A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR
AZ-ZAHRAA ISLAMIC ACADEMY
2010 - 2015
“My Lord, increase me in knowledge and make me of the virtuous”
## AZ-ZAHRAA ISLAMIC ACADEMY 2010 - 2015
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This journey of strategic planning for the positive growth of Az-Zahraa Islamic Academy would not have been possible without the active participation of school board directors; school administration and staff team; parents and community members; and representatives of the executive committee.

A debt of gratitude is owed to all that were involved in shaping the future of our children through this process.
In Spring 2009, the Az-Zahraa Islamic Academy embarked on an ambitious and exciting process called, “Planning for the Future: Children First!”

The criteria for this process was that it would be a journey of learning and growth; it would be meaningful, practical, and manageable; not all-consuming so as to take away from time and energy expended by staff in their daily work; inclusive of all stakeholder and community participation; inclusive of unfettered visioning; and inclusive of reflective responding and responsive planning.

The purpose of this process was to revisit, review, and revise the vision through an interactive process of dialogue and group discussions; establish the School Board’s priorities by identifying focused goals and objectives; and develop a school plan that would facilitate implementation of prioritized positive growth.

Toward the end of the process, three phases were identified. These are as follows:

Phase 1: Vision Beyond 2010
Phase 2: Establishing Priorities: Board’s Goals & Objectives
Phase 3: Developing a School Plan
The first of these engaging phases, “Vision Beyond 2010” started with a session on Sunday May 10, 2009. Participants included school board members, staff representatives, community representatives, and representatives from the executive committee. The session centered around the question, “What is the job of Az-Zahraa Islamic Academy?”, and utilized “World Cafe” techniques to draw from the participants.

A second session was scheduled on Friday, June 19, 2009. Participants included school board members and the entire staff faculty. This session included work on visioning, key themes from session one, and school governance, utilizing “World Travel” techniques to gain participant input and feedback.

The third and final session for “Vision Beyond 2010” was entitled Parent Information Session and Feedback Forum, and it was scheduled on Friday, November 20, 2009. Participants included a commendable number of parents, community members, school board members and staff faculty. This session opened with a PowerPoint Presentation designed to inform parents of the work accomplished thus far. Interactive work included thinking and talking about areas of strength and areas needing growth. Participant input and feedback was sought utilizing “World Festival” techniques. A rating scale activity using “dollars” to buy “fireworks” was used to further identify and prioritize key themes. One new key theme (Technology) was added. The session concluded with table discussions of key themes (celebration of different world fests).
In the first six months since the launch of Planning for the Future: Children First!, hundreds of “pieces” of data in the form of comments, input, feedback, questions and answers were collected from numerous meetings, sessions, forums, conferences, consultations, and online communications. There were also meetings, advice and involvement of people from within and outside of the Az-Zahraa Islamic Academy family, including parents, staff, other educators, community members, executive committee representatives, and more. Several public school educators and practitioners, including administrators, were also engaged in the process.

Through the use of prioritizing activities and rating scales, the raw data was refined and gave focus to the participants’ thoughts and dialogue during the actual sessions. The data was then collected and applied through a progressive series of analysis and refinements. The purpose here was to collate the hundreds of “pieces” of data into manageable and meaningful documents that would capture the directions provided by the participants. The following documents are the fruits of the participants’ labour:

I. Mission Statement  
II. Vision Statement  
III. Key Themes & Major Directives
Armed with the work realized through Vision Beyond 2010, particularly from the “Key Themes & Major Directives” document, we moved toward starting phase two.

Phase two began with a session on Sunday, November 22, 2009. Participants included all members of the school board. Activities included examining a summative analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data; finalizing the key themes and major directives document (one theme added - staffing); individually engaging in a sorting type of ladder exercise to prioritize goals; and using a rating scale to reach consensus on top six goals. The Board successfully adopted six goals as areas of focus for the next several years.

These goals are as follows:
Goal 1: Provide Exemplary Islamic Education
Goal 2: Foster Academic Excellence
Goal 3: Create Financial Stability
Goal 4: Retain and Recruit Quality Staffing
Goal 5: Support ALL Learners
Goal 6: Nurture Socially Responsible Citizens

A second session was scheduled on Sunday, January 31, 2010. Using the Olympic theme, teams were created for each adopted goal area and Team Captains were assigned. Teams gathered in their small groups to work through identifying objectives and strategies. A template listing team members, goal area, objectives and strategies was created for each goal.
PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE: CHILDREN FIRST!
PHASE 3: DEVELOPING A SCHOOL PLAN

The third and final phase began with an all-day session on Monday February 15, 2010. Participants included the entire staff faculty. Activities included a brainstorming of possible goal topics; prioritizing three focus goal areas; establishing focus goal teams using the Olympic theme; and working on objectives and strategies for each goal area.

A second session was held on Sunday, May 30, 2010. A review of the previous session was followed by further refining and polishing of objectives and strategies. The session concluded with teams reporting back to the whole staff, and a discussion on the school plan and its implementation.

This planning process was facilitated by Rizwan Hemraj who was a practicing Principal with the Surrey School District. He sadly passed away on August
PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE: CHILDREN FIRST!
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. This process, its findings, documents, and recommendations should be conveyed to the parents and larger community both by way of an information session and through a brochure or other publication.
2. Big signs of both the Mission and Vision statements should be made and displayed in a prominent area of the school.
3. Smaller signs of both the Mission and Vision statements should be made and displayed in each of the school rooms.
4. School’s Mission and Vision statements should be communicated to parents in September of each year.
5. The staff should collectively review both the Mission and Vision statements annually, preferably at the first staff meeting of each year.
6. “The Key Themes and Major Directives” document should be used as a reference point resource as needed.
7. The Board Chair should religiously schedule time at monthly meetings for two Team Captains to present and discuss a strategy from the Board’s goal areas.
8. Team captains from the Board’s goal teams should passionately advocate for a strategy from their goal area to be considered and implemented.
9. The School Principal should religiously schedule time at monthly meetings for all Team Captains to present and discuss a strategy from the School Plan’s goal areas.
10. Team captains from the School Plan goal teams should passionately advocate for a strategy from their goal area to be considered and implemented.
11. This is a long term plan. While haste in implementing it quickly will lead to failure, haste in implementing it slowly will also result in a loss. Slow but steady implementation will yield maximum gain. The plan is designed to have a solid lifeline of three to seven years, with five years probably being a good guideline.
12. The Board should strongly consider a similar journey once the present voyage is near completion.

Az-Zahraa Islamic Academy is a dynamic place to be. As you review our website, I trust that you will see how vibrant it is. We have so much to be thankful for at AZIA…our students, parents, staff, numerous volunteers, support organizations, the Az-Zahraa Islamic Centre and the wider Muslim community. Education goes well beyond the classroom door and a child’s identity is formed through innumerable experiences and a multitude of social interactions. I firmly believe that when the home, school and community work together in harmony, our children gain immeasurable benefits. There is no greater responsibility for a community than the education of their future.

I look forward to continual academic, spiritual, social, emotional, and physical growth, as we work together for the sake of the children. Together, let’s CARE more about one another than others think necessary. TRUST more than others think prudent. SERVE more than others think practical. LEARN more than others think possible. And WORSHIP more than others think required.

In doing so, with Allah’s blessings, our most precious gifts, our children will grow to be successful in this world and the hereafter.
Az-Zahraa Islamic Academy provides a safe and nurturing environment where all children can excel in Islamic learning, academic achievement, and socially responsible citizenship. Leadership and integration opportunities are also provided toward preparation for future success.
Az-Zahraa Islamic Academy provides a safe and nurturing environment that fosters exemplary Islamic education and strong academic achievement.

Islamic learning inculcates “taqwa” (God consciousness) and is based on the teachings of the Quran, Holy Prophet, and the Ahlulbayt. This builds a confident foundation of Muslim Identity. Provision of a high calibre secular education includes excellence in academics. Children are motivated to attain their potential through curiosity and a desire for learning. We strive to meet the needs of all children and support ALL learners in an equitable environment.

Our role includes teaching social responsibility and creating global social awareness. We prepare students to excel in moral values and demonstrate exceptional character.

We strive to provide leadership experiences and integration opportunities both within and outside our immediate community. We believe that leadership roles offer the students a chance to give back to the community. Integration opportunities increase the learning realm and allow for a successful future after Az-Zahraa Islamic Academy and in the larger Canadian society. Provision of extra-curricular programs complements our children’s personal growth.

The chief responsibility of the school is to prepare independent thinkers who have a good sense of right from wrong, through both solid Islamic learning and a wholesome secular education. Az-Zahraa Islamic Academy prepares children to become caring and contributing citizens of distinction.
AZ-ZAHRAA ISLAMIC ACADEMY
KEY THEMES AND MAJOR DIRECTIVES

THEME 1: PROVIDE EXEMPLARY ISLAMIC EDUCATION

- Inculcate and nurture “taqwa” (God consciousness), based on the teachings of the Quran, Holy Prophet (s), and the Ahlulbayt (as)
- Build a strong Islamic foundation and Muslim identity
- Teach Islamic values, morals, and beliefs within our multicultural Canadian environment
- Revisit and review the Quran program and its goals/objectives
- Integrate Islamic values across all subjects and disciplines

THEME 2: FOSTER ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

- Maintain small class sizes
- Create a love for schooling and a want for learning
- Encourage independent thinking and inculcate value of knowledge
- Develop children’s potential based on their inherent abilities
- Equip students with the skills, experiences, knowledge, and attitude needed for success

THEME 3: NURTURE SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS

- Provide a safe and caring environment for learning
- Provide an environment that is welcoming to ALL children, parents, and staff
- Instill moral values, character, and respectful language
- Teach stewardship of the school and the environment, and create global social awareness and responsibility
- Recognize socially responsible behaviours through regular assemblies (Gotcha & Pride Assemblies)
THEME 4: PROVIDE LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES

- Instill self-esteem, confidence, and motivation in the students
- Provide students with outreach and volunteering opportunities both with and outside the community
- Create opportunities for the students to give back to the community and society
- Prepare future leaders

THEME 5: DEVELOP INTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES

- Promote programs that allow for integration in Canadian society
- Promote programs that allow for religious integration
- Promote involvement in projects outside the community
- Prepare students to be an integral part of the larger community
- Prepare students through integration for life after Az-Zahraa

THEME 6: PROVIDE DIVERSE EXTRA-CURRICULAR PROGRAMS

- Provide a wide array of activities to meet different interests and to develop the whole child
- Provide a well rounded athletic and sports program
THEME 7: SUPPORT ALL LEARNERS

- Meet the needs of all children in an equitable environment
- Provide for students who are English Language Learners (ESL)
- Provide for students with learning disabilities & special needs
- Offer inclusion of different learning styles (hands-on activities)
- Provide for the students’ emotional needs (counselling)
- Allow for enrichment activities for the gifted students
- Provide for different socio-economic backgrounds
- Provide for the needs of students who are new immigrants
- Be sensitive to students from other religions, sects, cultures

THEME 8: CREATE FINANCIAL STABILITY

- Achieve sustainable and secure financial stability
- Maintain a budget that is equitable and needs based
- Allow for purchases of relevant and necessary resources
- Make Az-Zahraa Academy the first choice for schooling and increase student enrollment

THEME 9: PROMOTE BOARD MEMBERS’ INVOLVEMENT AT SCHOOL LEVEL

- Be part of school life - a day at the school, staff meetings, involvement with kids, etc.
- Have specific portfolios for each Board member
- Provide support for teachers through material and people resources
THEME 10: ENHANCE RELATIONSHIPS & COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS
- Convey good news stories to parents and community
- Assist new families with transitional challenges
- Consider translating communications to languages represented at the school
- Involve ALL parents in strategic and operational planning whenever possible and appropriate

THEME 11: SUPPORT TECHNOLOGY USAGE
- Improve the use of technology at all levels and grades
- Integrate technology into all subject areas
- Use the tools of current time, keeping with change
- Provide for professional development opportunities

THEME 12: RETAIN AND RECRUIT QUALITY STAFFING
- Retain the quality staff members presently on our team
- Recruit quality staff members as positions become available
GOAL 1: TO PROVIDE EXEMPLARY ISLAMIC EDUCATION
TEAM CAPTAIN:
Mohamed A. Dewji

TEAM PLAYERS:
Shaheen Rashid, Mahmood Merali

OBJECTIVES:
1. To inculcate and nurture an environment of God consciousness.
2. To build and maintain a strong Muslim identity in the hearts of the students.
3. To develop the pride in our students to live Islam and be ambassadors in our multi-cultural Canadian environment.

STRATEGIES:
1. Give all teachers opportunities to better understand Islamic teachings and values (Pro-D on Introduction to Islam, Orientation for New Staff, etc.).
2. Encourage teachers to participate in community events.
3. Recruit and retain staff that are good role models.
4. Provide adequate number of Muslim staff in the school.
5. Integrate God consciousness across all subjects and disciplines.
6. Recognize exemplary Islamic behaviour in students and staff.
7. Involve parents in encouraging and reinforcing Islamic values in their children.
GOAL 2: TO FOSTER ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE
TEAM CAPTAIN:
Navshina Savory

TEAM PLAYERS:
Mariam Pirbhai, Hameed Jagani, Shahin Virji

OBJECTIVES:
1. To exceed Ministry grade expectations.
2. To hire and retain superior teaching and support staff.
3. To maintain optimal student to teacher ratio.

STRATEGIES:
1. Provide support for excelling in FSA results.
2. Explore peer tutoring within the greater community.
3. Recognize academic excellence and effort (honour roll, bumper stickers, luncheons, valedictorian, certificates, etc.).
4. Support teachers through adequate professional development and teacher resources.
5. Support good teaching through continual formative assessment.
6. Monitor and analyze class size, composition, and achievement on an annual basis.
7. Academic excellence committee to communicate needs to the Financial committee to ensure that needs are continually understood.
8. Continue to provide and support students with extra-curricular opportunities in the areas of enrichment.
GOAL 3: TO CREATE FINANCIAL STABILITY
TEAM CAPTAIN:
Mahmood Merali

TEAM PLAYERS:
Hameed Jagani, Navshina Savory

OBJECTIVES:
1. To explore methods to maximize revenue bases.
2. To continue to prepare timely financial reports and budgets.
3. To review expenditures while maintaining optimal learning conditions.

STRATEGIES:
1. Increase our marketing efforts for enrollment beyond our catchment to other communities.
2. Explore providing transportation.
3. Seek khums ijaza.
4. Develop a formula in conjunction with the jamaat to explore annual contributions.
5. Develop an enhanced fundraising strategy that maximizes revenue potential.
6. Analyze the budget more closely.
GOAL 4: TO RETAIN AND RECRUIT QUALITY STAFFING
TEAM CAPTAIN:
Shaheen Rashid

TEAM PLAYERS:
Mohamed A. Dewji, Mariam Pirbhai, Shahin Virji

OBJECTIVES:
1. To retain high quality staff – both Muslim and Non-Muslim.
2. To actively recruit high quality teachers.
3. To foster an inclusive and supportive working environment for all staff.

STRATEGIES:
1. Support networking opportunities with other teacher associations/groups.
2. Support teachers in conflict situations.
3. Offer competitive compensation and benefits.
4. Promote and advertise our school as a positive place to work.
5. Keep open channels of communication and feedback, making efforts to always acknowledge and recognize accomplishments.
6. Promote an environment that is clean, safe, healthy, inclusive, accepting, and conducive to learning and teaching.
7. Be mindful that teachers are not overburdened or overworked; have healthy class numbers, workload, and prep time; and support a healthy balance between work and family time.
9. Support varied professional development opportunities.
GOAL 5: TO SUPPORT ALL LEARNERS
TEAM CAPTAIN:
Hameed Jagani

TEAM PLAYERS:
Shaheen Rashid, Navshina Savory

OBJECTIVES:
1. To ensure that all learners achieve their maximum potential.
2. To provide teachers with additional resources to support all learners.
3. To promote and market AZIA as a school that supports all learners.

STRATEGIES:
1. Support assessing needs of all learners.
2. Support professional development for teachers in the area of differentiated instruction.
3. Introduce new standardized assessments.
4. Add additional support staff where needed.
5. Maintain smaller class sizes.
6. Align staffing to optimize learning.
7. Explore further solutions to meeting needs.

ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES: BOARD’S GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES
GOAL 5: TO SUPPORT ALL LEARNERS
GOAL 6: TO NURTURE SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS
TEAM CAPTAIN:
Shahin Virji and Mariam Pirbhai

TEAM PLAYERS:
Mohamed A. Dewji, Mahmood Merali

OBJECTIVES:
1. To promote socially responsible behaviours within the school community.
2. To support social responsibility projects both within and outside our Muslim community.
3. To explore different types of social responsibility initiatives for our school community.

STRATEGIES:
1. Voice the importance of social responsibility when hiring new staff.
2. Budget for social responsibility projects both within and outside our Muslim community.
3. Set aside some finances for the school to highlight socially responsible citizens.
4. Facilitate tax receipts when people donate.
5. Bring in different speakers to encourage different types of social responsibility.
6. Encourage social responsibility within the school by being actively involved and physically present for different initiatives.
7. Be a conduit of moral support between the school and the greater community in promoting different SR ventures.
8. Encourage focusing on a single project outside of the school and mosque.
SECTION 3
DEVELOPING A SCHOOL PLAN
DEVELOPING A SCHOOL PLAN
GOAL 1: TO STRENGTHEN STUDENTS’ KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ATTITUDES IN LITERACY

TEAM CAPTAIN:
Fatima Sheriff

TEAM PLAYERS:
Jamie Britt, Lisa Crosse, Sarah AlMarsomy

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES:
1. To improve students writing skills
   a) Use the ‘Write Traits’ program at all grade levels
      • Consistency of using program
      • Sequential program
   b) Do School-wide writes
      • Writing paragraphs & essays
      • 1 per term
      • Class-wide as per teacher discretion to develop a writing skill
   c) Do Journal Writing – at home
      • Start off with a given topic and focus on a particular skill
        (capitals, periods, finger space, parts of speech)
      • Reinforce on the ‘Write Traits’ program

2. To improve students reading comprehension skills
   a) A–Z reading program for primary grade levels have the printed books for each class
   b) Use the OG reading strategy in school-wide reading & writing
      • Have questions verbally / written alternatively
      • Twice a week in half hour blocks
   c) Explore the possibility of having the Reading Rockets Program
      • Interactive reading at school & home (booklets for signing)
   d) Create a healthy reading environment
      • Create a quiet reading corner
      • Have “drop everything and read” (DEAR) times

3. To increase the number of students who are meeting or exceeding grade level expectations in Language Arts
   a) Use a home reading program with different incentives at different grade levels (primary & intermediate)
      (e.g. pizza party, certificates, reading medals, recognition in assembly)
      • Establish a home–school partnership toward promoting daily reading
        (parents sign the reading log everyday)
   b) Establish school-wide competitive level programs
      • Spelling bee
      • Public Speaking
      • Debates
   c) Honour Students Achievements
   d) Explore and implement school-wide assessment programs
DEVELOPING A SCHOOL PLAN

GOAL 2: TO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR ALL LEARNERS

TEAM CAPTAIN:
Jessie Claudio

TEAM PLAYERS:
Zainab Dhanani, Afsha Gulamhussein, Shabnam Mithani

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES:

1. Utilize technology to support all learners
   a) We will get financial help from the school board and community
   b) We will invest in and train staff to use an interactive smart board
   c) We will purchase a document projector and train staff to use it
   d) We will ensure beginning in KG, students learn typing in computers
   e) We will have students work on generating original compositions using interactive writing programs/templates

2. Support all learners through staff development.
   a) We will build in collaboration time after school for 1 hour minimum 3 times a month devoted to collaboration. The goal of collaboration would be to build a sequential learning program
   b) We will have a school year focus with Pro-D days designated to specific programs.
   c) We will do base-line assessments on all students in key areas of reading, writing, and numeracy
   d) We will develop IEP’s for students who have been assessed as having learning difficulties (teachers will be trained to develop IEP’s and follow through)
   e) We will have teachers go for training in multi-sensory techniques (IE touch math) and will implement/modify teaching techniques.

3. Support English Language Learners (ELL)
   a) We will implement a PALS program
   b) We will use Surrey District’s ELL assessments to access all students (as a base-line)
   c) Extra prep time can be devoted to providing support to ELL students (If teachers have more than 3 preps per week)
   d) We will start a formative assessment method of buddy time
   e) We will implement a phonemic awareness program
TEAM CAPTAIN:
Sabera Dewji

TEAM PLAYERS:
Sukaina Jaffer, Zainab Bachoo, Fatemah H. Dewji, Femida Jagani

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES:

1. To reflect, practice and set goals on a weekly basis based on topics covered / school-wide themes (values)
   a) Do reflective journal writing
      • Present at assembly and invite parents
   b) Have weekly themed (based on goal) assemblies
      • Monday morning after recess – 10 mins
      • Wrap-up Friday after recess – 10 mins
      • Structured & organized with complete message
      • Role playing / kid-centered / visual
   c) Have monthly talks with a Sheikh – different voice

2. To build good habits & nurture God consciousness in everyday activities through reminders & strategies in
   this school and beyond
   a) Quick writing down / pictures / brainstorm – at the end of the day – a good deed you did and a good deed
      you noticed someone else doing
   b) Have a visual display in the assembly area – to build during the month
      (e.g. phrases of remembrance of All… / glorification)
   c) Have a visual poster / reminder in every class based on month goal / phrases of glorification
      • Some sort of connection that goes on at home – teaching parents
   d) Monthly social responsibility bulletin with:
      • Parents corner / student corner
      • Reflection part filled at home with parents, signed by both, and returned
      • School wide “WOW” wall – based on theme – art / writing / display / visual

3. To involve students in charitable projects
   a) Trips to seniors homes, environmental projects (planting trees, picking up trash, building bird houses)
   b) One school project – we are connected with
      • Translating books
      • Sponsoring students to go to Qum
      • Sponsoring a child (pen pals / send pictures)