

ISLAMIC SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA



12TH WEST COAST ISNA EDUCATION FORUM

In collaboration with CISNA (Council of Islamic Schools Based in North America)
and WISER (Weekend Islamic Schools Educational Resources)

Friday & Saturday, January 12 & 13, 2024

Hilton Orange County/Costa Mesa
3050 Bristol St. Costa Mesa, CA 92626

*A New Dawn: Empowering Islamic Schools
in a Complex World*

PROGRAM



West Coast Education Forum Program Committee 2023 – 2024

Necva Ozgur, Chair

Shahida Alikhan • Sufia Azmat

Abir Catovic • Sadeq Al-Hasan

Lina Kholaki • Susan Labadi

Ibrahim Yousef • Maisa Youssef

Mukhtar Ahmad • Tabasum Ahmad

Room Locations

Lunch & Banquet	Pacific 2 & 3
Prayer	Pacific 1
General Sessions (Opening, Closing, Panel)	Pacific 4
Parallel Track I	Pacific 4
Parallel Track II	Emerald 1 & 2
Parallel Track III	Balboa Bay

Prayer Timings

FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Fajr 6:00 AM	Fajr 6:00 AM
Jumu'ah 1:15 PM	Dhuhr 1:30 PM
Asr 3:30 PM	Asr 3:15 PM
Maghrib 5:05 PM	Maghrib 5:05 PM
Isha 7:00 PM	

Disclaimer

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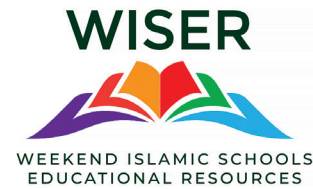
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Friday, January 12, 2024

Registration Begins at 9:00 AM

Session Symbols	Arabic Language AL	Islamic Studies/Qur'an IQ	Board/Admin BA	Weekend School WS	General Topic GT
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TIME	SESSION TYPE	ROOM, TRACKS, TOPICS AND PRESENTERS		
9:30 AM – 12:00 PM	Workshop	Pacific A Incorporating Islam-Based Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs in Schools <i>Abir Catovic, Wadud Hassan, Ibrahim Yousef</i>		
9:30 AM – 12:00 PM	Workshop	Balboa Bay Igniting a Love of Language Learning: Strategies for Engaging Students <i>Lina Kholaki & Nacheda Tizani</i>		
12:00 PM – 1:05 PM	Inaugural Luncheon	Pacific 2 & 3 ► Qur'an Recitation ► Welcome: ISNA Executive Director <i>Basharat Saleem</i> ► Opening Remarks: ISNA President <i>Safaa Zarzour</i> ► Program Overview: WCIEF Committee Member <i>Abir Catovic</i> ► Keynote Address: Activism and Volunteerism in Islamic Work – President Southern Shura Council <i>Ahmed Soboh</i> Moderator: Mukhtar Ahmad		
1:15 PM	Prayer Break	Pacific 1 Jumu'ah Prayer Khateeb: Imam Jihad Safir		
		Parallel Session I Pacific 4	Parallel Session II Emerald 1 & 2	Parallel Session III Balboa Bay
2:00 PM – 3:15 PM	Parallel Sessions	1A GT Empowering Leaders to Advance Antiracism in Classrooms and Schools <i>Amaarah DeCuir</i>	1B IQ Integrating Qur'an and Science for Student Success <i>Amal Sakr Elhoseiny</i>	1C AL, IQ Learn the Language of Children to Succeed in their World <i>Shatha Eissa</i>
3:30 PM	Prayer Break	Pacific 1 Asr Prayer		
3:45 PM – 5:00 PM	Parallel Sessions	2A GT A Prophetic Approach to Social Emotional Learning Based in Neuroscience <i>Rehenuma Asmi</i>	2B IQ, GT Qur'anic Education as Collective Care: Empowering Students towards Community Involvement <i>Seyda Kubra & Samiha Rahman</i>	2C AL Teaching for All: Adapting to Diverse Learning Styles <i>Maria Kouli</i>



TIME	SESSION TYPE	ROOM, TRACKS, TOPICS AND PRESENTERS		
5:15 PM	Prayer Break	Pacific 1 Maghrib Prayer		
5:30 PM – 6:45 PM	Parallel Sessions	Pacific 4 3A GT The Sexual & Gender Identity Movement: An Islamic Perspective <i>Mustafa Umar</i>	Emerald 1 & 2 3B IQ Elevating the Discourse: Emphasizing Iman and Ihsan in Islamic Education <i>Amina Darwish</i>	Balboa Bay 3C WS, AL Enhancing Arabic Language Learners' Interpersonal Skills in Weekend Schools <i>Samar Dalati-Ghannoum</i>
7:00 PM	Prayer Break	Pacific 1 Isha Prayer		
7:30 PM – 9:30 PM	Dinner	Pacific 2 & 3 Celebration Banquet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Qur'an Recitation ➤ Welcome Remarks: ISNA President <i>Safaa Zarzour</i> ➤ Lifetime Award Ceremony for <i>Shabnum Husain</i> ➤ Keynote Speaker: <i>Former ISNA President Ingrid Mattson</i> ➤ Entertainment: <i>Orange Crescent School Students' Presentation</i> Moderator: Basharat Saleem		

Saturday, January 13, 2024

TIME	SESSION TYPE	ROOM, TRACKS, TOPICS AND PRESENTERS		
		Parallel Session I Pacific 4	Parallel Session II Emerald 1 & 2	Parallel Session III Balboa Bay
9:00 AM – 10:15 AM	Parallel Sessions	4A IQ, GT Teaching Islamic Studies for Spiritual Resilience and Critical Thinking <i>Ingrid Mattson</i>	4B GT Special Education in the Islamic School Classroom <i>Omaira Alam</i>	4C IQ Simply Positive: Teaching Qur'an To Enhance Mental Fitness and Resilience <i>Talaat Pasha</i>
10:30 AM – 12:00 PM	Joint Session	Pacific 4 5A Understanding and Navigating: Jerusalem/Palestine in Islamic Education Panel: <i>Hussam Ayloush, Sondos Kholaki, Safaa Zarzour, Ibrahim Yousef</i>		
12:15 PM – 1:15 PM	Lunch	Luncheon Program Guest Speaker: <i>John Kiser</i> , Chairman Greve Foundation Minaret Academy Student Presentation		
1:30 PM	Prayer Break	Pacific 4 Dhuhr Prayer		
1:45 PM – 3:00 PM	Parallel Sessions	6A GT, IQ Pedagogical Strategies to Teach History Effectively <i>Ovampir Anjum</i>	6B AL, WS Efficiency and Engagement: Unleashing AI in Arabic Language Classrooms <i>Iman Hashem</i>	6C WS Weekend School Standards & Certification <i>Shahida Alikhan, Sufia Azmat, Samar Dalati-Ghannoum, Susan Labadi & Necva Ozgur</i>
3:15 PM	Prayer Break	Asr Prayer		
3:30 PM – 4:45 PM	Parallel Sessions	7A GT The Impact of ChatGPT on Muslim Educators and Students <i>Tahir Aziz</i>	7B IQ, GT Empowering Muslim Students to Actively Engage in Climate Change Issues <i>Nana Firman</i>	7C WS Applying and Preparing for Weekend School Certification <i>Sufia Azmat, Abir Catovic, Amal Sakr Elhoseiny, Samar Dalati-Ghannoum, Susan Labadi & Necva Ozgur</i>
5:00 PM	Prayer Break	Maghrib Prayer		
5:15 PM – 6:00 PM	Concluding Session	Pacific 4 Live Program with Giveaways Join us to share your feedback, have fun and win fabulous prizes!		



Session Details

Friday, January 12, 2024

Registration Begins at 9:00 AM

TIME	SESSION TYPE	TOPICS AND PRESENTERS
9:30 AM – 12:00 PM	Workshop	<p>Incorporating Islam-Based Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs in Schools <i>Abir Catovic, Wadud Hassan & Ibrahim Yousef</i></p> <p>Good Islamic education should result in the development of good Islamic character. The presenters will guide participants on how to incorporate effective SEL practices, grounded in the Qur'an and Sunnah, in their schools and classrooms that will bring about a healthy school culture for all learners, allow students, staff, teachers and parents to live in a balanced, God-centered manner, and produce students who strive to reach their potential, both in this life and the next.</p>
9:30 AM – 12:00 PM	Workshop	<p>Igniting a Love of Language Learning: Strategies for Engaging Students <i>Lina Kholaki & Nacheda Tizani</i></p> <p>Learning a foreign language can be a challenging and rewarding experience for students, but it is not always easy to engage and motivate them in the process. Presenters will share strategies for helping students reach their full potential in foreign language learning, discuss how to create a positive and inclusive learning environment, and demonstrate how to incorporate authentic materials and cultural content into language instruction. The role of technology in language classrooms will also be examined.</p>
12:00 PM – 1:05 PM	Inaugural Luncheon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Qur'an Recitation ➤ Welcome: ISNA Executive Director <i>Basharat Saleem</i> ➤ Opening Remarks: ISNA President <i>Safaa Zarzour</i> ➤ Program Overview: WCIEF Committee Member <i>Abir Catovic</i> ➤ Keynote Address: Activism and Volunteerism in Islamic Work – President Southern Shura Council <i>Ahmad Soboh</i> <p style="text-align: right;">Moderator: Mukhtar Ahmad</p>

Session Symbols	Arabic Language AL	Islamic Studies/Qur'an IQ	Board/Admin BA	Weekend School WS	General Topic GT
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2:00 PM – 3:15 PM Parallel Sessions

1A **GT**

Empowering Leaders to Advance Antiracism in Classrooms and Schools – *Amaarah DeCuir*

Antiracism is not a 21st century call to action, nor a modern concept; it is a deeply rooted faith-based obligation. Islamic schools, like other educational institutions, face social challenges that leave students experiencing marginalization due to race/ethnicity, socioeconomics, and community relationships. The presenter will share key practices, derived from her examination of American Islamic school leadership and concepts of equity and justice in Islam, that will empower leaders to advance antiracism in classrooms and schools.

1B **IQ**

Integrating Qur'an and Science for Student Success – *Amal Sakr Elhoseiny*

Is the Qur'an a science book? This question has been asked by educators and learners. Some are fascinated by the scientific facts mentioned in the Qur'an more than 1400 years ago, although this scientific knowledge wasn't known at the Qur'an's revelation time. Touching upon these topics and encouraging students to search and present results will deepen their faith and lead them to glorifying Allah (SWT). The presenter will share with the audience activities and resources.

1C **AL, IQ**

Learn the Language of Children to Succeed in their World – *Shatha Eissa*

The process of teaching children essential subjects such as Islamic Studies and Qur'an, involves much more than just knowledge of the subject. Who we are and how we teach is a direct derivative of what we are teaching. The presenter will share how we can strengthen our children's Muslim identity and successfully instill the love of Allah (SWT) through the acceptance of His guidance and the teachings of His Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

3:45 PM – 5:00 PM Parallel Sessions

2A **GT**

A Prophetic Approach to Social Emotional Learning Based in Neuroscience – *Rehenuma Asmi*

A prophetic approach to children's emotional and social well-being requires an awareness of the mind and its connections to the body. By learning about the neuroscience of the brain and complementing it with Prophetic strategies that achieve mindful self-awareness, we can engage more of our God-given gifts and skills to enhance the educational experience of our students, help students who are overwhelmed with emotions or experiencing frustration, and assess teacher-student connection and well-being.

2B **IQ, GT**

Qur'anic Education as Collective Care: Empowering Students towards Community Involvement – *Seyda Kubra & Samiha Rahman*

This presentation highlights an approach to Qur'anic education that builds students' confidence, promotes habits of service, and empowers them towards community involvement in the here and now. This approach is based on a model that is popular in Medina Baye, Senegal, where youth who memorize the Qur'an are encouraged to use what they learn to address their community needs. Join us if you are seeking to empower and engage students in their Qur'anic studies.

2C **AL**

Teaching for All: Adapting to Diverse Learning Styles – *Maria Kouli*

Student learning styles have an impact on teaching and learning outcomes. In this session, the presenter will focus on two of these learning styles, and reflect on how they can be used in planning to enhance the students' learning environment. Student work samples will be shared and participants will engage in activities that will help them successfully apply what they learn.



5:30 PM – 6:45 PM **Parallel Sessions****3A GT**

The Sexual & Gender Identity Movement: An Islamic Perspective – *Mustafa Umar*

The current gender identity and sexual revolutions have Muslim educators searching for answers to questions that will be addressed by the presenter: When and how should we talk to students about the LGBTQ movement? What does Islam say about homosexuality and gender nonconformity and how to respond to common arguments against Islam's position? How to deal with students/families in our school communities who embrace ideologies contrary to Islam's teachings? Join us to learn more!

3B IQ

Elevating the Discourse: Emphasizing Iman and Ihsan in Islamic Education – *Amina Darwish*

Many young Muslims internalize Islam as a checklist of dos and don'ts that emphasizes the legalistic aspect of Islam devoid of an intellectual heritage that reinforces Iman or a relationship with the Divine that fosters Ihsan. Without understanding that Islam is built on Allah's love for us, the rules become ritualistic tasks accompanied by an identity crisis. The goal of this session is presenting the foundational requirements for fostering Islam, Iman and Ihsan.

3C WS, AL

Enhancing Arabic Language Learners' Interpersonal Skills in Weekend Schools – *Samar Ghannoum*

Over the past few decades, there has been a significant shift in the field of foreign language teaching, with vocabulary moving from a less prominent role to a central one. We firmly believe that vocabulary deserves thorough consideration. We are confident that vocabulary, encompassing not only individual words but also their meanings, spelling, pronunciation, context, and verb conjugations, plays a fundamental role in the process of acquiring a new language. Join us to see how.

7:30 PM – 9:30 PM**Celebration Banquet**

- Qur'an Recitation
- Welcome Remarks: ISNA President *Safaa Zarzour*
- Lifetime Award Ceremony for *Shabnum Husain*
- Keynote Speaker: *Former ISNA President Ingrid Mattson*
- Entertainment: *Orange Crescent School Students' Presentation*

Moderator: *Basharat Saleem*

Saturday, January 13, 2024

SESSION TIME	TOPIC AND SESSION INFO
9:00 AM – 10:15 AM	Parallel Sessions
4A IQ, GT	<p>Teaching Islamic Studies for Spiritual Resilience and Critical Thinking – <i>Ingrid Mattson</i></p> <p>Muslim children and youth need spiritual preparation and religious education to face the difficulties of life, including when the source of their distress might originate from within the Muslim community. In this session, we will discuss how to ground students to be confident in their spiritual worth and relationship with Allah and stay committed to building community no matter what circumstances and disappointments arise.</p>
4B GT	<p>Special Education in the Islamic School Classroom – <i>Omaira Alam</i></p> <p>This interactive workshop will delve into practical strategies for addressing the needs of all students, with a focus on neurodivergent learners such as those with Autism and ADHD. Research-based pedagogy and Islamic principles will provide a toolkit for creating inclusive learning environments. Educators will gain valuable insights to enhance their instructional approaches and better support students with special educational needs. Join us to foster an inclusive and enriching learning environment for all.</p>
4C IQ	<p>Simply Positive: Teaching Qur'an To Enhance Mental Fitness and Resilience – <i>Talaat Pasha</i></p> <p>This presentation aims to show how Qur'an can be used to develop social emotional skills in our children. The Ring or Chiastic Structure (Niles, J. 1979) will be used to analyze Surat Yusuf to derive universal laws. Hands-on and group activities will allow participants to learn how to teach Qur'an interactively to engage students to build everlasting connections with Allah's book and to instill the habit of Qur'an reflection which leads to a tranquil life.</p>
10:30 AM – 11:45 AM	Joint Session
5A	<p>Understanding and Navigating: Jerusalem/Palestine in Islamic Education</p> <p>Panel: <i>Hussam Ayloush, Sondos Kholaki, Ibrahim Yousef & Safaa Zarzour</i></p> <p>Join us in understanding and discussing Jerusalem's significance as a central framework for teaching about Palestine. In this session, we'll dive into its religious importance, historical context, and modern-day challenges. Together we'll shape a foundation of a future curriculum focused on Jerusalem/Palestine which empowers students to connect deeply with their heritage and grasp the essence of our community's history. This collaboration will pave the way for a comprehensive approach, seamlessly integrating Palestine's awareness into students' consciousness, fostering resilient and knowledgeable individuals within the Muslim world.</p>
12:15 PM – 1:15 PM	Luncheon Program
	<p>➤ Guest Speaker: <i>John Kiser</i>, President Greve Foundation</p> <p>➤ Minaret Academy Student Presentation</p>
1:45 PM – 3:00 PM	Parallel Sessions
6A GT, IQ	<p>Pedagogical Strategies to Teach History Effectively – <i>Ovimir Anjum</i></p> <p>This presentation explores innovative pedagogical strategies for enhancing the effective teaching of Islamic history. Examining dynamic approaches that engage students intellectually and emotionally, the presentation delves into interactive methods and technology integration. By fostering a deeper understanding of Islamic history, educators can cultivate critical thinking and cultural awareness. This study aims to provide practical insights and tools for instructors seeking to create vibrant and enriching learning experiences in the realm of Islamic history education.</p>



SESSION TIME	TOPIC AND SESSION INFO
6B AL, WS	<p>Efficiency and Engagement: Unleashing AI in Arabic Language Classrooms – <i>Iman Hashem</i></p> <p>Join the presenter in exploring the potential of using AI tools in optimizing teachers' time and captivating learners' interests. This workshop empowers teachers to reclaim time, spark curiosity, and nurture a vibrant language-learning environment through strategic integration of AI technologies.</p>
6C WS	<p>Weekend School Standards & Certification – <i>Shahida Alikhan, Sufia Azmat, Samar Dalati Ghannoum, Susan Labadi & Necva Ozgur</i></p> <p>The WISER Standards of Certification have been prepared by a group of experienced and qualified educators. They help provide guidance and offer opportunities for reflection and refinement of operations for Islamic weekend schools. WISER Standards recognize the distinctive mission of a school and respect its institutional uniqueness while maintaining high expectations. This interactive session will familiarize participants with standards and practices for governance, leadership, administration, proper school environment, and parent partnerships.</p>
3:30 PM – 4:45 PM	Parallel Sessions
7A GT	<p>The Impact of ChatGPT on Muslim Educators and Students – <i>Tahir Aziz</i></p> <p>This presentation will explore the latest research on ChatGPT and how it can be effectively implemented in the classroom to promote student success. We will discuss practical strategies for incorporating innovative approaches to teaching and learning, including personalized learning, project-based learning, and technology-enhanced learning by using ChatGPT. We will also explore the role of teacher professional development in supporting the implementation of these innovative approaches and student outcomes, including academic achievement, engagement, and motivation.</p>
7B IQ, GT	<p>Empowering Muslim Students to Actively Engage in Climate Change Issues – <i>Nana Firman</i></p> <p>Environmental degradation and the consequences of climate change are becoming a grave threat to life on earth. It is imperative that Muslim youth be empowered to deal with these challenges. This session seeks to familiarize educators with various aspects of environmental degradation and complex global Climate change. It will also provide an overview of critical Islamic environmental related concepts and terminology and the development of Islamic environmentalism and climate activism.</p>
7C WS	<p>Applying and Preparing for Weekend School Certification – <i>Sufia Azmat, Abir Catovic, Samar Dalati-Ghannoum, Amal Sakr Elhoseiny, Susan Labadi & Necva Ozgur</i></p> <p>Certification is essential for weekend schools to attain high-quality performance and continuously improve policies and programs. The WISER certification process provides a protocol for schools committed to systematic and sustainable progress and accountability. This interactive session will explore the standards and evidence for curriculum, instruction, Islamic Studies, Arabic instruction, and Qur'anic Studies, and what successful schools do to prepare for the WISER certification process.</p>
5:15 PM – 6:00 PM	Concluding Session
Live Program with Giveaways	
Join us to share your feedback, have fun and win fabulous prizes!	

Presenter Biographies



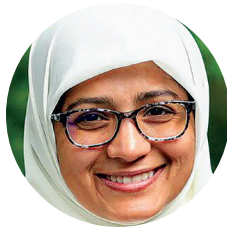
Omaira Alam, is an experienced educator, researcher, and consultant, with nearly twenty-five years in education. She has held leadership positions such as principal, board member, teacher trainer, and classroom teacher. Omaira has collaborated with respected institutions including the US Department of State, Muslim Kids TV, the Prophetic Pedagogy Project of CICW, and the Gibraltar Leadership Academy. She is the developer of A Dignified Way, a behavior management program rooted in Prophetic Pedagogy.

Shahida Alikhan joined New Horizon School, where she became principal and served for 26 years while simultaneously working as the principal of Sunday School for 11 years. In addition, she served as the professional development coordinator at Aldeen Foundation for 21 years. She received the New Horizon School Appreciation Award and ISNA Lifetime Achievement Award for her commitment to Islamic education in America.



Ovamir Anjum is Imam Khattab Endowed Chair of Islamic Studies at the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at the University of Toledo. His work focuses on the nexus of theology, ethics, politics, and law in classical and medieval Islam, with comparative interest in Western Thought. He is the author of *Politics, Law and Community in Islamic Thought: The Taymiyyan Moment* and is translating *Madarij al-Salikin* (Ranks of Divine Seekers) by Ibn al-Qayyim.

Rehenuma Asmi, PhD is an executive board member of the Center for Islam in the Contemporary World where she creates education programs for Islamic school teachers. She received her PhD from Columbia University Teachers College in Anthropology and Education. Her research focuses on globalization, multilingualism and religious education in public schools.



Tahir Aziz is a full-time computer science professor at Long Beach City College in California. Dr. Aziz also serves in the Islamic Society of Orange County (ISOC) Shura Board. As a part of the Muslim Speakers Network, Dr. Aziz is a presenter of Islamic topics at various high schools, universities, and church groups. Dr. Aziz presented on Islamic Finance at the MAS Convention in November 2022. Additionally, Dr. Aziz is actively involved in interfaith dialogues.

Sufia Azmat is the Executive Director of the Islamic Schools Based in North America (CISNA). She holds a Master's in Islamic Education and Leadership from Bayan. She has served the Islamic education community for over 25 years as a teacher, school leader, leadership coach, and education consultant. Sr. Sufia is a certified Board Consultant, a board member of WISER, and a member of the Steering Committee of the Global Association of Islamic Schools.



Abir Catovic is a long-time educator. She is one of the founders of her local Islamic School and she prides herself in having taught every grade level from KG through twelfth grade. She has served as a Director of Religious Studies, Vice Principal and Principal. Abir Catovic was voted one of the top three Islamic educators in North America in 2017 and she received the New Jersey State Governor's Jefferson Award in Education in 2021.

Seyda Kubra Askari-Cisse is a scholar, educator, and community leader who was born in Georgia and moved to Medina Baye, Senegal as a youth. In Medina Baye, she memorized Qur'an at Shaykh Hassan Aliou Cisse's African American Islamic Institute School, becoming a hafidha in 2001. She is the Director of the AAIL Legacy Academy, an international Islamic boarding school in Senegal where global citizens who are champions of truth, light, and equality are produced.





Amal Sakr Elhoseiny received her PhD in comparative studies of German and Arabic languages. A Nooraniyyah-certified instructor, Dr. Elhoseiny has taught Arabic and Qur'an at New Horizons School in Pasadena for more than twenty years. She supervises teachers at the Sunday School, ICSC. She designed standards-based activities for QFI and BIAE and is a master Arabic teacher in the Aldeen Online Teacher Training program. She serves as a board member of NATA (K-12) and WISER.

Samar Dalati-Ghannoum, a California-based language instructor and history professor, currently teaches at the University of Redlands. Her career began at Damascus University, where she earned a B.A. in Arabic language and arts. She later obtained an M.A. in education and credentials in psychology. Her accomplishments include developing Arabic language programs, co-creating professional book series, and serving as a lesson developer. Samar is co-founder and executive board member of WISER, YUP, and NATA.



Amina Darwish, "Imamina," is the Muslim Life Coordinator at Columbia University. She earned a PhD in chemical engineering before switching careers to follow her true passion for community building. She earned traditional Islamic studies certifications from the Qalam Seminary in Dallas and the Critical Loyalty Seminary in Toronto. She has also studied individually under different scholars from all over the world and served as the content development coordinator for the Muslim Youth of North America.

Amaarah DeCuir is a faculty member at the American University in the School of Education and an Executive Board member at the Center for Islam in the Contemporary World. DeCuir served as a school board member and then principal at a Muslim school in Northern Virginia for fifteen years. She taught elementary level students in local public schools for five years. DeCuir holds an EdD in education leadership and an MEd in curriculum and instruction.



Shatha Eissa has been teaching Islamic Studies and Qur'an at New Horizon School in Pasadena for more than sixteen years. She has a bachelor's degree in biological sciences and a master's degree in human development with an emphasis on leadership in education. She taught preschool through kindergarten at New Horizon School of West Side for two years. Ms. Eissa is a proud parent of three New Horizon School alumni.

Nana Firman has two decades of experience working with advocacy and awareness-raising on environmental degradation and climate crises, advocating urban sustainability and developing green economy concepts and strategies. Nana directed "Green Reconstruction" efforts during the post-tsunami recovery in Indonesia, and later developed an urban climate adaptation and mitigation initiative engaging with Muslim leaders to create climate resiliency plans. Nana was one of the twenty-eight Green Changemakers chosen during World Environment Day in 2022.



Iman Hashem is a consultant, Co-Director of the Southern California Arabic Teacher Council, CSULB Instructor and the 2019 California World Language Teacher of the Year. She fosters professional growth opportunities for world language teachers. Dr. Hashem has designed and taught courses for the instruction of Arabic as a world and heritage language. She was a member of the writing committee for the Standards for Learning Arabic and for California's World Language Content Standards.

Wadud Hassan is the founder of HEART-centric Mindfulness Masterclass at Productive Muslim Mindfulness Matters Leadership Institute, a Mindfulness and Emotional Intelligence based leadership and character development program to empower people and organizations with tools for personal, professional, and organizational transformation. The former Head of School at Good Tree Academy, Br. Wadud completed his graduate studies in leadership and organizational per-



formance at Vanderbilt University and leadership training at Harvard, IDEO, and the Neuroscience Academy.



Lina Kholaki is an Arabic language instructor at Occidental College, a consultant for the Arabic Dual Immersion Program in the Los Angeles Unified District, and the Director of Online Professional Development for the Al-deen Foundation. Sr. Lina is the co-developer of Hayya Natakalam Maan, a program for teaching Arabic, and is a member of the Task Force Committee charged with drafting the Standards of Arabic as a Foreign Language for the 21st century for K-12.

Sondos Kholaki is a board-certified chaplain serving at a hospital in Southern California. She also serves as a volunteer community and police chaplain. She holds certification in end-of-life and palliative care specialties from an Islamic and spiritual care perspective. Sondos is the author of the award-winning book, “Musings of a Muslim Chaplain” (2020); a co-editor of the anthology, “Mantle of Mercy: Islamic Chaplaincy in North America” (2022); and a contributor to various online platforms on topics related to spirituality and chaplaincy.



John Kiser is the author of *Communist Entrepreneurs: Unknown Innovators*, *The Monks of Tibhirine: Faith Love and Terror in Algeria*, and *Commander of the Faithful: A Story of True Jihad* which is an account of the life of Emir Abd el-Kader of

Algeria. A former international technology broker, John has an M.A. from Columbia University and an MBA from the University of Chicago. He is Chairman of the William & Mary Greve Foundation.

Maria Kouli is a foreign language teacher and a dual language coordinator in ELC School in Los Angeles. She holds a bachelor’s degree in biology and a master’s in chemistry. Sr. Maria has six years of teaching experience at the Minaret Academy Saturday School, and she has acted as a substitute teacher in various schools. She is an ACTFL member who has a sev-



enteen single-subject credential in Arabic, a multiple-subject credential, and a bilingual credential.



Susan Labadi leads workshops on positive school climate, teaching strategies, and SEL for Consultants for Islamic School Excellence (CISE) and is a board member of WISER – Weekend Islamic Schools Educational Resources. She is a Dr. Amen brain health licensed trainer, writer, and a DEFINE certified character and PQ coach. Sr. Susan is an experienced teacher and administrator who holds degrees in psychology, sociology, and a master’s in teaching. Learn more at SusanLabadi.com.

Ingrid Mattson is the Chair of Islamic studies at Huron University College in London, Canada. From 1998 to 2012 she was Professor of Islamic Studies at Hartford Seminary in Connecticut where she developed and directed the first accredited graduate program for Muslim chaplains in North America. From 2001-2010 Dr. Mattson served as vice-president, then as president of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA).



Maisa Youssef-Osman is in her tenth year as Principal of Orange Crescent School in Garden Grove. She earned her bachelor’s in information systems from Cal State Northridge and her master’s in public policy with a concentration in nonprofit management from

UCLA. Sr. Maisa taught math for five years at a charter high school, where she established the AP Calculus program. She completed her second master’s in educational leadership and policy studies with an administrative credential.

Necva Ozgur holds an MS in Pharmacy and an MA in Human Development. She is the founding School Head of New Horizon School of Pasadena where she served for twelve years. She established MERIT, a resource and training non-profit for Islamic schools. Sr. Necva developed the Academy of Islamic Thought for the Islamic Center of Southern California and led the establishment of Bayan Islamic Graduate School



where she is teaching Nonprofit Leadership and Management classes.



Talaat Pasha is the Director of the Arabic Language Institute at the American Islamic College. He holds a PhD in Arabic and linguistics and is a curriculum and instruction consultant. Dr. Pasha is a certified facilitator in Personality Types, a coach in Positive Intelligence, and a certified instructor of Mental Health First Aid. The founder of Pasha Academy Consulting and Training offers life and executive coaching services and facilitates workshops for personal and professional growth.

Samiha Rahman is an Assistant Professor of Human Development at California State University in Long Beach. She holds a PhD in African studies and education from the University of Pennsylvania. Her research on Islamic education in West Africa and African-diasporic Muslim exchange has been published in numerous academic journals. She is a board member of two full-time Islamic schools, Islah Academy in South Los Angeles (USA) and the AAIL Legacy Academy in Senegal.



Jihad Saafir is an assistant professor at Bayan, the former Chaplain of the California Institute for Women, the former Imam of Masjid At-Taqwa, and the founder of Islah LA and Islah Academy. He has an MA in Islamic Studies and Leadership and a PhD in Practical Theology. Imam Jihad was awarded the KCET Local Hero's Award and was recognized as the "2022 Faith Leader of the Year" by the South Coast Interfaith Council.

Ahmed Soboh is the Chairman of the Islamic Shura Council of Southern California, an umbrella organization of all the mosques and Islamic organizations throughout Southern California. He is the Religious Director of the Islamic Center of Yorba Linda and khateeb and youth adviser at many Islamic centers. Dr. Soboh gives talks about Islam at many churches, temples, universities, and schools.



Nacheda Baroud Tizani is an experienced foreign language instructor who has been teaching Arabic at New Horizon School in Pasadena for twenty-nine years. She is a dedicated Arabic educator committed to enhancing instruction. A member of the Southern California Arabic Language Teacher Council and National Arabic Teachers' Association, Ms. Tizani has produced instructional materials, created scenarios and standards-based activities for various student levels and has contributed to the Aldeen Arabic Reading Program.

Mustafa Umar has a bachelor's in information and computer science and a bachelor's in theology and Islamic law. He holds a master's in Islamic Studies and pursued studies in India and Egypt. He is a scholar, author, and Imam. He founded California Islamic University, is the Senior Religious Director at the Islamic Center of Irvine, an executive member of the Fiqh Council of North America, and a Senior Fellow at the Yaqeen Institute.



Ibrahim Yousef has a master's degree in educational leadership, a Principalship from the state of Tennessee, and teacher certification and training from the state of Texas. He is currently a school principal who believes in the Whole Child school vision. His work has revolved around reinventing the way we teach and discipline our Muslim children. Br. Ibrahim has served the education community as a board member, a teacher, and a consultant.

Safaa Zarzour is an educator, attorney, and community activist. He is the President of ISNA and the Superintendent of Universal Schools in Illinois and Indiana. He has served as the Secretary General of ISNA, General Counsel and Chief Operations Officer of Zakat Foundation, Chief Executive Officer of IQRA International Foundation, and adjunct law professor at Loyola Law School. Recently, Br. Safaa was elected to the board of Oak Lawn High School District 229 in Illinois.



Lifetime Service Award Recipient



Shabnum Saeeda Husain was born in East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. She spent her childhood with her six older siblings in a carefree family home in the midst of a scenic natural environment.

Good education was a priority for her family. She was privileged to attend the most prestigious private school in Dhaka. The secure and comfortable life soon came to an end as a civil war broke out for the liberation of Bangladesh. She was forced to migrate to Pakistan.

Her schooling continued in Pakistan. She graduated from high school and entered college life at Kinnaird College for Women in Lahore. Shabnum was recognized for her love of learning, high academic performance, and leadership skills. She was awarded the Mangat Rai Scholarship.

While awaiting admission into a master's program, she began her teaching career as a pre-school teacher in Lahore. Before she knew it, she was an elementary teacher and then moved on to school administration.

Shabnum moved to London to further equip herself as an educator. She went back to school, became certified in special education, teaching children with Dyslexia. She also pursued her interest in teaching English as a second language. While studying, she took up teaching at an Islamic school in London.

She moved to California in 1990. Southern California, with its diverse population, offered many opportunities from public schools, charter schools and Islamic schools. Her interest remained in Islamic schools.

Since there was a stark difference between the education systems of England and the United States, Shabnum had no choice but to adjust to meet the needs of her students. She pursued a teaching credential and much more to enjoy her passion and give the best to her students in a new country.

She was blessed, along with many other good opportunities, to start a new Islamic school in Anaheim, Minaret Academy. The group of people behind the project was the finest with a crystal clear vision for the future leaders of the Ummaah. This indeed was her favorite assignment because building a school was like building a small nation, with little communities in a structured setting. The sky was the limit and her efforts knew no boundaries. The school blossomed as one of the best sought-after Islamic schools within a short period of time.

After having spent four decades in education, she decided to slow down and take on other responsibilities. Her passion for Islamic education keeps her engaged as a consultant for a school. She continues to inspire young educators and directs them to seek the pleasure of Allah through the prophetic profession of teaching.

