global-mindedness that respects and promotes understanding of peoples and cultures from around the world. As an Islamic school, ... strives to fulfill these commands.</i>
26	AdvancED	<i>committed to empowering students with sound Islamic principles and skills for high academic achievement in order to become productive citizens.</i>	<i>To produce exemplary members of society</i>
27	AdvancED	<i>to educate and prepare each student with faith, knowledge, wisdom, character, and life skills, using the best and most effective methods and tools through the Islamic vision as it exists in the Quran and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).</i>	<i>To provide a comprehensive Islamic education combined with a general studies curriculum To establish an environment which provides the highest possible standards of education To promote the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for the successful development of the total person. To prepare students to adapt to the complexities and challenges of an increasingly interdependent and constantly changing world. To foster awareness of the rights, duties, and responsibilities of citizenship To promote respect for other cultures and nationalities</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
28	AdvancED	<i>prepare today's students for tomorrow's society with the best manners and the highest academic achievements. The school believes that learning is a lifelong process; therefore, the school provides a program that promotes the intellectual, physical, moral and social maturation. Each teacher and staff member provides the highest ethical and professional standards.</i>	<i>improvements have been made to further the goals of academic achievement and excellence. For instance, Smart Board technology has been installed and utilized in all high school subject classrooms. Curriculum review has been carried out, with new, updated textbooks purchased and utilized. The new curriculum is aligned with both Sunshine State Standards and the upcoming Common Core Standards.</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
29	AdancEd	<p><i>provide and promote the highest level of education in a nurturing Islamic environment, raising future generations of students with a strong moral character and excellence in both Islamic and academic education.”</i></p>	<p><i>The school touchstone emphasizes righteous conduct, citizenship and leading by example to make the school and broader community in which we live a better place:</i></p> <p><i>We show respect for each other by using kind words and actions.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We demonstrate self-discipline by persevering in pursuit of our goals.</i> • <i>We commit to developing leaders by setting examples and living by our “Word.”</i> <p><i>we are committed to the attainment and maintenance of the highest level of academic achievement in all subject areas with a primary focus on the Sciences, Technology, English , Mathematics and Social Studies. These core areas of education are central to the instructional emphasis at the school and the graduation of students who are fully capable in these areas is one of our core goals.</i></p> <p><i>Islamic monotheism is incorporated into education to achieve holistic growth, development and self-actualization through spiritual, cognitive, intellectual, social, physical, scientific and linguistic growth. The school strives to provide facilities and programs of learning that allow a student to develop spiritually and build a positive relationship with God that manifests in peace, happiness, contentment, justice and social welfare.</i></p>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
30	AdvancED	<i>to teach our students the principles and practices of Islam and to prepare them for academic success and good citizenship.</i>	<i>committed to offering its students a competitive curriculum while adhering to the highest possible Islamic and academic standards. The Universal Academy of Florida will provide a safe and secure school atmosphere while preserving the Islamic identity of its students. The Academy achieves these goals by approaching the education process holistically—by satisfying the cognitive, spiritual, psychological, physical and social needs of our students.</i>
31	AdvancED	<i>To effectively instill Islamic values and morals, while ensuring academic excellence through an integrated curriculum based upon: Common Core Georgia Performance Standards in core academic subjects ACTFL national world language standards for the Arabic language Noorani Qai'da tajweed foundation, and strong program of memorization of essential segments and surahs of the Qur'an High quality Islamic Studies curriculum integrated in other core subjects, and applied to the school culture in a Tarbiyah framework Outdoor Physical Education, Health, and Art classes</i>	<i>shall be a learning institution, based on the principles of the Quran and Sunnah, that nurtures, cultivates and fosters creative and critical thinking skills, academic excellence and strong moral values, to develop in each student a positive identity as a Muslim, who is prepared intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically for the betterment of family, community and humanity.</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
32	AdvancED	provide a challenging and diverse curriculum that integrates all disciplines in an Islamic environment that will help students to develop the leadership potential and balanced character.	<p><i>(INSPIRE)</i></p> <p><i>I Integrate Islamic values within academic and religious curricula.</i></p> <p><i>N Nurture an environment that empowers the next generation of American Muslim leaders through the study of Quran and Prophetic Teachings in Islam.</i></p> <p><i>S Strengthen our global community through learning experiences.</i></p> <p><i>P Provide sufficient opportunities for parental and other stakeholder involvement.</i></p> <p><i>I Implement high order thinking skills through the application of technology and 21st century learning.</i></p> <p><i>R Reinforce Islamic Identity while fostering cultural diversity.</i></p> <p><i>E Empower all students to apply life long skills to become productive citizens.</i></p>
33	AdvancED	Provide an ENVIRONMENT to produce Muslims whose thoughts and action are DEVOTED to Allah. Focus on teaching Science, MATH and ARABIC. Utilize the most EFFECTIVE teaching methods and tools. Make LEARNING appealing, interesting, FUN and interactive. Instill DISCIPLINE.	Develop Strong Muslims, nurtured to excel academically and capable of being productive members of society.

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
34	AdvancED	<p>a community made up of board members, parents, students, staff and friends of the school who are dedicated to providing a comprehensive education in an Islamic environment which is well-equipped to serve the needs of students from preschool through high school, with grades six through twelve being exclusively for girls. In addition to a college preparatory program of rigorous academics, ... School and its partners are committed to introducing the true message of Islam, instilling an appreciation of Islamic history and values, and cultivating pride among Muslim American youth about their heritage and their place in American society. Charitable giving, good deeds, equality among the races, and a tolerance for the religions and values of others will also be stressed in an effort to prepare students intellectually, spiritually, physically and socially to be responsible and effective members of a diverse and changing world.</p>	<p>seek and hire qualified educators who demonstrate a commitment to the values of Islam, and to excellence in education. The following are school-wide objectives that we continuously strive to achieve with our students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ To teach our students the love of Islam by example and through Islamic and Quranic studies, and the practice of Islam. ☐ To teach our students to strive for excellence at school and in their future academic and personal lives. ☐ To teach social awareness and responsibility through involvement in community causes. ☐ To teach the concept of faith with action through the example of our staff.

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
35	AdvancED	<i>an academic institution dedicated to providing excellent education in an Islamic environment with Quran and Sunnah as its guiding principle. It strives to provide the highest level of academic, spiritual, and physical education, while focusing on child's social, emotional, financial and intellectual needs. It aims to develop well-rounded individuals equipped with passion for knowledge, life-long learning and leadership qualities with dedication to serve humanity at large.</i>	<i>Our vision is to be a nationally recognized college preparatory school with outstanding faculty, state of the art facilities, and advanced curriculum to prepare our graduates for admission to top-ranked colleges and to be successful in their future endeavors. We strive to foster a vibrant environment which ensures practice of Islamic principles at all levels, and promotes cultural diversity, intellectual curiosity, creativity, entrepreneurship, leadership qualities, and service to humanity at large. We aim to produce professionally successful and well-rounded individuals, who are enriched with knowledge, inspired to excellence, and committed to the betterment of family, community, and humanity.</i>
36	AdvancED	<i>fosters the development of the mind, instruction and activity promote healthy action, and daily experiences nurture integrity, empathy, and kindness. ... seeks to graduate young people whose physical, intellectual, and spiritual capacities and potentials are nurtured. As students increase in maturity and responsibility, knowledge in scope and content progressively increases.</i>	<i>To develop individuals with knowledge and goodness who achieve excellence in the spiritual and material life based on the Qur'anic conception of intelligence and virtue as embodied in the Prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and grant him peace).</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
37	AdvancED	<i>We believe an Islamic environment is essential not only for optimum education but also for the appropriate emotional, social, and intellectual development of Muslim children in America. An Islamic environment affirms our children's identity and pride in Islamic legacy. Such affirmation of identity and pride are necessary to inspire our children to optimally achieve not only in the classroom during their childhood but also in their future scholarly and career objectives.</i>	<i>Hence our vision of "Building Character & Developing Mind" is to make sure that character and a development of a scholastic mind are both essential for success in life and makes for a wholesome education. We strive to achieve this balance with the belief that both are essential elements that helps a child grow into a person who is beneficial to the place and people and is able to make contributions for the good of all. We believe that a sense of social consciousness, compassion, mercy, kindness, honesty and justice are components of the characters that can be taught with adhering to the religious values. When these values are combined with a strong and challenging academics and scholarly element can have the astounding effect on an individual that neither can have if executed in the absence of the other.</i>
38	AdvancED	<i>to empower students with exceptional Islamic character and academics to thrive as honorable members in a global community.</i>	<i>the premiere Academy for educational and character excellence.</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
39	AdvancED	<i>To provide a safe, nurturing, and stimulating Islamic learning environment that enables students to achieve their maximum educational potential, and prepare them for their future roles in society as responsible citizens.</i>	<i>School's philosophy is rooted in the belief that education is a process which encompasses all the experiences students encounter in their school. Classroom instruction is only one small aspect of a child's educational experience. It is also rooted in the belief that students learn from the behavior and actions of the adults around them more than they learn from books. Finally, it is rooted in the belief that children's knowledge and pride in their religion and heritage is key to their well-being and success in the world. As such, the board of directors has strived to ensure that the administration and the teaching staff are qualified educators, who themselves are observant of Islamic values in their own lives. It is fruitless in education to ask children to adhere to anything unless role models exist around them, showing not only that adherence to these ideals is possible, but also that direction, stability, peace, and happiness cannot be achieved otherwise. ... believes that being a Muslim is synonymous with excellence in every area. To that end, academic excellence is expected and pursued as part of our religious duties. Our effort to establish an Islamic ethos in the school does not interfere with the establishment of a challenging academic program. In fact, both efforts must go hand-in-hand for us to be able to claim that ours is a model Islamic school.</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
40	AdvancED	<i>It is our mission to teach students to nurture a positive self-image as twenty-first century, global citizens. We instill the fundamental principles of personal faith, honorable character and commitment to scholarship as a means of supporting each child in reaching his/her full potential.</i>	<i>Our vision is that each of our students, upon graduating from Avicenna Academy is:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · <i>able and willing to live according to the tenants of their personal faith. For Muslim students, this means that they will be able and willing to live according to Allah 's (SWT) will as established in the Quran and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (SAW).</i> · <i>serving as a shining example of what it is to be a young, confident and capable person of sound character in this twenty-first century world.</i> · <i>in possession of a complement of academic skills: linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, physical and social.</i> · <i>comfortable and confident collaborating with people from a myriad of social, religious, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds.</i>
41	AdvancED	<i>take all the necessary means to build a generation of committed, balanced Muslims who are empowered academically and religiously to make a positive contribution to their community and the world around them..</i>	<i>“Our Lord, make us leaders of the righteous.”</i> <i>We instill the Quran in the hearts of our children so that it becomes the engine that drives all aspects of their lives.</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
42	AdvancED	<i>committed to providing students with an excellent academic education and firm foundation in moral and ethical values. The ... fosters a dedication to God through virtuous living in a progressive Islamic environment.</i>	<i>seeks to develop in each Muslim student a positive identity as an American Muslim who is prepared intellectually, socially, emotionally, spiritually, and physically to succeed in tomorrow's world. All ... students are expected to integrate academic skills, Qur'anic principles, and ethical behavior in order to make positive contributions to the global community. ... aims to develop in each student a balanced character enriched with knowledge, inspired to excellence, and committed to the betterment of self, family, community, and humanity."</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
43	MSA-CESS	<p><i>working towards empowering the Ummah1 by developing students who will become well-rounded individuals spiritually, emotionally, and physically who then will be capable of dealing with today's challenges through the knowledge and implementation of the Qur'an2, Sunnah3, and through academic excellence.</i></p>	<p><i>School's teaching philosophy is firmly ingrained in the Islamic belief of inherent goodness in human beings and in their ultimate duty to submit to the will of Allah. Therefore, ... School considers its mission and responsibility to nurture and carefully develop its students into persons who engage in practices that are centered around strong Islamic principles, moral values, and religious beliefs.</i></p> <p><i>... School believes in providing quality education, to instill a love of learning in the students, and to graduate students who will not only practice Islam as a complete way of life, but who are also leaders in their practice toward their families and communities. ... School believes in the shared responsibility in shaping the hearts and minds of the young souls. Based on this, our aim is to have our students exemplify excellent character towards parents, teachers, peers, and the community at large.</i></p> <p><i>... School strives to create an environment that encourages the development and flourishing of an Islamic identity. Furthermore, the school is the foundation upon which we hope to build a living Islamic community that adheres to the Qur'an and Sunnah.</i></p>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
44	MSA-CESS	<p><i>to provide a high quality Islamic education through a holistic approach to child development that encourages excellence, hard work, perseverance, and dedication.</i></p> <p><i>... School aims to provide an integrated approach to Islam, meaningful life experiences, and effective adult mentorship.</i></p> <p><i>...School is committed to developing leaders who are focused on pleasing Allah and serving humanity, who are globally aware and locally active.</i></p>	<p><i>to cultivate excellence in Islamic character and academics, foster leadership skills, and develop global awareness.</i></p>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
45	NEASC	<p><i>to coordinate the efforts of parents, teachers, and community members to empower all students to develop, through education, the knowledge, skills, and values needed to create better lives for themselves and build a more just society based on Islamic values.</i></p>	<p><i>to give our students an Islamic identity and a high quality education. This includes state-of-the-art training in physical and social sciences, and at the same time inculcation of the values which make individuals good human beings and useful members of society. Students will be prepared to take a role in the scientifically and technologically advanced world. At the same time, the social and spiritual needs of students will be addressed by developing the highest standards of values, morals, etiquette, and drive for excellence through Islamic education, which demands a complete discipline in one's personal and social life.</i></p> <p><i>The following are school-wide objectives that we continuously strive to achieve with our students:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• To teach our students to strive for excellence in all that they do;</i> <i>• To teach a love for Islam by example and through Islamic and Quranic studies;</i> <i>• To teach the practice of Islam by demonstration;</i> <i>• To prepare our students at the level necessary for worldly success;</i> <i>• To teach our students social awareness and responsibility through involvement in community</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• To educate the whole child, physically, spiritually, intellectually and emotionally;</i> <i>• To teach the concept of faith with action through the example of staff and administration;</i> <p><i>and</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• To teach the love of Qur'an and the Arabic language through classroom instruction and school competitions.</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
46	NEACS	<p><i>Our mission is to provide an education that is rooted in Islamic faith and ideals that draws upon the noblest Islamic traditions of 'Ilm¹, 'Ibadah², 'Ihsan³ and 'adl⁴, and that inculcates these values in our students.</i></p>	<p><i>The curriculum, system of discipline, and leisure activities at the Academy combine the knowledge and practice of Islam with the best training in the sciences, humanities and business, so that our students can grow up to be conscientious Muslims while also aspiring to the highest goals in the vocations they choose.</i></p> <p><i>Thus, the objectives of the academic programs are to form skilled and discerning individuals equipped with logical scientific reasoning, trained in basic skills, full of creativity, and prepared for life-long learning. The Academy makes students proud of the Muslim scholars in the fields of humanities and sciences and encourages them to excel in their education to advance the mission of their ancestors by contributing to modern-day academia.</i></p> <p><i>The Academy provides a fertile environment for maximum social, emotional, physical and academic development according to the values of Islam, and challenges students to reach their maximum human potential. The Academy guides the young adults to lead decent contemporary lives, enrich their families, serve their community, tolerate difference, think critically, promote collaboration and respect others. School activities help them develop individual talent, self-esteem and leadership characteristics and offer an outlet for demonstrating creativity. The entire school community provides high learning standards, preparing students to live in a complex, technological and multi-cultural society as proud, practicing Muslims.</i></p>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
47	NEASC	<i>committed to excellence in education that builds better citizens and better Muslims.</i>	<i>Our vision is to grow, enrich, and lead as we focus on our mission. The school wants to grow in enrollment, in financial resources and in our capacity to serve the community. We want to lead among independent schools by modeling best practices, competence and efficiency. We want to create a learning environment that motivates students to be their best. We want to enrich the minds of every student each day with a dynamic curriculum geared towards developing a strong intellect, firm faith and good character. We want to prepare our students to be leaders in the 21st century through community service, and commitment to the core values of quality, respect, integrity, sincerity and unity.</i>
48	NEASC	<i>seeks to provide a foundation of academic excellence and Islamic values that enables young Muslims to become Righteous Leaders for the community.</i>	<i>provides a unique, individualized, accelerated educational program that is shaped by Islamic values and which prepares students for higher learning, leadership, service, and community builders.</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
49	NEASC	<p><i>Our mission is to provide an education that is rooted in Islamic faith and ideals that draws upon the noblest Islamic traditions of 'Ilm (Knowledge), 'Ibadah (Worship), 'Ihsan (Excellence) and 'Adl (Justice) and that seeks to inculcate these values in our students.</i></p>	<p><i>aims to provide a high-standard of American-curriculum education while integrating Islam in all aspects of the learning process. We consider learning to be a lifelong responsibility. We educate our students integrate into society as proud practicing Muslims. We strive hard to create a learning environment where children develop Islamic behavior, manners, morals and pride in their Islamic heritage. The objectives of the academic programs at ... are to form minds that are skilled and discerning, which are equipped with logical scientific reasoning, trained in basic skills, full of creativity, and prepared for lifelong learning. The Academy instills students with an awareness of achievements of Muslim scholars in the fields of the humanities and sciences. We encourage our students to excel in their education and advance the mission of their ancestors by contributing to modern-day sciences. ... provides a fertile environment for maximum social, emotional, physical and academic development of each child according to the values of Islam, and challenges students to reach their maximum human potential. The Academy guides the children to lead decent contemporary lives, enrich their families, serve their community, tolerate differences, think critically, promote collaboration and respect others. School activities help the children develop individual talents, self-esteem and leadership characteristics and offer an outlet for demonstrating creativity. The entire school community provides high learning and practice standards, preparing the students to live in a complex technological</i></p>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
50	AdvancED	to educate and raise young people imbued with the qualities of a Muslim personality: devotion to Almighty Allah, commitment to their Islamic principles, care and service to others, and an understanding of their role in contemporary society. The goal of the school is to develop students who are empowered by their Islamic faith and practice to live as effective, conscientious, and upright citizens in the national and international community contributing to the betterment of life.	s vision for student success is centered on the development of self-directed individuals inspired towards care and service. Authentic performance assessments and comprehensive culminating experiences provide measurable patterns of development across a broad range of skills, understandings, and applications. The learning experience includes hands on, project based learning that foster conceptual understandings that promote thinking outside the box.
51	AdvancED	To develop our students into role models who excel academically, socially, and spiritually to pursue higher education and achieve their endeavors. ... Academy will provide a healthy learning environment devoted to Islamic principles based on the Quran and the teachings of the prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). Genesee Academy will flourish by collaboration between students, parents, school and the community.	To be the preferred Islamic School recognized to infuse academic excellence with highest morals and ethics.
52	AdvancED	Our mission is to offer an excellent education that will enable students to be life-long learners and contribute to the betterment of human culture, and	With guidance from Allah, we will ensure academic excellence for both students and educators. We will be a school where the students and educators are welcomed, respected, trusted and worship where they will strive to be the best. Our objectives and efforts will stem from an Islamic four pillars: self-discipline, good morals, justice and vicegerents on earth.

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
53	AdvancED	<p><i>to inspire academic excellence; develop caring and responsible, Muslim American citizens; and cultivate intercultural understanding and respect.</i></p>	<p><i>to assist in the development of a successful and trustworthy citizen, who will in turn become a positive and productive participant in a multicultural society. In addition to providing knowledge and skills for the learning experience of the students, we hope to prepare each student for a life of purity and sincerity. Therefore, our ultimate goal at ... school is to build individual character based on the divine source of discipline and knowledge adapted from the Quran and exemplified by the practices of the blessed messenger of Allah, Mohammad (peace be upon him). We are dedicated to providing a loving and trusting environment conducive to Islamic beliefs and values. Islamic rules of conduct allow for a quality education and excellence in academic achievement. Through this trusting and supportive learning environment, we hope to nurture the growth of each student into a well-rounded and honorable individual.</i></p> <p><i>Values: Our commitment includes providing the following:</i></p> <p><i>1. Meaningful knowledge, essential skills and positive learning experience</i></p> <p><i>2. Personal growth: morally, spiritually, intellectually, socially, and physically</i></p> <p><i>3. Preparing students to become responsive and active members of a healthy family, community, country and world at large.</i></p> <p><i>... programs of study include holistic educational framework. We prioritize students character first and build transdisciplinary skills through content areas. Students are offered a variety of courses and after-school activities including sports and clubs to enhance students' total educational</i></p>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
54	AdvancED	<p><i>set the standard for excellence in education while nurturing Islamic character. Our goals are: -To teach in a way that educates spiritually, physically, intellectually, and emotionally. - To provide skilled instruction at an academic level necessary for worldly success. -To strive for excellence, social awareness, and responsibility through involvement in the community. -To instill the attributes of integrity, citizenship, service, and diversity in our children by providing Islamic Character Education.</i></p>	<p><i>our vision is the guiding principle that establishes the goals and expectations for the student population. Students at ... receive the necessary skills to foster academic success and Islamic character development through the strong secular and religious curriculum for students in Grades Pre-K through 12.</i></p>
55	AdvancED	<p><i>to provide a high quality education for our students by nurturing cognitive skills for academic and positive character growth as well as instilling in them deeply rooted Islamic values that will help them achieve success.</i></p>	<p><i>to promote intellectual, spiritual, social, and physical growth of our students through an Islamically based education. The active involvement of dedicated teachers, parents, and community members will inspire ... students to become devout, independent, creative, and compassionate Muslims who are enthusiastic about learning</i></p>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
56	AdvancED	<p>to produce a generation of Muslims who: Have a solid understanding of Tawheed (oneness of the Creator) Have a strong Islamic moral character, Have leadership skills superseded by Taqwa (piety), Have a strong sense of responsibility and realize that Islam is the only solution, Interact with community and global issues with an Islamic frame of mind, and Are academically equipped to succeed and excel in an increasingly competitive and challenging world.</p>	<p>to be the top tier Islamic school and excel in education in all areas including Islamic Studies and Arabic. ... takes a holistic approach to educating young minds to develop not only their academic skills, but also to make them active citizens of the community they live in. The students volunteer and work with many different area organizations to raise funds, collect goods, and run events to help the greater Minnesota community. Food drives, clothing drives, book drive, nursing home visits, orphan sponsorship, teddy bear collection for ill children, Pennies for Patients, Water for Africa, African Night (for the Horn of Africa), and Hope Kids are just a few of the events and/or organizations that Al-Amal School students have worked for or raised funds for. Whether it is an Al-Amal School event, fundraiser, graduation, open-house, parent teacher conferences, or National Honor Society projects, our students participate in various capacities by manning registration booths, setting up for events, clean-up after events, emceeing, or being active participants in the many school events. They can be seen volunteering in many capacities for other organizations...</p>
57	AdvancED	<p>academic excellence and prepares them to be morally and socially responsible citizens guided by the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah.</p>	<p>to empower students to become model citizens and leaders committed to Islamic principles, life-long learning, and steadfast service to the local and global communities.</p>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
58	AdvancED	<i>To provide a nurturing environment where students aspire for excellence in education, integrity and leadership skills to better serve humanity.</i>	<i>Striving to be a premier Islamic, progressive and scientific learning institution.</i>
59	AdvancED	<i>Grounded in the strengths of our Islamic heritage and spiritual beliefs, ... mission is to develop highly educated, responsible, and active students with an interest in the pursuit of knowledge in all its forms." In pursuit of this mission, all students are given top-quality educational resources customized to meet individual aspirations and abilities. With a low student to teacher ratio, we ensure each student receives ample opportunities for one-on-one learning and enrichment. This hands-on process is further strengthened by strong parental communication and involvement.</i>	<i>to remain one of the most reputable schools in the field of Islamic Education, developing leaders equipped with Faith and Knowledge, and preparing them to create a bright future for themselves and for others; to be the school in which students achieve greatness of character and excellence of knowledge.</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
60	AdvancED	<i>In pursuit of this mission, all students are given top-quality educational resources customized to meet individual aspirations and abilities. With a low student to teacher ratio, we ensure each student receives ample opportunities for one-on-one learning and enrichment. This hands-on process is further strengthened by strong parental communication and involvement, with a large selection of after-school and extra-curricular programs.</i>	<i>All of these complementary approaches come together to encourage a strong desire to learn among all students, who grow a solid set of critical and reflective thinking skills that will guide them throughout their academic and future professional career. Our school is founded on traditional Islamic values that seek to develop intellectual, moral, and physical skills that celebrate the innate gifts each child has been given. It is in this nurturing, safe community that your child will master the skills essential for success academically and throughout every facet of their lives..</i>
61	AdvancED	<i>seeks to develop in students a positive identity as Muslim Americans who are prepared intellectually, socially, emotionally, spiritually, & physically to succeed in the future. ... students are expected to integrate highest academic skills, Qur'anic principles, & ethical behavior in order to make positive contributions to their family, community, & humanity.</i>	<i>will be an educational institution of choice, rooted in the Qur'an & Sunnah, by striking a balance between Islamic values, academic excellence, responsible citizenship, & promoting lifelong learning.</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
62	MSA-CESS	<p><i>espouses the ideal of academic and spiritual excellence. Our curriculum is designed to educate the whole student by addressing development of the moral, physical, spiritual and social qualities of each student. The school strives to instill in our students the commitment to their being lifelong learners who learn, love, and live their spiritual and academic experience in every aspect of their lives as community leaders, collaborators, educators, and ambassadors of knowledge. Our students are being prepared to be able to share and model values of the Prophetic vision as a way to become visionaries themselves.</i></p>	<p><i>We believe.... Children are our most precious asset as they will be the future leaders of our community.</i></p> <p><i>Effective education develops the whole person- spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, socially, and physically.</i></p> <p><i>The fostering and development of good character is an essential component in the educational process. Every child has the ability to learn but they learn in different ways and at different rates.</i></p> <p><i>All students deserve to be treated with kindness, caring, and fairness.</i></p> <p><i>Each child has inherent self worth as the creation of God.</i></p> <p><i>Teaching Islam through the “Learn, Love, Live” Philosophy. The school should always provide a safe learning environment.</i></p> <p><i>Effective communication skills are an essential component of success. Technology should be used in the classroom.</i></p> <p><i>Lifelong learning is essential for success and continued self-improvement.</i></p> <p><i>We are accountable not just for what we say but also for what we do.</i></p> <p><i>Following the commands of Allah will guide us to the very best in ourselves.</i></p> <p><i>The school community values safety, and as such teaches safety skills, for care of one self and others.</i></p> <p><i>School staff are important role models for the students and should at all times model appropriate behavior.</i></p> <p><i>Children need to learn the skills that prepare on how to deal with issues in a changing environment and making decisions when unpredicted situations arise</i></p> <p><i>The staff members are life long</i></p>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
63	AdvancED	<i>shall provide an Islamic environment that offers quality education and leadership skills to develop global awareness and 21st Century skills.</i>	<i>-Provide an Islamic and professional learning environment by integrating Islamic Teaching into the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. -Foster Islamic Character by implementing a Character Education Curriculum in partnership with all stakeholders (school board, staff and faculty, parents, and students) -Maintain its status of a recognized private school as outlined within the General Statutes of the State of North Carolina.</i>
64	AdvancED	<i>to educate and inspire students in an Islamic environment to excel in a diverse society.</i>	<i>to guide students to become model citizens with academic excellence and Islamic values to succeed in this life and the Hereafter.</i>
65	AdvancED	<i>to enable students to develop a strong foundation in ethics and responsibility grounded in the Holy Qur'an, and the Sunnah. It is the objective of the ... that students are provided an education so as to become contributors to the global community by representing diverse cultures, learning awareness of our environment, and participating in service to the community.</i>	<i>Curriculum and programs developed with consideration for the above mission will reflect the values of the society during the time of its inception. Each of these considerations works in concert to help produce independent, capable and confident individuals as productive participating citizens.</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
66	AdvancED	<i>This vision coincides with our mission which has been to develop life-long learners who are responsible and moral citizens within a global community while maintaining their Muslim identity. With this vision and mission, children will mature into well-rounded, socially and spiritually developed human beings. It is these high standards as well as the balance of intellect and spirit that the ... curriculum seeks to achieve and to educate our students in both the academic and religious learning.</i>	<i>vision has consistently been to empower students within a healthy, Islamic environment through academic excellence. A healthy environment is achieved when students and staff are able to continue to learn and grow in an atmosphere that not only accepts, but also encourages an American Muslim identity and teaches the practices and values of Islam consistent with good citizenship.</i>
67	AdvancED	<i>aims to nurture confident and committed youth, who draw upon Islamic values, cultivating leaders of righteous and noble character who contribute to the betterment of our American Society. To this end, we will cultivate personalities who upon graduation will be ambitious yet responsible, competitive yet caring, practical yet reflective, open minded yet principled, motivated yet focused and progressive yet aware.</i>	<i>aims to develop an educational institution committed to fostering balanced American Muslim citizen</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
68	AdvancED	<p><i>will provide the tools to promote life-long learning and an Islamic environment that inspires noble character and righteous leadership." While students are nurtured to always seek beneficial knowledge, the focus on character and leadership development is equally important. Our stakeholders believe this school must prioritize character and leadership development based on a strong foundation of ethics and morality. We envision the development of students who demonstrate the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, to take responsibility for their actions, and to be conscious of critical intrinsic qualities such as honesty and integrity; students who learn an approach to life that leads to a path of balance and moderation; students who act as responsible citizens, who show full respect for the law; students who regularly engage in community service projects and who eventually become leaders in promoting community improvement and civic engagement.</i></p>	<p><i>Building generations of balanced and academically excellent Muslim-American citizens. The stakeholders really envisioned our graduates as being well-rounded students with a balanced understanding of themselves, their faith, and their role in the world. Students who are academically-excellent, but who are also inspired to use their talents and education to make a difference in the lives of others, to make a positive contribution to America, and to the world. Finally, the vision and mission statements were translated into three implementable goals intending to build: Committed Balanced Muslims, Knowledgeable Scholars, and Contributing Citizens & Community Builders. These goals cover learning skills, thinking skills, life skills, religious skills, ethical skills, social skills, and leadership skills. These were further subdivided into three categories: Religious and ethical skills, academic skills, and social and leadership skills. These school wide goals were published in a booklet and distributed to students, parents and other stakeholders.</i></p>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
69	AdvancED	<p><i>Our mission is to deliver superb, holistic academic and spiritual education within an Islamic environment that will nurture our children's hearts and minds, build their character, develop their identities, and prepare them for their role in life as stewards of Earth and humanity.</i></p>	<p><i>In order to create a comprehensive program that fulfills our Islamic philosophy, purpose, goals, and mission, the ... has the following objectives:</i></p> <p><i>To provide an active, comprehensive learning experience that incorporates critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and problem solving skills in the core areas of Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Fine Arts, Social Sciences, and Physical Education in parallel with a comprehensive curriculum of Islamic Studies, Quran, and Arabic Language.</i></p> <p><i>To instill in our students a love of learning, a spirit of inquiry, and the ability to link science with Islam so they can explore the myriad signs of God in the Universe and within themselves. To inspire and transform students into confident, capable individuals with a God-centered outlook on life through Islamic education and discipline.</i></p> <p><i>To utilize modern teaching strategies to deliver superb academics and extracurricular experiences to our students that will polish their talents and mold them into positive, productive members of society.</i></p>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
70	NEASC	<p><i>committed to inspiring excellence in our students' education, character and personal conduct. We strive to teach them how to gain KNOWLEDGE, increase their FAITH in their daily lives, and incorporate Islam and exercise DISCIPLINE in their pursuits to benefit themselves and society.</i></p>	<p><i>. We are dedicated to nurturing our students with Islamic and innovative educational methods, while helping to mold them to be noble individuals spiritually, morally, and ethically, guiding them to academic excellence, and strong leadership abilities.</i></p> <p><i>Here at ..., we derive our message from the faith in the necessity of raising a generation that believes in its creator, Almighty Allah. Our students come from families of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and all walks of life. ... strives to be a centre for excellence in academics, leadership and Islamic conduct. Our qualified administrators and teachers work hard at instilling strong Islamic values according to Quran and Sunnah teachings, highest moral standards, and the latest academic skills available to our students.</i></p> <p><i>To continue to succeed, it is our belief that we must keep an open communication with administrators, teachers, parents and the community, concerning the progression of students and the school.</i></p> <p><i>Our ultimate goal is to prepare our students for success in this world and to achieve the best in the hereafter, inshaAllah.</i></p>
71	AdvancED	<p><i>is dedicated to providing its students with excellent academic education in an Islamic environment.</i></p>	<p><i>envisions a future where every student receives high quality individualized education that prepares him/her for a bright future as a caring, productive member of the society.</i></p>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
72	AdvancED	<i>Our Mission is to educate the whole child in an Islamic environment where students are spiritually nurtured, challenged academically, engaged, healthy, safe, and supported in order to contribute positively in a diverse society.</i>	<i>will serve humanity by developing exemplary scholars committed to living Islam through academic excellence, good character, service and leadership.</i>
73	AdvancED	<i>Prepare generations of scholars with a strong Islamic identity, leadership, and academic excellence who make a positive contribution to the global community</i>	<i>Establish a distinguished Islamic institution in North America which develops exemplary Muslims with academic excellence.</i>
74	AdvancED	<i>Our mission is to provide academic excellence for all students in a safe and healthy environment following Islamic values.</i>	<i>To foster our students' optimal potential and leadership skills by inculcating a spirit of lifelong learning based on Islamic principles.</i>
75	AdvancED	<i>Prepare our students for success in this life and the Hereafter by providing them with exemplary education based on Islamic morals, values, and the highest academic standards.</i>	<p><i>be recognized among the top educational institutions of its kind providing exemplary education based on Islamic morals and the highest academic standards. This vision will be embodied in each ... graduate who will have acquired strong Islamic beliefs and practices, demonstrating model behavior and character.</i></p> <p><i>Graduates will have the academic grounding, confidence, and the skills to meet life's challenges and relate to others with respect, tolerance, and understanding. They will be knowledgeable enough to be critical and creative thinkers. ... graduates will be ambitious and influential enough to become productive citizens and leaders within their communities, demonstrating their Muslim-American identity.</i></p>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
76	AdvancED	<i>The Academy's mission is to graduate practicing Muslim leaders and responsible citizens who are well prepared for college entrance and career challenges of the 21st century. Our mission will be achieved through educational excellence within healthy learning environment, intimate adherence to Islamic practices, and strong collaboration with positive interaction among school, students, parents and community.</i>	<i>will be a model Islamic educational system within which learners may develop to their fullest potential and become a generation of leaders and individuals who are highly motivated to be successful in this life and beyond.</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
77	AdvancED	<p><i>Preparing our students to excel as Muslim role models and exemplary citizens in today's diverse society.</i></p>	<p><i>committed to the following principles:</i></p> <p><i>Prepare our children to become Muslim role models, exemplary citizens in their communities, and to excel in their professional careers.</i></p> <p><i>Inculcate in our children Islamic values, habits, attitudes, high moral and ethical standards, tolerance, and patience that are characteristics of a good Muslim.</i></p> <p><i>Teach our children to read and understand the message of the Quran, and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and to apply these in every facet of their personal and professional lives.</i></p> <p><i>Help students exit with academic skills at or above their grade level.</i></p> <p><i>Engage the students in a rich curriculum to acquire the skills and love of effective learning.</i></p> <p><i>Encourage the faculty and staff to communicate high expectations of and respect to every student.</i></p> <p><i>Extend to the greater community, through partnership with parents a genuine appreciation of the value of excellence in education.</i></p> <p><i>Empower the faculty and staff through mutual respect, ongoing training, strong leadership, and sufficient resources to implement an educational program of high excellence.</i></p>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
78	AdvancED	<p><i>Preparing today's students for tomorrow's challenges and hereafter by instilling Islamic values and high moral standards, through enriched curriculum that fosters holistic development, thus empowering them to become productive American Muslim citizens</i></p>	<p><i>committed to the following principles:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Prepare our children to become Muslim role models, exemplary citizens in their communities, and to excel in their professional careers.</i> <i>Inculcate in our children Islamic values, habits, attitudes, high moral and ethical standards, tolerance, and patience that are characteristics of a good Muslim.</i> <i>Teach our children to read and understand the message of the Quran, and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and to apply these in every facet of their personal and professional lives.</i> <i>Help students exit with academic skills at or above their grade level.</i> <i>Engage the students in a rich curriculum to acquire the skills and love of effective learning.</i> <i>Encourage the faculty and staff to communicate high expectations of and respect to every student.</i> <i>Extend to the greater community, through partnership with parents a genuine appreciation of the value of excellence in education.</i> <i>Empower the faculty and staff through mutual respect, ongoing training, strong leadership, and sufficient resources to implement an educational program of high excellence.</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
79	AdvancED	<p><i>Preparing today's students for tomorrow's challenges and hereafter by instilling Islamic values and high moral standards, through enriched curriculum that fosters holistic development, thus empowering them to become productive American Muslim citizens.</i></p>	<p><i>committed to the following principles:</i></p> <p><i>Prepare our children to become Muslim role models, exemplary citizens in their communities, and to excel in their professional careers.</i></p> <p><i>Inculcate in our children Islamic values, habits, attitudes, high moral and ethical standards, tolerance, and patience that are characteristics of a good Muslim.</i></p> <p><i>Teach our children to read and understand the message of the Quran, and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and to apply these in every facet of their personal and professional lives.</i></p> <p><i>Help students exit with academic skills at or above their grade level.</i></p> <p><i>Engage the students in a rich curriculum to acquire the skills and love of effective learning.</i></p> <p><i>Encourage the faculty and staff to communicate high expectations of and respect to every student.</i></p> <p><i>Extend to the greater community, through partnership with parents a genuine appreciation of the value of excellence in education.</i></p> <p><i>Empower the faculty and staff through mutual respect, ongoing training, strong leadership, and sufficient resources to implement an educational program of high excellence.</i></p>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
80	AdvancED	<p>strive for excellence in preparing its students for tomorrow's challenges and for the Hereafter by providing them with an exceptional academic experience in an Islamic environment thereby empowering them to become successful Muslim Americans.</p>	<p><i>Vision 1: Students are prepared for tomorrow's challenges through academic excellence.</i></p> <p><i>The first step is to increase the effectiveness of curriculum for all subjects through implementing a systemic process for the review, development, and implementation of curriculum for all subjects. Secondly, proficient job-embedded professional development aligned with the school's curriculum, mission and goals is provided Teachers' professional development is an ongoing process and imparted through presentations on designated days as well as through coaching, mentoring, and collaborative activities with administrators and peers. Teachers are encouraged to increase the use of technology in their lessons through resources such as IXL Math, Smart boards, and the Surface RTs. The school has implemented the Data-Driven Instruction Model; and continues to follow up with school alumni to assist in identifying academic areas where improvements may be needed to ensure a smooth transition to other schools. Students receive adequate test preparation through class-work, study materials, and tutoring to assist in ensuring they score above state and national averages on all assessments. School recognition programs are implemented to encourage students to aim high and score well. Most importantly the school has endeavored to maintain appropriate and timely progress on goals identified by AdvancED SACS CASI.</i></p> <p><i>Vision 2: School provides an environment based on the principles of Islam. Staff training includes information on how to incorporate Islam into</i></p>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
81	AdvancED	<i>To prepare all our students as model Muslims who excel academically, socially, and spiritually to succeed in higher education and/ or their future endeavors. We will achieve this by providing a healthy learning environment, adherence to Islamic practices based on Quran and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and collaboration between school, students, parents, and community."</i>	<i>To be the preferred school where the cultivation of American Muslim Scholars and Leaders begins</i>
82	AdvancED	<i>promotes Islamic values, academic excellence and respect for all creation in a positive, safe environment, to produce confident contributing members of society.</i>	<i>will work towards establishing an exemplary Islamic institute that produces graduates who will go on to be model citizens working for the betterment of society.</i>
83	AdvancED	N/A	<i>"O, Our Lord, Make Us Leaders for the Righteous."</i>
84	AdvancED	<i>to develop the next generation of American Muslim Scholars who pose an upright and noble character through integrated training in the religious and contemporary sciences, and who are capable of meeting the modern challenges of our diverse society through guidance, service, and leadership.</i>	<i>developing a new generation of American Muslim scholars who are raised within the culture of the United States, while possessing knowledge of classical Islamic scholarship, and who can provide leadership for the Muslim Ummah in the 21st century.</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
85	AdvancED	<i>promotes academic excellence and Islamic values in a nurturing environment that empowers students to reach their highest academic potential while preparing them to become leaders in the service of their families, their communities, and God.</i>	<i>committed to providing an education of the highest academic caliber implementing sound educational theory and practice that will enable our children to become leaders in a new, globalized society. Rooted in strong Islamic values, students will strengthen and maintain their Islamic identity while recognizing the diversity inherent in the world around them. Through a challenging and diverse curriculum that integrates all disciplines in an Islamic environment, students will develop the leadership potential and balanced character needed to face the challenges that lie ahead.</i>
86	AdvancED	<i>combines an Islamic environment with innovative educational methods to nurture noble character, academic excellence and strong leadership skills.</i>	<i>Our vision is to be an exemplary educational system. Our values and beliefs are centered around our religious principles and ethics.</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
87	AdvancED	<p>seeks to provide a comprehensive education to develop well-rounded students. We combine an Islamic environment with innovative teaching methods to deliver strong academic programs and develop a comprehensive understanding of Islam. We strive to develop our students and nurture noble characters, academic excellence, and strong leadership skills.</p> <p>To achieve this mission, we have established school-wide goals and objectives and each of us are dedicated and aligned to them. We have measures put in place to ensure that we remain true to our goals and continue to monitor our performance and processes.</p>	<p>Our entire organization is thoroughly trained via workshops and meetings to help them apply our vision and mission in their interaction with each and every student. Classroom observations and coaching sessions have also been established in order to maintain focus and ensure curriculum delivery is effective. This effort results in academic excellence and strong leadership skills.</p> <p>Development of our students' characters is achieved through a focus on religious skills. The development process is called Tarbiyah, an Arabic term that relays a comprehensive program that nurtures the physical, mental and emotional self, developing the complete individual.</p> <p>Our program has been designed and continues to be refined to achieve our well established vision and mission.</p>
88	AdvancED	<p>To provide our children with an environment enabling them to achieve their highest potential, founded on Islamic morals, scholastic excellence, and good citizenship.</p>	<p>We prepare our students to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Committed balanced Muslims. - Knowledgeable scholars. - Contributing citizens and community builders.
89	AdvancED	<p>To provide our children an environment which will enable them to achieve their highest potential, founded on Islamic morals, scholastic excellence, and good citizenship.</p>	<p>Be the Islamic school of choice in North Texas, weaving academic excellence with the highest morals and ethics.</p>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
90	AdvancED	<p><i>committed to the development of the student as a whole. It seeks to provide students with academic excellence and religious training that they may strive for success, in this life and the Hereafter, in an increasingly competitive and challenging world. Beliefs and Values: Islam is a guide for all aspects of one's life, from daily life routines to striving for Paradise. Age appropriate lessons are provided during religion classes that help promote best behavior and mannerisms. Students are expected to model behaviors taught in every part of their daily lives at school. The school makes every effort to guide the direction of students' actions and application of lessons taught. Parents/guardians play the leading role to the level, or extent, to which their children apply these practices. The goal is to instill good citizenship and behaviors that lead to productive members of society.</i></p>	<p><i>To shape our new generation of leaders where the spirit is united with the tools of Islamic knowledge and intellect to meet and overcome the challenges that society presents.</i></p>
91	AdvancED	<p><i>to educate children in every aspect including spiritual and in the faith of Islam. We want to provide a quality school which will not only make our children the best in their professions but also good practicing Muslims thereby becoming contributing citizens to this great Nation and humanity at large.</i></p>	<p><i>It is our vision to build such institutions where the best of the faith based education for Muslims is provided and is also affordable and money should not become hindrance for those who wish such education.</i></p>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
92	AdvancED	<p><i>to be an educational institution where girls will acquire religious and academic knowledge as well as develop intellectually, emotionally, socially, and morally. We will achieve this by following Islamic traditions and values; fostering a community where every girl will be confident, responsible, qualified, ethical, and a considerate member of the society</i></p>	<p><i>Recognizing that each child comes with unique strengths, challenges, and needs, ... Academy in collaboration with all stakeholders adopt the vision to educate the students (girls) to be Confident in Religious Education and Advancement with Modesty. We, at ... Academy, believe that 1) Student learning is the primary priority for the school; 2) Each student is a valuable individual with unique physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs; 3) Students learn in their respective unique and different ways and should be provided with a variety of instructional approaches to support their learning; 4) Mutual respect among and between students and teachers/staff will effectively foster positive relationships which lead to the physically and emotionally comfortable environment to promote student learning; 5) Parents and the community share the responsibilities with teachers for promoting and advancing the school's mission; 6) The importance of the role of the educator is unsurpassed, hence, students should be provided with caring and dynamic educators who are knowledgeable in their field of instruction; 7) Tuition should be affordable to every and each student regardless of socio-economic background.</i></p>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
93	AdvancED	<i>to graduate students with academic excellence, leadership skills and distinguished moral principles who contribute to society and fully live the values of Islam.</i>	<i>graduates will play a leading role in American society.</i>
94	AdvancED	<i>To provide students with an excellent academic and Islamic education and a firm foundation of moral and ethical values To develop in every student a positive American-Muslim identity Prepare today's students to be tomorrow's leaders</i>	<i>will be a place for learning and leadership that nurtures and encourages Muslim youth in Utah to develop their innate creativity and inquisitive nature in the pursuance of academic excellence while anchoring their hearts and souls in a moral framework of a God-centered life.</i>
95	AdvancED	<i>to cultivate and nurture a thriving American Muslim identity that balances religious, academic and cultural knowledge and imparts the importance of civic involvement and charitable work. Through an interdisciplinary and integrated programming approach, we strive to create an educational environment that unites students, teachers, family, and community to provide an exceptional learning experience.</i>	<i>to be a model Islamic learning community that inspires a commitment to excellence in all aspects of life.</i>
96	AdvancED	<i>to support and develop each student academically and spiritually through an outstanding curriculum offered in an Islamic environment.</i>	<i>students will embody the Islamic values of self-discipline, honesty, tolerance, and respect for all Creation. Our students will be academically successful, practicing Muslims and productive citizens. "Pursuing knowledge from the cradle to the grave" will be the guiding light for our students to be successful in this life and the hereafter, insha 'Allah.</i>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
97	AdvancED	<p>to enable students to excel academically while maintaining the values of Islam and proficiency with the Arabic language. The Academy endeavors to provide a caring, challenging and supportive learning environment where students can achieve their highest potential while exhibiting civic responsibility and multicultural appreciation.</p>	<p>Create opportunities for our students to embrace, internalize, and practice the moral values established in the Holy Qur'an and the exemplary life of our Prophet Muhammad (S.A.S.)</p> <p>Provide a safe and stimulating learning environment that promotes an atmosphere of cooperation, trust, and dignity.</p> <p>Encourage students to serve others both within our school and in the larger community.</p> <p>Teach and promote respect and appreciation for cultural differences and the natural rights of mankind.</p> <p>Nurture and inspire creativity, self-direction, self-discipline, and self-esteem.</p> <p>Instill a thirst for knowledge.</p> <p>Develop critical thinking and practical application skills needed for life-long learning.</p> <p>Promote physical and mental fitness through athletic participation while emphasizing sportsmanship and teamwork.</p>

#	Accreditation	Mission	Vision
98	AdvancED	<i>to provide students with a Quranically guided educational environment in which the academic, social and spiritual development of the student leads them to an understanding of their role as caretakers of Allah's creation.</i>	<i>offers a rigorous curriculum that combines critical thinking and spirituality in a way that deepens a student's understanding of their responsibility to aid in the betterment of society. Our classes empower youngsters with skills necessary to engage the world creatively as they pursue academic careers. Our God-conscious school culture nurtures the development of empowered adults and prepares each student for life beyond high school graduation. At Tawheed Prep School our vision is to build world-class leaders one student at a time.</i>
99	AdvancED	<i>aspires to educate the whole child in a living Islamic atmosphere which facilitates the social intellectual and spiritual development of every student in order for them to fully utilize their unique talents to benefit themselves their families, their community and all of humanity.</i>	<i>Nurturing the love of learning to empower well-rounded future leaders</i>
10	AdvancED	<i>By empowering our students to achieve Islamic and academic excellence, ... School seeks to develop citizens who embody the spirit of Islam and strive to improve their society through faith, perseverance and service to others.</i>	<i>is an Islamic educational institution adhering to the tenets of the Qur'an and Sunnah, truly believing that Allah is the God, the one and only (Qu'ran112.1). There is no God but He....the Subsisting and Eternal (Qur'an, 2.255). Salam School dedicates itself to quality academic education in an Islamic environment. Salam School welcomes and respects students from all religious, economic and cultural backgrounds.</i>

APPENDIX D

THE RESEARCHER'S EMIC PERSPECTIVE

In qualitative research, the researcher's knowledge, context, experiences and immersion in the research field can contribute to the researcher's credibility and authenticity in reporting the perspectives that he/she presents. Here, I share with the reader a synopsis of my life experiences that I believe have helped me understand the world in a better way. Patton (2015) affirms that "reflexivity reminds the qualitative inquirer to be attentive to and conscious of the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and economic origins of one's own perspective and voice as well as the perspective and voices of those one interviews and those to whom one reports" (p. 604).

I spent my childhood in Iraq until 1996 when I immigrated to United States of America with my parents and siblings. I was born in the Kurdish city of Duhok in Northern Iraq, which is a city surrounded by beautiful mountains. My childhood, like thousands of other children's childhoods in Iraq, was anything but ordinary. I grew up with the sound of emergency sirens and in a life of war and sanctions. I remember very well the exodus from the Kurdish cities in 1991. After an up-rising led by the Kurdish forces for freedom, entire cities had to evacuate in the fear of chemical bombings from the Iraqi government forces under the regime of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. I remember as a child walking for miles and days in the cold and steep mountains to reach safety. My family, along with thousands of other Kurdish people, spent months in the wilderness away from our homes until we felt safe enough to return back to our homes. Our life after the exodus was difficult; whilst there were already sanctions placed on Iraq, the Iraqi regime placed yet another level of sanctions on Kurdish cities in the North of

Iraq. Basic resources were not readily available. My life, like the average Iraqi student's life, consisted of studying under oil lamps because the government had cut electricity supplies, sharing old school books with friends since there weren't enough to go around for all students, learning to be frugal with the very limited school resources and supplies, attending classrooms without heat and electricity, and etc. In the midst of all this difficulty, my parents always placed a great value on education and encouraged my siblings and I to do our best. In Iraq, the school days were short and were very academic centered. We learned from scripted textbooks and in an environment not conducive to scholarship and ingenuity. In school, we were not taught how to deal with the tough life that we experienced. Thankfully though, we had ample opportunities outside of the short school days for our families to teach us life skills, socio-emotional skills and many other coping skills. Even in the midst of toughest conditions, the presence of family and friends provided feelings of happiness.

At the end of the year 1996, my family along with hundreds of other Kurdish people were granted asylum in the United States. We stayed in a temporary camp on Guam for several months until our destination place was determined and the paperwork was completed. My family and I were placed in a small town in VA called Newport News, and later we moved to Nashville, Tennessee.

Going to a large middle and high school in the U.S., not being fluent in the language, and appearing obviously different was a difficult experience for me as a teenager. Being a straight "A" student who loved going to school even in the toughest conditions in Iraq, I came to dread school. The school environment wasn't very accepting to students who didn't meet the typical student mold, such as an immigrant Muslim

female student. After I graduated from high school and started college, I grew a passion for education and the importance of providing environments for all students to be happy, emotionally safe, and thrive in school.

My life experiences have provided me with a lot of insights. The experiences have helped me understand what it's like to live in a war zone and face the consequences of political instability, the importance of safety for all students, the experiences of the minority students who identify as Muslims, the experiences of students who are English language learners, the experiences of immigrant students, and the challenges that many students face everyday in our schools who don't fit the typical student mold. Also, being part of the Muslim American community, I live and understand the struggles and challenges, which adds authenticity and credibility to my research. Further, in terms of language and cultural experiences, my fluency in Kurdish and Arabic help me connect with different communities and make cross-cultural connections.

In the United States, I have worked with many students of the Muslim faith through community programs, Sunday school programs, Girl Scouts, and Islamic schooling. My experiences with these students have led me to believe that many times, these students need people who can connect with them and help them understand and navigate their struggles and challenges. Also, not enough research is done to clarify and explicate the challenges that this particular community faces. Lastly, my experiences growing up in Iraq and attending schools in both Iraq and the United States have provided me with many insights and have affirmed my belief in the importance of providing positive, transformative, safe, and wholesome schooling experiences for all children.

