



Sakinah Circle Handbook



C O N T E N T S

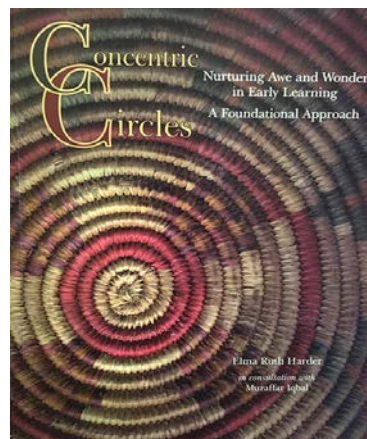
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I. Introduction

The Arabic noun ‘sakinah’ means “tranquility; inner peace; stillness of the heart”. The noun *sakinah* appears six times in the Qur’ān.

The educational philosophy of Sakinah Circle is derived from the Qur’ānic worldview which is based on its three axial themes: *Tawḥīd* (Unicity of Allah Most High), *Risāla* (Prophethood); and *Ma‘ād* (Resurrection). This philosophy is further explained in the foundational text of the Program: *Concentric Circles, Nurturing Awe and Wonder in Early Learning, a Foundational Approach* (Elma Harder, 2006). *Concentric Circles* provides the theoretical framework and pedagogical examples of an approach to learning rooted in the Qur’ānic worldview. Briefly stated, the Qur’ān teaches that throughout the span of our lives, we remain in a dynamic relationship with the Creator and His creation and that whatever we do in our earthly lives matters both for the duration of life on earth and for the life in the Hereafter. The educational philosophy emerging from this worldview makes us life-long learners, endowed with intentionality and purpose. This educational philosophy places a great deal of emphasis on having a holistic and nurturing learning experience, leading to spiritual and intellectual growth that nourishes Sakinah in the heart.

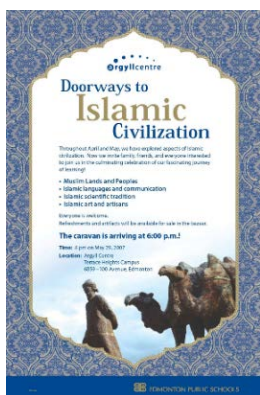
More specifically, as an alternate program in Edmonton Public Schools, Sakinah Circle delivers Alberta Program of Studies from the Qur’ānic worldview. The program seeks to provide education that leads to development of critical minds and hearts conscious of their relationship with the Creator, fellow human beings, and the natural world that surrounds us. This approach to education recognizes the learner’s innate nature (*fiṭrah*), seeks to nurture God-Consciousness (*taqwā*) and cultivates compassion so that learners strive to become God’s true vicegerents (*khulafā’*). The learning experience in Sakinah Circle is conceived as a process of continuous intellectual and spiritual growth for all three categories of participants: students, teachers, and parents, who together constitute the “Sakinah Community”.



II. A Brief History of Sakinah Circle

In 2006, two members of the Muslim Education Foundation (MEF), a non-profit educational foundation, approached the principal at the Argyll Centre for Home Education for support in developing and providing resources to Muslim homeschooling families. He showed interest, but first we needed to determine the level of interest within the Edmonton Muslim community. MEF called a community meeting for December 12, 2006 at the Argyll Centre to find out. The turn-out was phenomenal—more than 300 people came on that cold and stormy evening! The interest for a program in the Muslim community was clear: we needed to do something.

Doorways to Islamic Civilization (April and May 2007)



The first step in our journey was an enrichment program, *Doorways to Islamic Civilization*, which was offered to families over eight evenings in the spring of 2007. Muslim Education Foundation partnered with the Argyll Centre to plan, coordinate, and deliver this well-attended Doorways project which explored various aspects of Islamic civilization in four specific areas: Muslim lands and peoples, Islamic scientific tradition, Islamic art and artisans, and Islamic languages and communication. The turnout and enthusiasm of the community as well as the rich learning experiences led to the announcement on May 26, 2007 that the District Superintendent has approved Sakinah Circle as a new program at Argyll Centre for Home Education.

Part-time enrichment program (2007-2008)

Thus started the first formal phase of Sakinah Circle. During the 2007-2008 school year, Sakinah students were registered with the Argyll Centre for Home Education and attended the onsite enrichment program four mornings a week. Interest kept growing for a full-time onsite program.

Pilot Program (2008-2010)

For the next two school years, Sakinah Circle was a full-fledged pilot program, with plans to prepare a recommendation to the Board of Trustees for an alternative program. Between 2008 and 2010, representatives of MEF and District staff from several departments, including Planning, Alternative Programs, Curriculum, and Human Resources met monthly to work through all aspects of a new program. Detailed curriculum documents for KG to Gr. 6 were developed.

Full-time Alternative Program (approved on March 23, 2010 to begin for the 2010-2011 school year)

On March 23, 2010 the Board of Trustees of Edmonton Public Schools accepted the recommendation that Sakinah Circle be an approved alternative program for Kindergarten to Grade 6 in the school district. The District chose a site in south east Edmonton. The Sakinah Circle Alternative Program was thus established in Grace Martin Elementary School in September 2010 and has remained there since then.

Planting the seeds of Sakinah Circle in Edmonton Public Schools

2007		<p>Doorways to Islamic Civilization Argyll Centre for Home Education</p> <p>Afterschool program throughout April and May Exploring aspects of Islamic civilization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslim lands and peoples • Islamic scientific tradition • Islamic art and artisans • Islamic languages and communication <p>The Superintendent approves Sakinah Circle as a new program at Argyll Centre for Home Education on May 26, 2007.</p>
2007-2008		<p>Enrichment Program Argyll Centre</p> <p>Monday to Thursday mornings 22 Homeschoolers: KG – Gr.3 1 teacher</p>
2008-2009	 	<p>Pilot Program (year 1) Argyll Centre</p> <p>Monday to Thursday full day 46 students in 2 classes: KG /Gr.1 and Gr. 2/3/4 2 teachers, 2 EAs for Arabic, Qur'an instructor</p>
2009-2010		<p>Pilot Program (year 2) Argyll Centre</p> <p>Monday to Thursday full day 59 students in 3 classes: KG, Gr.1, Gr. 2/3 3 teachers, 1 EA for Arabic, Qur'an instructor</p>
March 23, 2010		<p>McCauley Chambers, Centre for Education</p> <p>EPSB approves Sakinah Circle Alternative Program This follows months of focused preparation. Monthly meetings with Central Office staff (Planning/Alternative Programs/Curriculum/HR) Development of KG–Gr.6 curriculum document</p>
2010—to-date	 	<p>Sakinah Circle Alternative Program Grace Martin School K-6</p> <p>Fulltime program with modified calendar Began with four classes: KG, Gr.1, Gr.2/3, Gr.4/5 with 4 classroom teachers, plus Arabic teacher, program specialist, and Qur'an instructor.</p>

Board Document

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

March 23, 2010

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Sakinah Circle Alternative Program

ORIGINATOR: D. Barrett, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE

STAFF: Gloria Chalmers, Leanne Fedor, Sandy Forster, Ann Parker, Elisa Rawe, Jim Ray, Christopher Wright, Bonnie Zack

RECOMMENDATION

1. That, subject to sufficient enrolment, the establishment of the Sakinah Circle alternative program for Kindergarten to Grade 6 be approved for implementation beginning in September 2010.
2. That the Sakinah Circle alternative program begin the school year four days earlier to provide additional time to accommodate significant Islamic festivals.

* * * * *

III. Vision and Mission

Our vision

Education that brings us closer to the Creator;
a process of learning based on the Qur'anic worldview,
encompassing all disciplines, to develop critical minds,
conscious hearts, and compassionate human beings

Our mission

To provide guidance and an environment that
recognizes the learner's *fiṭrah*, nurtures *taqwa*, and
cultivates learners who strive to become *khulafā'*

I. Alberta Program of Studies Through the Qur'anic Worldview

"The Sakinah Circle alternative program links the Alberta Program of Studies learning outcomes to the Mission and Vision Statement for the program by appropriately integrating Qur'anic content and Islamic concepts. The units of study integrate learning, faith and life in order to nourish inner peace and harmony, as the name "Sakinah" suggests. The focus in this alternative program is on transformational learning which addresses the spiritual, intellectual, aesthetic and practical needs of the learner. The program proposes to offer learning activities that harmonize self-discipline, courtesy towards all living creatures and stewardship of the environment. Carefully prepared classroom and outdoor learning activities are used to connect students with their natural world and their Creator. This connection is the foundation for encouraging conscientious choices for a wholesome lifestyle."

Board Report p.2

"Curriculum documents for Sakinah Circle address the outcomes of the K-6 Alberta Programs of Study. Units of study are approached thematically, integrating Qur'anic content, Islamic concepts, and Prophetic Tradition where appropriate, to enrich the worldview central to the Islamic way of life. To do this, thematic statements are identified for each General Outcome in each grade level of the Program of Study. Enduring Understandings provide a unifying concept, these are transferable, and are conceptualized through sustained inquiry during the learning process.

In addition to the stated Enduring Understandings and Alberta Education grade-specific learner outcomes, each curriculum document identifies possible Reflective Questions for teacher and learner consideration. Reflecting on these questions is intended to further integrate aspects of Islam with the Alberta Programs of Study. Reflective questions italicized and in red reflect the Islamic worldview and those in black are more general. Reflective questions serve to orient and direct teacher thinking with two distinct foci: reflective questions encourage both teachers and students to relate and connect aspects of Islam and Islamic civilization with the Program of Studies outcomes; and reflective questions help teachers direct students thinking to the higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy (analysis, synthesis, evaluation) in the Alberta Programs of Study outcomes.

A sample Transfer/Performance Assessment Task has been identified for each general outcome by way of providing an exemplar of a student activity that directly links the Qur’ānic worldview or Islamic heritage and the provincial Program of Study. Authentic assessment is seen as a tool to analyze student learning, and as its Latin origin *assidere* (to “sit with”) implies, the teacher makes thoughtful observations, balances a variety of assessment techniques, keeps records, offers helpful feedback, and applies the gained knowledge of student learning; formative assessment becomes an integral part of planning the learning process.”

Board Document, p.4

Sakinah Circle alternative program for Kindergarten to Grade 6 was born with an initial curriculum document which added enduring understandings to all subject areas, posed reflective questions for teachers and students for the specific outcomes, and provided sample transfer tasks and performance assessment to the four core subject areas in the Alberta Program of Studies.

Over time, with Sakinah-specific resources started to emerge through specific endeavors to produce content, professional learning and collaborative efforts by teachers under the supervision of the Program Specialist who had access to the resources and experts from the Muslim Education Foundation. The corpus of these teaching and learning resources includes lessons and units specifically designed with the Qur’ānic worldview, thematic resources that integrate subject areas for multi-grade levels, and resources to focus on character development.

The main language of instruction in Sakinah Circle is English.

Arabic is taught as a K-6 Language and Culture course “where the language is studied to develop communication and intercultural and strategic skills, and to build an appreciation for the culture” (Alberta Education, Programs of Study) and, specifically in this alternative program, “to support and extend knowledge of the teaching of the Qur’ān” (Board Document, p.2).

Music curriculum is adapted for the Sakinah Circle program.

The school library has an area for carefully selected Sakinah Circle books, divided into two sections: one section for Sakinah student circulation and another for Sakinah teacher use. The Sakinah library collection has been purchased with dedicated funding and belongs to the Sakinah program.

II. Three Pedagogical Pillars

Nature-focused

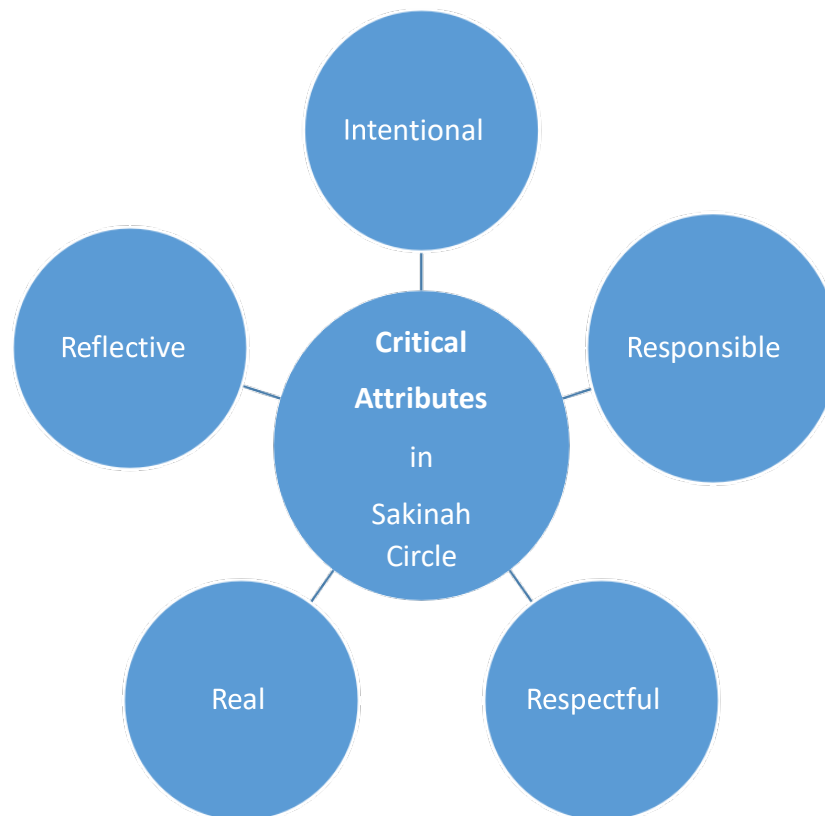
We bring nature focus to our learning wherever possible, to increase each child’s connection to the cosmos and to nurture awe and wonder in creation. The Qur’ān continually reminds us to reflect on the “signs” of the natural world. Not only do outdoor experiences in natural places help children really learn about nature in nature, the benefits of having deep connections to nature improves our lives in many other aspects.

Historically-rooted

Finding our meaningful place on the timeline of history provides each of us connection to the past, our present, and looking to the future in the next life. We want each student to identify with their own historical roots, find role models in Islamic history, and learn about Islamic civilization and tradition.

Service-oriented

Service to others and experiences in stewardship are fundamental to becoming a compassionate human being with a conscious heart. We encourage good deeds and intentionally seek service opportunities.

III. Critical Attributes**IV. Enduring Understandings in Sakinah Circle**

Enduring understandings are ongoing threads that connect our learning across disciplines and over time, provide unifying concepts, are transferable, and are conceptualized through sustained inquiry in the learning process. Reflection and contemplation are implicit in the Sakinah Circle philosophy and are a means to fathom and comprehend enduring understandings which support the Vision and Mission of Sakinah Circle.

i. Signs and symbols point us to our Creator and Sustainer

The Qur'ānic term *ayāt* is translated as “signs”, and refers to the verses of the Qur'an as well as the signs in creation. The *ayāt* are signs of revelation, which can be seen in the three realms of creation

(the cosmos, human history, and our own selves) and they are signs that point to and remind us of the Creator Who has given us life and sustains us. The signs and symbols which children encounter at every turn indicate or signify the presence of something beyond – the perception of that sense of “other” is a fundamental part of their learning as they move from concrete to more abstract ways of thinking. Signs and symbols appear in all subject areas.

ii. There is harmony in the cosmos.

The balance, the symmetry, and the design of the cosmos provide a natural starting point to cultivate a sense of order, justice, peace, and aesthetics. In the process of discovering what we see, what we hear, and how things move, cosmic patterns and wondrous beauty emerge. The Qur’ān draws our attention to this apparent harmony in the universe and within ourselves as a proof for tawhid, the Oneness of God and unicity of all things. We make conscious intention to recognize the harmonies of the cosmos and seek to develop an approach of inquiry and inquisitiveness that is always alert for patterns and cycles. In all subjects, and especially in language and fine arts, we participate in the exploration and expression of beauty and harmony.

iii. We have a place in space and time.

As individuals and as communities we have a particular place on the continuum of time and we live in relationship with one another. Human beings have been given the role of khalifah on earth – a role of stewardship for the world in which we live and have our being; this demands conscious hearts, critical minds, and compassionate responsibility. Our place in the story of life, rooted in the past, growing in the present and looking to the future, provides curricular content for science, social studies, and all subject areas of the humanities.

iv. Language is a divine gift to be appreciated and treated as an amānah.

Language is a divine gift which serves as a tool of expression in our ongoing story. This gift of language is an amānah, a sacred trust, which grants us the opportunity and capability to communicate with each other. The ways in which we communicate and the languages we use reflect who we are and play a significant part in how we relate to each other. Meaningful, beautiful, and honest use of words is the art of language. This is the realm of Language Arts.

v. All Prophets brought the same essential message: to remember God.

Allah has sent Messengers to guide humanity. The revelation given to the prophets weaves a continuous thread up to the final message that was sent to Prophet Muhammad in the form of the Qur’ān, the last of the revealed Books. The Prophetic Tradition is seen as a universal history and prophets form the pivotal points in our history. Learning about the Prophetic Tradition provides a young learner with role models, a framework to understand time through the ages, and inspiration to live life with faith, belief, and trust in the One Who guides, sustains and protects.

vi. Sakinah is the fruit of inner harmony and external balance.



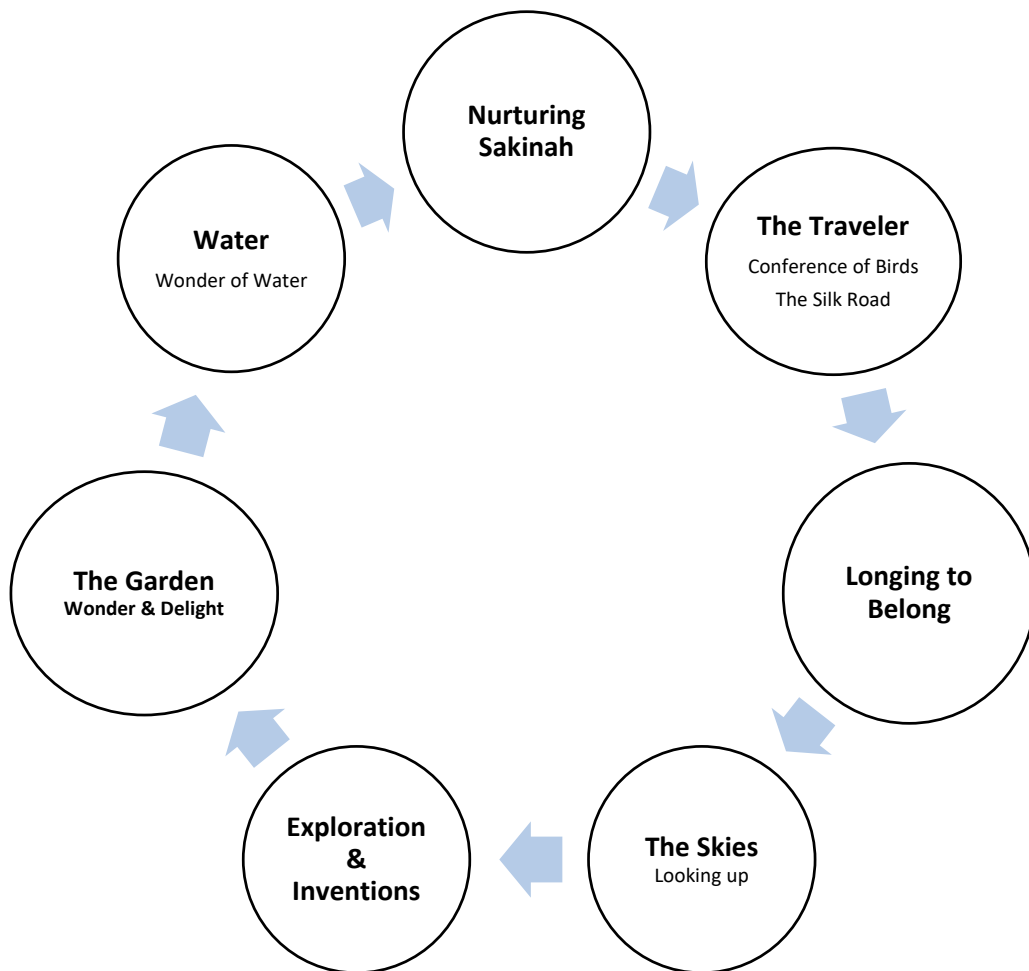
Strategies to nurture inner harmony include developing taqwa, observing the signs around us, and reflecting on how things are sustained in balance with each other. We learn to see things as they really are, distinguish between the true and the false, and focus on sincerity of heart and mind and the intentions of our deeds. And because inner harmony is also affected by externals, we strive to bring balance to our physical body with good nutrition, regular physical exercise, habits of hygiene, and a positive healthy lifestyle. Sakinah will, insha’Allah, be internalized and become evident externally. Everything in the cosmos glorifies God and resonates in praise, and we can also join in this harmony.

V. Thematic Learning in Sakinah Circle

Thematic focus is a brilliant way, an illuminating way, to integrate learning. It is a powerful tool to organize the learning experience, program-wide and cross-curricular. It can lift us up to realms of discovery and delight.

In every theme we look for

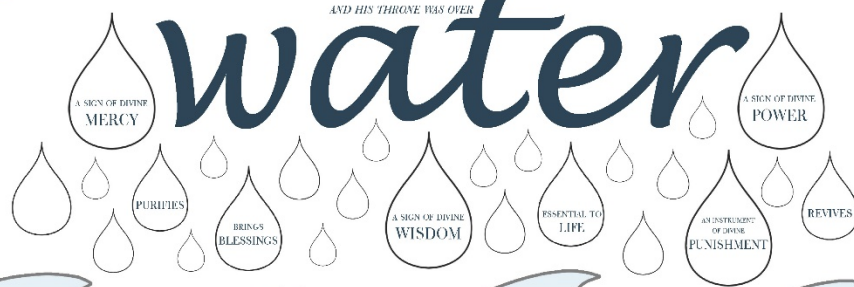
- Qur'ānic worldview
- curriculum connections
- nature-focus
- historic roots
- service opportunities



Seven-Year Rotation of Themes



AND HIS THRONE WAS OVER



Language Arts (English & Arabic)

Water Words

Water Metaphors

Water Stories

Prophet Musa ﷺ
Basket on the River
Parting of the Sea

Prophet Yusuf ﷺ
7 Years Drought
7 Years of Rain

Prophet Nuh ﷺ
The Flood

Prophet Yunus ﷺ
The Big Fish

Math & Science

Fresh & Salt Water

Chemistry of H_2O

Boiling Point

Surface Tension

Wetlands

Buoyancy

Water Cycle

Marine Life

Weather

Water
Environments

Symmetry & Proportion

Ibn Sina & al-Biruni Correspondence:
Why Does Ice Float on Water?

Physical States of Water:
Liquid, Gas, Solid

Social Studies, Geography, History

Fishing

Farming

Ship Building

Water Exploration

Transportation on Water

Ocean Travels for Hajj

Caravan Routes Along Watering Places

Well of ZamZam

Ingenuous Water Devices

Banu Musa

al-Jazari

Ibn Jubayr

Ibn Battuta

Zheng He

Fine Arts

Harmony & Balance

Elegance & Beauty

Sounds of Water

Islamic Architecture

& Gardens

Health & Wellness

Water Activities

Swimming, Floating, Fishing

Boating, Canoeing

Water in Our Body

Cleanliness

Water Etiquettes

Charity

Good Deeds Using Water

Respect

Amanah

Ritual Purity

Reflection

Water Science • Water Protection • Water Attitudes

Water Technology • Water Conservation



VI. Routines, Procedures, and Guidelines

a. Modified Calendar for Sakinah Circle

When Sakinah Circle was established in 2010, the EPS Board of Trustees approved two recommendations. The second recommendation addresses the modified calendar:

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS	
March 23, 2010	
TO:	Board of Trustees
FROM:	E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools
SUBJECT:	<u>Sakinah Circle Alternative Program</u>
ORIGINATOR:	D. Barrett, Assistant Superintendent
RESOURCE STAFF:	Gloria Chalmers, Leanne Fedor, Sandy Forster, Ann Parker, Elisa Rawe, Jim Ray, Christopher Wright, Bonnie Zack
RECOMMENDATION	
1. That, subject to sufficient enrolment, the establishment of the Sakinah Circle alternative program for Kindergarten to Grade 6 be approved for implementation beginning in September 2010.	
2. That the Sakinah Circle alternative program begin the school year four days earlier to provide additional time to accommodate significant Islamic festivals.	
* * * * *	

Significant Islamic festivals are understood to be the two Eids, one following Ramadan (called Eid ul-Fitr) and the other following Hajj (Eid ul-Adha). These are based on the lunar calendar, which moves back approximately 10 days every Georgian calendar year. The length of a lunar month is 29 or 30 days, and so the exact corresponding date in the Gregorian calendar can only be determined with the visibility of the moon, thus the need to remember that the date of Eid may vary by one day, i.e. Eid ul-Fitr would follow the month of Ramadan after 29 days or 30 days, depending on sighting of the moon.

For more information on the Islamic calendar, please see this article:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_calendar

Significance of the modified calendar in Sakinah Circle:

- Modified calendar with early start is an integral part of the foundational document approved by the Board of Trustees.
- It officially recognizes two significant Islamic celebrations: the two Eids.

- It allows Sakinah children to fully realize the importance of their faith tradition as it is being lived in Canada; it is an integral part of personal and collective identity.
- Thus, it has two-fold significance – preservation of the alternative nature of the Sakinah Program and official recognition of the two Eids.

Annual early start information:

1. When Sakinah Circle started at Grace Martin in 2010-11 (Islamic Calendar year 1431), both Eids fell during school year and had four days to have Eid holidays. Eid ul-Fitr was September 10, Hajj and Eid ul-Adha were November 15 and 16.
2. The following year (2011-12), Eid ul-Fitr was during summer break; early start needed to accommodate only the 2 days for the Eid ul-Adha celebration after Hajj.
3. Eid ul-Fitr during summer break continued until 2016; in 2017-18 school year Eid ul-Fitr was on Sunday June 25th and Hajj and Eid ul-Adha were during the summer break.
4. For 2018-19 school year, Eid ul-Fitr was in June, but an early start was not scheduled into a modified calendar.
5. For 2019-20, Eid ul-Fitr is on the weekend May 23 or 24. Eid ul-Adha will be during the summer holidays, thus no need for an early start.
6. For 2020-21, Eid ul-Fitr will most likely be Thursday, May 13, 2021. (According to most calendars, the month of Ramadan this year will be 30 days; if the month of Ramadan is 29 days it will be on Wednesday, May 12, 2021.) This would require an early start to accommodate Eid ul-Fitr. Eid ul-Adha will be during the summer holidays.
7. For 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years, Eid ul-Adha will be during the summer break, so the program will need an early start to accommodate Eid ul-Fitr.
8. Beginning with 2022-23 school year, both Eid ul-Fitr and Eid ul-Adha will be within the school year, necessitating early start to accommodate both Eids. This will remain so for the next thirty-three years.

b. Islamic Holidays and Celebrations

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, a month of obligatory fasting for all able adult Muslims. This special month is a time to focus on spiritual growth, increasing acts of worship and doing good deeds. Fasting begins at dawn and ends at sunset. Fasting is only obligatory for the adults, but many young children love to fast with their families. Breaking the fast at the end of the day is a time when families and friends often gather to share food and the blessings of fasting.

Eid-ul-Fitr commemorates the completion of Ramadan and begins with a congregational Eid prayer in the morning followed by festivities which involve special foods, gifts for children, and gatherings of family and friends.

Eid-ul-Adha (Festival of the Sacrifice) is on the 10th day of Dhul Hijja, the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar which has the annual Hajj pilgrimage. Eid-ul-Adha is celebrated much like Eid ul-Fitr, with

the addition that Muslims who meet a certain economic threshold sacrifice a lamb, goat or cow and share the meat with friends, relatives, and the needy.

Ramadan in Sakinah Circle

- Students and teachers have a revised lifestyle and schedule during Ramadan. Family meals after sunset, late hours at the mosque where the Qur'ān is being recited every night, and the start of the fast before daybreak impact the amount of sleep everyone has.
- During the school lunch hour, students who are fasting need a place where they are not in the midst of everyone else eating lunch.
- Despite the physical hardships, Muslims experience spiritual growth during this month and community is always looking forward to this blessed month.
- For Sakinah children, this special time of the year comes with opportunities and challenges. It provides opportunities for self-discipline and character development. At the same time, it is physically demanding.
- These considerations are important to keep in view when scheduling events that require more physical exertion or add extra burden during Ramadan.



Other Special Days in School

Given the high impact which special days have in the wider school culture and the intentional nature of the Sakinah Program, in which “the intent is to enable the students to develop an authentically Islamic personality and become a contributing member of the Canadian and world community” (Board Report, p. 2), awareness and sensitivity on the part of administration are important in the design of the whole school culture. This includes the treatment and public presentation of holidays with strong religious roots and associated beliefs such as Christmas and Easter, and highly commercialized days like Halloween and Valentine’s Day. Sakinah students do not participate in these celebrations. Nor do they attend band, theatre and other performances where the content of the presentation is not known.

An authentic alternative approach to events such as the Remembrance Day ceremony helps to inclusively observe it and nurture harmony and diversity in school culture. Earth Day is prime opportunity for everyone to actively collaborate.

c) Morning Assembly

Sakinah Circle morning assembly, daily at 8:25-8:37 a.m., provides an opportunity to students and staff to begin their school day together with intention and supplications. Attendance is important. The assembly holds a special significance for the Sakinah Circle Program as an instrument to align the school day with the vision and spirit of the Program through inspirational words and recitation of the Qur'ān. The assembly is led by the MEF-appointed instructor or an approved qualified parent/community volunteer.

d) Sakinah Time

“Non-instructional” Sakinah Time is scheduled into the school day when students meet with the MEF-appointed instructor(s), who is onsite every school day. Each class has two 25-minute sessions per week in addition to the Morning Assembly time.

“Learning at Sakinah Circle is sustained and nourished by daily prayers, morning assembly and memorization and recitation of Qur'ān. Periodic visits by guest speakers and emphasis on community service further enrich the learning experience of the students. Activities are meaningful and the goal is to transform learners through character development and the attainment of spiritual courtesy and etiquette.”

Board Report, p.4

Sakinah Time is guided and led by the MEF-appointed instructor whose role is to teach a specific content, nurture Prophetic character, instill Islamic values and convictions, and facilitate love for life-long learning.

The role of the instructor involves the following:

- Lead the morning assembly of students and staff.
- Guide students in memorization of portions of the Noble Qur'ān.
- Inspire and guide students to develop high moral character.
- Teach essentials of Islamic rituals and sunnah.
- Instruct older students to lead Friday prayers.
- Provide guidance to students and staff.
- Maintain a high level of motivation in students.
- Work with a pre-established Sakinah Time curriculum and a plan of implementation, for morning assembly and class instruction.
- Track and assess student learning; provide reports and recognition certificates.
- Keep records of what is taught at each level.

e) Program-wide Activities

Sakinah teachers plan collaboratively and organize regular experiential learning activities so all Sakinah Circle students learn to work together. Teachers usually request parent volunteers to help with set-up, facilitate small group activities, and provide support in other creative ways.

Monthly theme-related learning activities bring students from Kindergarten to Grade 6 together once a month in “family groups” for cooperative learning activities, such as cooking together, collaborative artwork and nature-focused outdoor experiences. Take-home projects are also theme-related, and include a winter break art challenge.

Service learning is program-wide as well as at the classroom level. This has taken the form of collecting donations of food for the food bank, socks for “Socktober”, hygiene items for shelters, funds for different projects like a well in Africa and local refugee support. Some classes have had experiences like making and delivering sandwiches to a homeless shelter, helping in the local mosque, working in a thrift store and at the Edmonton Food Bank.

A culminating celebration of learning shares highlights of the year’s thematic learning with the rest of the school, parents and the wider community. Emphasis is on sharing the learning with excellence, not on performance nor in showcasing individuals.

Eid has been celebrated in various ways in Sakinah Circle, from classroom parties to program-wide gatherings where all families are invited. Sakinah students receive Eid gifts organized by the teachers, funded by the Society. In the past, student gifts have been items like Sakinah T-shirts, water bottles, or art supplies along with some chocolate. Since 2021, students receive books as a gift for Eid.

A year-end field trip for staff, students and their families to a natural park encourages everyone to spend rejuvenating time in nature. This field trip provides opportunities to immerse ourselves in the signs of creation and explore a natural area.

The Grade Six class has commemorated its Learning Journey with a year-end ceremony, in the first years it was held at the original Al-Rashid Masjid in Fort Edmonton Park. After the covid-years, the ceremony at Fort Edmonton Park was not resumed.

f) Salah in Sakinah Circle

Salah is the Arabic term for the obligatory ritual prayer, performed five times a day. *Salah* timings are determined by the position of the sun in the course of the day, and exact timings change with the season. Except for Fridays, students usually perform

salah in their classroom every day, as determined by their teacher between the noon and afternoon recess.

Friday prayer is a congregational prayer and it includes a sermon. All Sakinah students and their teachers gather for this congregational prayer in the gym, where Sakinah carpets are rolled out. In favourable weather, the prayer is often held outside. An older student leads the prayer and delivers the prayer sermon. Leading the Friday prayer provides an excellent opportunity for Sakinah students to learn leadership skills.



g) Sakinah Circle Field Trips

Sakinah Circle field trips provide learning experiences beyond the regular classroom setting. Destinations are carefully chosen. These trips are intentionally planned by teachers to provide opportunities for learning about the cosmos, history, and nature. They enhance understanding of the Qur'anic worldview, experiential learning, facilitate personal growth and community service. MEF provides funding for transportation to natural outdoor venues and community service experiences.

h) Sakinah Resources

Sakinah Circle has a growing collection of books, teaching resources, artifacts, and furnishings specially chosen for the program. These include classroom carpets, carpet runners for prayer, cultural handicrafts, wooden benches and KG chairs, gardening tools, and utility wagons to facilitate outdoor learning. These resources belong to the program. Supplemental funding for resources is provided by MEF.

Resources are carefully selected so that these resources

- foster Qur'ānic values and worldview
- support units of study, enrich thematic learning, and surround children with invitations to discover and explore
- have literary value and are engaging

- inspire wonder and awe
- nourish hearts and minds
- are authentic, accurate and relevant
- enrich understanding of our relationship with the Creator
- demonstrate richness and diversity of Islamic spiritual and intellectual traditions



i) Islamic Spiritual Etiquettes

The goal of learning in Sakinah Circle is to cultivate Qur'ānic worldview and Prophetic character in order to become compassionate human beings. Character development has inner and outer aspects. How we look at the world frames our intentions, and our intentions are demonstrated in outward aspects, such as speech, behavior, and interactions with others.

“The intent is to enable the students to develop an authentically Islamic personality and become a contributing member of the Canadian and world community. Sakinah Circle is nondenominational and non-proselytizing and seeks to reflect the diversity of the community.”

Board Report, p. 2

“Fundamental to learning from a Qur'ānic worldview is to understand the Qur'ānic view of success, which holistically encompasses success in this world and in the Hereafter. Experiencing the world, especially the natural world, with the intention of reading signs of the Creator helps to develop a learning paradigm and worldview shaped by *taqwa*. *Bismillah* (learning with intention) cultivates an awareness of our place in the world. To this effect, the intent is to strive to be respectful, responsible, and real (authentic, without façade) in every way. Students will be encouraged to develop attitudes of reflection and *sakinah* (tranquility) in an overall learning experience which nurtures spiritual, intellectual, psychological, and social dimensions of the learner. Students and staff will strive for *ihsan* (beauty, excellence, and goodness), bringing quality to every aspect of life.

“Students and teachers at Sakinah Circle are expected to dress for learning in accordance with the principles of the Islamic worldview—with modesty, comfort, simplicity and dignity for oneself and for others. While no uniform code is proposed, students and teachers are expected to respect the basic stated principles. Parents, teachers and students are also expected to respect the diversity of cultures and choices of dress. Sakinah Circle is non-denominational and non-proselytizing and seeks to reflect the diversity of the community.”

Board Report, p. 4

The program anticipates noble Islamic etiquette demonstrated in speech, physical appearance, gender interactions and character traits, including modesty in behavior and dress, respect for personal boundaries, cleanliness of mind, body, clothing, and environment. Obviously, teachers become role models for students, and older students are models for younger students.



The Program recognizes that peer pressure may impact children and may elicit unanticipated behaviors. It is important to try to understand the context within which children and their families are living and be mindful of situations. For example, activities for older students that require physical contact like some team building activities in PE are best organized with boys and girls in separate groups. Also, older Muslim girls are sometimes negotiating identity and societal factors with regard to wearing of hijab as part of their faith obligation. These are sensitive matters and may require special attention.

When some students perform their ablution for prayer in the school washroom, they may initially need some guidance in keeping the area neat and dry. Bathroom etiquette requires washing with water after using the toilet. Students may even hesitate to use the toilets at school because they have no access to water. It is helpful if there is a dedicated plastic container available for this purpose in the washrooms or an empty bottle which can be carried from the classroom.

j) Food in Sakinah Circle

Halal is an Arabic term often translated as “lawful”. Halal is ‘that which is permitted in Sacred Law’. It often pertains to food, but in reality extends to other things as well. Since outer aspects of our lives impact inner aspects of our being, in Sakinah Circle we seek to surround ourselves with halal things.

The Qur’ān requires Muslims to eat halal and pure food. In addition to specific regulations about slaughtering of permissible animals, Halal food also means that food and drinks contain no ingredients from non-halal animal products (e.g., those derived from pigs) or any kind of intoxicating substances (e.g. alcohol).

It is appreciated that any food provided to classrooms, served at Breakfast Club, grocery items available in the Community Fridge, or snacks at special events be checked to make sure the food is halal. For example, it is important to confirm that cheese contains no animal-derived rennet. This is especially important for hot lunch organized by school partners which students may purchase.

V. The Sakinah Circle Community

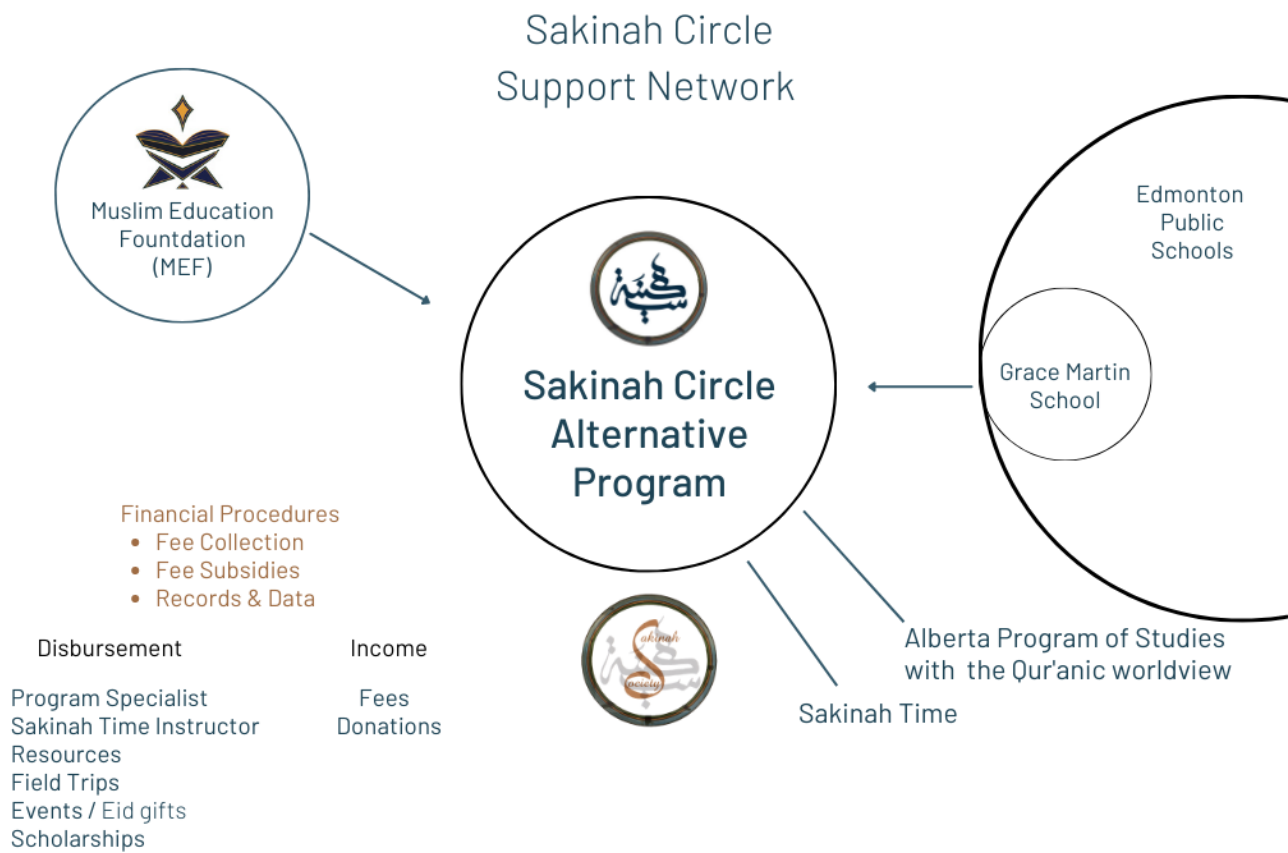
a) Muslim Education Foundation (MEF)



Muslim Education Foundation (MEF) was established in 2005 as a not-for-profit society. One of its objectives is to develop authentic Islamic educational resources. It has published *Concentric Circles*, a major work on philosophy of Islamic education (2006), which became the foundational text for Sakinah Circle.

MEF recognizes that the basic principle of Islamic philosophy of education is to give due importance to the role played by three inner resources given to each child by the Creator: the intellect (*‘aql*), the heart (*qalb*), and the soul (*nafs*). These resources, along with the innate nature (*fiṭrah*) are the real assets of all learners. These inner resources are, however, often veiled by the environment in which the child is raised. Thus, there is a need to create a learning environment in which these inner faculties are nurtured.

The role of Muslim Education Foundation in Sakinah Circle is to support the delivery of Alberta Program of Studies from the Qur’ānic worldview. This involves, but is not limited to, development of Sakinah-specific educational resources drawn from the Islamic spiritual and intellectual traditions, support to teachers in their effort to align the program with its vision, and oversight for the procurement of Sakinah resources.



b) Sakinah Society

Sakinah Society, established by the Muslim Education Foundation to support the Sakinah Circle program, draws its membership from all Sakinah parents and guardians. Sakinah Society collaborates with the administration of Grace Martin School in its efforts to support and enhance the quality of education at Sakinah Circle.

Members of the Sakinah Society have served as active liaison between the school administration and parents, assisted with the registration process to ensure that the expectations of interested families are in agreement with the program objectives and philosophy, and helped MEF collect and manage fees to support and enhance the quality of learning in Sakinah Circle. Parent volunteers have also facilitated learning activities during non-instructional Sakinah Time, including, but not limited to, the morning assembly, fostering and nurturing of the Qur'ānic worldview through the essential teachings of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace.

c) Sakinah Parent Commitment

Sakinah Circle recognizes that parents have a primary role in their children's education, and that the partnership between home and school is mutually supportive. It is expected that families seeking to have their children in Sakinah Circle understand and support the vision of the program.

“Parents seeking enrolment for their child(ren) will be asked to sign a commitment of their support for the vision, mission and integrated objectives of the program.

Admission and Oversubscription: Admission to the program would be consistent with Board regulations on student accommodation, and will be open to all students/families. In cases where the program is oversubscribed, current students and their siblings would have first priority, with remaining places being filled by random selection.”

Board Report, p. 2

The following statements in the application form are signed by every parent:

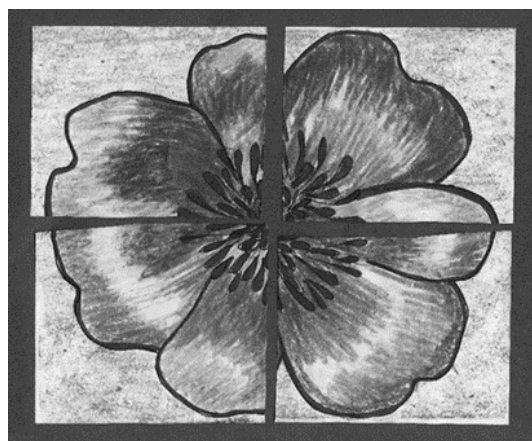
- I believe that school attendance is important and, except for illness or emergency, I will make sure my child is present in school. I recognize that if my child is not present by the last instructional day in the month of September, he or she may lose their place in the program.
- I will ensure my child arrives for daily morning assembly promptly at 8:20 a.m.
- I will teach my child the etiquettes of wudu and salah at home in order to meaningfully participate in salah during school time.
- I will model and teach my child adab and good manners.
- I will send healthy and wholesome food for my child to school. I know that processed snacks and drinks are strongly discouraged at Sakinah.
- I will ensure my child comes to school well rested and dressed in clean and modest clothing which is appropriate for salah. I will emphasize good personal hygiene at home.
- I will ensure that, as a family, we play outside and explore nature to connect with Divine creation.
- I will monitor and limit my child's screen time on devices at home and ensure that electronic devices are not taken to school.
- I will make sure that my child is suitably dressed for the weather and understand that everyone goes outdoors for recess. We have indoor recess when the temperature falls below -23 degrees Celsius.
- I understand that my child attends the modified Music class in Sakinah Circle.
- I will strive to be actively involved in the Sakinah Circle community, attend Sakinah events and try to volunteer at least twice during the school year.

Applications are accepted from parents across the Edmonton Public Schools jurisdiction. Sakinah Circle is a unique alternative program in the district and admission is not limited by school catchment boundaries. The program “is non-denominational and non-proselytizing and seeks to reflect the diversity of the community” (Board Report, p. 2). Everyone is welcome to apply.

The district’s early registration process provides clear dates and deadlines for advance application and oversubscription procedures. There is no waiting list for the program, and double-registering in another school to keep options open is not permitted. Parents recognize that registration in Sakinah Circle is a commitment to attend the program. Students need to be enrolled in September.

d) Sakinah Circle Alumni

Former students of Sakinah Circle are encouraged to keep in contact with us. They are excellent volunteers and their presence is greatly appreciated at program events.



e) Sakinah Volunteers

Volunteers bring inter-generational support and cross-cultural enrichment to the program. Their help is greatly appreciated in helping students in the classroom as well as in program events.

Examples of volunteer work include helping with small group projects, handcrafts, gardening, outdoor activities, and field trips. Some volunteers have worked with books in the library. They have been facilitators for thematic events like the Silk Road Field Day and the Hajj Journey simulation.

Volunteers are requested to follow the direction of the teacher, refrain from using a cell phone during volunteer time, not to bring along young children, and observe confidentiality when working with students.

Please contact classroom teachers if you would like to volunteer.

VI. Staff

Teachers in Sakinah Circle deliver the Alberta Program of Study through the Qur'ānic worldview with an integrated pedagogical philosophy in a highly intentional learning environment. Teachers are the key component of this Program as they design and implement the learning process in the classrooms. Their work is instrumental to achieve the goal of the Program—transformational learning:

“The focus in this alternative program is on transformational learning which addresses the spiritual, intellectual, aesthetic and practical needs of the learner. The program proposes to offer learning activities that harmonize self-discipline, courtesy towards all living creatures and stewardship of the environment. Carefully prepared classroom and outdoor learning activities are used to connect students with their natural world and their Creator. This connection is the foundation for encouraging conscientious choices for a wholesome lifestyle. Arabic as a second language instruction, with emphasis on communication and understanding, supports and extends knowledge of the teachings of the Qur'ān. The intent is to enable the students to develop an authentically Islamic personality and become a contributing member of the Canadian and world community.”

Board Report, p.2

The vision of the Program guides what happens in the classroom, the pedagogical approach, and the selection of resources and materials. Three essential questions are helpful in planning the learning experience and classroom routines:

1. What is the intention of this activity?
2. What makes it meaningful?
3. How is it connected to the Qur'ānic worldview?

Teachers in this alternative program:

- Seek to address intellectual, aesthetic, practical and spiritual needs
- Weave enduring understandings throughout the curriculum
- Integrate holistic learning across subject areas
- Engage in program-wide thematic integration
- Design learning environments with intention and orientation
- Seek to be nature-focused, historically-rooted, service-oriented
- Value Arabic and understanding of the Noble Qur'ān
- Appreciate and use material from the Islamic tradition and civilization

As a program, Sakinah Circle is deeply directional in intention, space, and time. Teachers strive to make it evident that students are in a nurturing, holistic learning environment. Ideally, the classroom has an unspoken sense of sakinah (tranquility), taqwa (God-consciousness), adab (spiritual courtesy), khalifa (responsible stewardship) and ihsan (beautiful excellence). The learning environment itself

teaches and reflects the pedagogy of being nature-focused and historically-rooted. Classrooms are set up to minimize visual noise, to use natural materials, and to avoid plastics as much as possible. Routines in each classroom include starting the morning with circle time and intentions and ending the day with closing circle, reflections, and du'a.

Teacher Leadership in Sakinah Circle

Program Specialist

The position of Sakinah Circle Program Specialist grew from the initial curriculum work that led to the pilot program and subsequently, to the alternative program.

The District teacher supporting the current pilot program at Argyll Home Education Centre has been a representative in the development of this program and is the author of a foundational text, *Concentric Circles, Nurturing Awe and Wonder in Early Learning—A Foundational Approach*. It is anticipated that she would provide curricular leadership should the program be approved. This leadership role is key in introducing the program as staff professional development will be critical during and beyond the implementation stage.”

Board Report, p.2, 3

The unique needs of the niche created by this alternative program require ongoing development and support for human and curricular resources. The Program Specialist works collaboratively with classroom teachers to document lessons with Qur’anic worldview, develop new resources for Sakinah Circle, and facilitate professional learning to build individual and collective capacity.

Professional Development for Staff

“Teachers are committed to participating in professional development related to the alternative program.”

“... staff professional development will be critical during and beyond the implementation stage.”

Board Report, p. 2, 3

Professional learning for Sakinah teachers is an ongoing process throughout the school year. Teachers meet for orientation and professional development specific to the alternative program. They begin collaborative planning at the start and continue throughout the school year to ensure thematic integration. Monthly meetings on early dismissal days provide dedicated time for Sakinah Circle teachers to focus on academic growth in the program, support each other in classroom work, and engage in professional development.



Appendix I

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

March 23, 2010

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Sakinah Circle Alternative Program

ORIGINATOR: D. Barrett, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE

STAFF: Gloria Chalmers, Leanne Fedor, Sandy Forster, Ann Parker, Elisa Rawe, Jim Ray, Christopher Wright, Bonnie Zack

RECOMMENDATION

1. That, subject to sufficient enrolment, the establishment of the Sakinah Circle alternative program for Kindergarten to Grade 6 be approved for implementation beginning in September 2010.
2. That the Sakinah Circle alternative program begin the school year four days earlier to provide additional time to accommodate significant Islamic festivals.

* * * * *

Background: Over the past three years, district staff has been in discussion with parents interested in developing an alternative program that offers the provincial curriculum within a holistic Islamic worldview. Prior to District-level discussions, these parents had registered their children with Edmonton Public Schools at the Argyll Home Education Centre. In the spring of 2007, these parents collaborated with the Argyll Home Education Centre and the Muslim Education Foundation (MEF) to host an enrichment program, *Doorways to Islamic Civilization*, which was offered over eight evenings. Seventy-five students and their parents attended the program. Subsequently, representatives of the MEF began work with the District to pursue the goal of an alternative program. In the fall of 2007, an onsite enrichment program was initiated at the Argyll Centre with 21 students. The following year, the Sakinah Circle Pilot started up as a full-day program for Division 1. As the students were enrolled in the District, it has been possible to simultaneously explore ways of integrating the Islamic worldview, develop a curriculum scope sequence, identify appropriate resources and pursue discussions regarding alternative program status.

Rationale for Program: This program is consistent with enabling legislation in the *School Act* for alternative programs and with District criteria. The District, in collaboration with representatives from the Muslim Education Foundation, has developed the necessary documentation to implement such a program, has sufficient space to offer the program, and the Society has demonstrated demand. The District has developed curriculum documents, including recommended resources, to support the Sakinah Circle alternative program. Through the pilot offered at Argyll Home Education Centre, 40 students are currently involved in the pilot program and 35 are committed to registering in the Sakinah Circle alternative if it is approved. Additionally, 80 families have shown an interest in the program.

Proposed Program: The Sakinah Circle alternative program links the Alberta Program of Studies learning outcomes to the Mission and Vision Statement (Appendix I) for the program by appropriately integrating Qur'ānic content and Islamic concepts. The units of study integrate learning, faith and life in order to nourish inner peace and harmony, as the name "Sakinah" suggests. Sample units are provided in Appendix II, a resource list in Appendix III and the entire curriculum document is provided for review in the Trustees' On-line Reading Room. The focus in this alternative program is on transformational learning which addresses the spiritual, intellectual, aesthetic and practical needs of the learner. The program proposes to offer learning activities that harmonize self discipline, courtesy towards all living creatures and stewardship of the environment. Carefully prepared classroom and outdoor learning activities are used to connect students with their natural world and their Creator. This connection is the foundation for encouraging conscientious choices for a wholesome lifestyle. Arabic as a second language instruction, with emphasis on communication and understanding, supports and extends knowledge of the teachings of the Qur'ān. The intent is to enable the students to develop an authentically Islamic personality and become a contributing member of the Canadian and world community. Sakinah Circle is non- denominational and non-proselytizing and seeks to reflect the diversity of the community.

The program includes a shortened lunch hour. The time accrued enables the Society to provide learning opportunities for the technical study of the Qur'ān during non-instructional time.

Parents seeking enrolment for their child(ren) will be asked to sign a commitment of their support for the vision, mission and integrated objectives of the program.

Admission and Oversubscription: Admission to the program would be consistent with Board regulations on student accommodation, and will be open to all students/families. In cases where the program is oversubscribed, current students and their siblings would have first priority, with remaining places being filled by random selection. In the first year, the intent would be to offer a kindergarten to grade 4 alternative program that would accommodate the students enrolled in the pilot, supplemented by some new enrolments, as well as a new intake in kindergarten.

Staffing: As with all District alternative programs, staffing for the program would be coordinated through Human Resources. The principal would be responsible for the selection of staff and the Muslim Education Foundation will have input into the principal's staff selection process. There is an expectation that the staff in the program meet District hiring criteria, that they support the vision and mission of the alternative program, and are committed to participating in professional development related to the alternative. If a situation were to

arise in which the appointment of a principal was required, provision would be made for the MEF to provide input.

The District teacher supporting the current pilot program at Argyll Home Education Centre has been a representative in the development of this program and is the author of a foundational text, *Concentric Circles, Nurturing Awe and Wonder in Early Learning – A Foundational Approach*. It is anticipated that she would provide curricular leadership should the program be approved. This leadership role is key in introducing the program as staff professional development will be critical during and beyond the implementation stage.

Fees: As noted in the program description, MEF intends to provide learning opportunities, during non-instructional time, for the technical study of the Qur’ān. The Muslim Education Foundation will be responsible for all arrangements related to the learning of the Qur’ān, including the administration of any fees associated with this activity.

Location: The pilot program at the Argyll Home Education Centre currently draws students from many parts of the city but a majority of the students in the pilot are from south east Edmonton. Planning is in the process of reviewing options in this area of the city. If the alternative program is approved, a location in this general area will be confirmed.

Program Establishment Costs: Establishment grant funding for the elementary Sakinah Circle alternative would be consistent with other alternative programs. New alternative programs receive a one-time establishment grant of \$319 per student in the first year, plus \$319 per student for enrolment growth in the second year.

Transportation: If the alternative program is approved, Student Transportation would support the Sakinah Circle program with transportation service for those students whose permanent resident address is outside the neighbourhood walk boundary for the school in which the program is located and within the Sakinah Circle Transportation Service Area set by Student Transportation. Transportation fees would apply for access to service and be consistent with rates for other alternative programs.

Next Steps: If the recommendations are approved, the District will confirm a location for the program. Subsequently, the principal, with input from the Society and assistance from Human Resources, will begin to staff the program, as well as work with the Society to advertise the program.

GC:cs

- Appendix I: Sakinah Circle Alternative Program Vision, Mission and Structure
- Appendix II: Sakinah Circle Alternative Program Sample Curriculum Documents
- Appendix III: Sample Resource List

Sakinah Circle Alternative Circle Program: Vision, Mission & Structure

The Vision:

To provide education that brings us closer to the Creator; through a process of learning based on the Qur'ānic worldview, encompassing all curricular disciplines, in order to develop critical minds, conscious hearts, and compassionate human beings; “learning” that will support the lifelong journey to emulate the teachings of the Qur'ān.

The Mission:

To provide guidance and an environment that recognizes the learner's “firah” (innate nature), nurtures “taqwa” (God consciousness), and cultivates learners who strive to become “khulafah” (vicegerents of Allah).

The Structure:

Fundamental to learning from a Qur'ānic worldview is to understand the Qur'ānic view of success, which holistically encompasses success in this world and in the Hereafter. Experiencing the world, especially the natural world, with the intention of reading signs of the Creator helps to develop a learning paradigm and worldview shaped by *taqwa*. *Bismillah* (learning with intention) cultivates an awareness of our place in the world. To this effect, the intent is to strive to be respectful, responsible, and real (authentic, without façade) in every way. Students will be encouraged to develop attitudes of reflection and *sakinah* (tranquility) in an overall learning experience which nurtures spiritual, intellectual, psychological, and social dimensions of the learner. Students and staff will strive for *ihsan* (beauty, excellence, and goodness), bringing quality to every aspect of life.

Learning at Sakinah Circle is sustained and nourished by daily prayers, morning assembly and memorization and recitation of Qur'ān. Periodic visits by guest speakers and emphasis on community service further enrich the learning experience of the students. Activities are meaningful and the goal is to transform learners through character development and the attainment of spiritual courtesy and etiquette. Students and teachers at Sakinah Circle are expected to dress for learning in accordance with the principles of the Islamic worldview – with modesty, comfort, simplicity and dignity for oneself and for others. While no uniform code is proposed, students and teachers are expected to respect the basic stated principles. Parents, teachers and students are also expected to respect the diversity of cultures and choices of dress. Sakinah Circle is non-denominational and non-proselytizing and seeks to reflect the diversity of the community.

Curriculum documents for Sakinah Circle address the outcomes of the K-6 Alberta Programs of Study. Units of study are approached thematically, integrating Qur'ānic content, Islamic concepts, and Prophetic Tradition where appropriate, to enrich the worldview central to the Islamic way of life. To do this, thematic statements are identified for each General Outcome in each grade level of the Program of Study. Enduring Understandings provide a unifying concept, these are transferable, and are conceptualized through sustained inquiry during the learning process.

In addition to the stated Enduring Understandings and Alberta Education grade-specific learner outcomes, each curriculum document identifies possible Reflective Questions for teacher and learner consideration. Reflecting on these questions is intended to further integrate aspects of Islam with the Alberta Programs of Study. Reflective questions italicized and in red reflect the Islamic worldview and those in black are more general. Reflective questions serve to orient and direct teacher thinking with two distinct foci: reflective questions encourage both teachers and students to relate and connect aspects of Islam and Islamic civilization with the Program of Studies outcomes; and reflective questions help teachers direct students thinking to the higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy (analysis, synthesis, evaluation) in the Alberta Programs of Study outcomes.

A sample Transfer/Performance Assessment Task has been identified for each general outcome by way of providing an exemplar of a student activity that directly links the Qur'ānic worldview or Islamic heritage and the provincial Program of Study. Authentic assessment is seen as a tool to analyze student learning, and as its Latin origin *assidere* (to "sit with") implies, the teacher makes thoughtful observations, balances a variety of assessment techniques, keeps records, offers helpful feedback, and applies the gained knowledge of student learning; formative assessment becomes an integral part of planning the learning process.