

MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS
COMMISSIONS ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

EXCELLENCE BY DESIGN

A Report of the Visiting Team for Accreditation
by the Middle States Association of Colleges and
Schools

AL-HUDA SCHOOL
COLLEGE PARK, MD

APRIL 20-23, 2015

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	1
Organization for Growth and Improvement	5
<i>Internal Coordinators</i>	7
<i>The Planning Team</i>	8
<i>Role of the School's Leadership and Governance</i>	9
<i>The Plan for Institutionalizing a Planning Ethic and the Plan</i>	10
<i>The Plan for Communication and Awareness</i>	11
<i>The Plan for Periodic Reviews of the Plan for Growth and Improvement</i>	13
<i>Visiting Team's Recommended Monitoring Issues</i>	14
Profile of the School	15
<i>Visiting Team's Observations and Recommendations</i>	15
Profile of Student Performance	17
<i>Visiting Team's Observations and Recommendations</i>	17
The School's Mission, Beliefs, and Profile of Graduates	20
<i>Mission</i>	20
<i>Beliefs</i>	21
<i>Profile of Graduates</i>	23
<i>Visiting Team's Recommendations</i>	25
Profile of Organizational Capacity	27
<i>Philosophy/Mission Standard</i>	28
<i>Governance and Leadership Standard</i>	31
<i>School Improvement Planning Standard</i>	34
<i>Finances Standard</i>	37
<i>Facilities Standard</i>	41
<i>School Climate and Organization Standard</i>	44
<i>Health and Safety Standard</i>	47
<i>Educational Program Standard</i>	51
<i>Assessment and Evidence of Student Learning Standard</i>	55
<i>Student Services Standard</i>	58
<i>Student Life and Student Activities Standard</i>	62
<i>Information Resources and Technology Standard</i>	66

	Page
Plan for Growth and Improvement	70
<i>Student Performance/Organizational Capacity Objectives and Action Plans</i>	71
<i>Visiting Team's Observations and Recommendations</i>	78
Accreditation Recommendation	81
Next Steps	82
Summary and Closure	84
Visiting Team Roster	88

INTRODUCTION

The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools is a non-governmental, nonprofit, peer-administered organization of diverse educational institutions committed to ensuring that students in accredited schools are receiving the highest quality education. Additionally, the Association seeks to ensure that accredited schools are engaged in continuous growth and improvement efforts through effective leadership, a comprehensive program of self-study, evaluation by peer educators external to the school, meeting the requirements for accreditation, exemplary programs, and supportive services. For more than 100 years, the Association has provided leadership in educational quality and school improvement for its member schools in Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and in schools in Europe, the Middle East, the subcontinent of Asia, and Africa.

The school that is the subject of this report selected the *Excellence by Design (ExBD)* self-study and accreditation protocol. *ExBD* is an accreditation protocol that uses strategic planning as a vehicle for growth and improvement in student performance and in the school's capacity to effect that growth. The protocol, developed by the Middle States Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools (MSA-CESS) of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, links various planning and school growth and improvement efforts. *Excellence by Design* leads the school to establish objectives for improving student performance and organizational capacity based on its vision of a preferred future for its students. Therefore, *Excellence by Design* is a future-oriented and visionary process. In addition, the protocol provides for a *continuous* review of programs and services and of the results of student performance. It also allows diverse constituent groups to participate in charting the future of the institution.

The purpose of *Excellence by Design* is to provide a framework and process to guide the school's efforts to achieve excellence in student performance and to achieve accreditation by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools.

Excellence by Design also provides the framework for formally aligning all the work of the school to ensure that all of its efforts are coordinated and focused on achieving the school's mission. It is expected that this framework will accomplish the following purposes:

- Development of a sense of community and common purpose among the school's students and staff, and its community of stakeholders.
- A Plan for Growth and Improvement in student performance and the school's capacity to produce the levels of student performance expected by the school and its community of stakeholders.
- Greater cooperation between all of the school's stakeholders in identifying and implementing practices that have been demonstrated to lead to excellence in student

performance and the organization's capacity to produce the desired levels of student performance.

Most importantly, this framework intends to develop in the school community of stakeholders an understanding that the school is part of a larger community of learners and that this community has agreed upon, supports, and accepts responsibility for assisting the school in achieving its Mission, Profile of Graduates, and Plan for Growth and Improvement in student performance and organizational capacity. This learning community understands that, by working together to articulate and align its efforts, it can achieve higher levels of excellence in student performance.

To be accredited through the *Excellence by Design* protocol, the school first must meet the 12 Middle States Association Standards for Accreditation. Second, the school, through a planning team of representatives from the school's community stakeholders, must identify areas of student performance that are the highest priorities for growth and improvement, measurable performance objectives, and a plan for achieving the objectives. The plan must also include the school's mission and the beliefs or core values that guide its decision making.

What Is Excellence?

In his book *Good to Great*¹, author Jim Collins posits that the transformation from being good to being great is a process of buildup followed by breakthrough. This process consists of three broad stages:

- Getting disciplined people into the organization;
- Getting the disciplined people to use disciplined thought; and
- Getting the disciplined people to take disciplined actions.

Collins goes on to say:

“...[I] believe that it is no harder to build something great than to build something good. It might be statistically more *rare* to reach greatness, but it does not require more suffering than perpetuating mediocrity.”²

Collins states that seeking greatness requires passion—“doing something you care that much about, and you believe in its purpose deeply enough, [that] it is impossible to imagine *not* trying to make it great.”³

¹ Jim Collins. *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...And Others Don't.* (2001). New York: Harper Business.

² Collins, p. 205

In summary, the purpose of the *Excellence by Design* protocol is to assist and provide guidance to those educators who believe passionately in the need to create a better future for their students and seek a framework and a process to make that happen.

In order to change a culture, education leaders must keep the attention of the entire school community focused on answering the five questions below. In the *Excellence by Design* process, the Planning Team was guided to develop answers to the following questions:

- #1: By the time they have experienced our full educational program and services, what should our students know, and how should they be able to use what they know? What content, skills, and work habits should be the priorities for learning? What attitudes, qualities, or characteristics should our students demonstrate?
- #2: How well should students perform the desired outcomes, and what does excellent performance look like?
- #3: How will we measure and evaluate our students' performance in multiple ways?
- #4: How well do our students currently perform? What is the actual quality of their work?
- #5: What must we do to improve student performance?

In setting a course for continuous improvement in student and organizational performance, schools and their communities must study not only what the existing data tell them about their students' present performance, but they must also set clear targets for what they want student performance to be in the future. Maintaining a focus on these five questions is essential to a successful continuous improvement process and is a "habit of mind" that must be cultivated and nurtured by the school's leaders and those leading the growth and improvement efforts. Too often schools find themselves working on curriculum and instructional materials and engaging in professional development before they have clearly decided what their students should know, how they should use their content knowledge, process skills, and work habits, and what the quality of their performance should be.

The Middle States Visiting Team is a group of professional educators appointed by the Middle States Association to visit the school. The purpose of the Team's visit is threefold. First, the Team determines whether the school meets the 12 Standards for Accreditation. Second, the Team determines if the school meets the requirements for a planning ethic and planning processes of the *Excellence by Design* protocol. Third, the Team reviews the content of the

³ Collins, p. 208

school's Plan for Growth and Improvement in student performance to determine the validity and clarity of the Plan together with the level of commitment to implementing the Plan and achieving its objectives expressed by the school's community of stakeholders.

NOTE TO THE READERS OF THIS REPORT

Readers of this report must be aware that the report is written, in part, as the Team's response to the school's self-study. Therefore, if readers need to see the specific information and data to which this Report responds, they should read the applicable section(s) of the Self-Study Document.

ORGANIZATION FOR GROWTH AND IMPROVEMENT

Introduction

A sound planning ethic and planning process are every bit as critical to achieving a school's goals for growth in student performance and the school's capacity to effect that growth as is a plan rich in content. An effective planning ethic and process address the essential question: "Does the school have the capacity, the will, and the systematic structures required to implement its plan and achieve its goals?" A fine plan full of great activities is only as strong as the ability and willingness of the school and its stakeholders to implement it.

While successful planning is reflective of an organization's context and culture, it should be visionary in describing what an organization wants to become and pragmatic in specifying the steps to reach that goal. Successful planning for growth and change has been described as a delicate balance between brave steps forward and reassuring steps to the side; between the recognition of the need for growth and a celebration of what already exists that is good, steady, and/or certain; between the bold, frequently scary, visions of future possibilities and the comfort with past and present successes.

When an institution seeks accreditation using the *Excellence by Design* protocol, it must commit to working toward establishing and maintaining a planning ethic within the school. A planning ethic means that planning for growth and improvement becomes part of what the school and its stakeholders do as much as providing programs, teaching, resources, services, and activities. A planning ethic requires continuous clarification of the school's unique mission, beliefs, profile of graduates, and student performance objectives. It requires that all of its processes are vision-driven. And it requires that the school is action-oriented by developing long-term strategic action plans that integrate programs, services, facilities, and support to address the school's growth needs.

In the *Excellence by Design* protocol, the school also makes a commitment to continuous growth and improvement. The school and its stakeholders should demonstrate that they are never satisfied with the status quo in terms of student performance, but are striving constantly to improve that performance. The setting and striving to achieve challenging growth goals should become a dynamic process in which the school develops the flexibility to revise and modify its plans to achieve its goals based on the results received from implementing those plans. As part of the accreditation process, the school should review the results of its efforts at least annually and willingly open its processes and results to review by its peers in the Middle States Association.

It is also essential for the school to commit to involving its stakeholders in meaningful ways in the setting of goals, developing plans to achieve and measure those goals, and the

implementation of those plans. In a planning culture, the school strives to develop broad ownership of the planning process and the plan for growth and improvement by the entire community by ensuring broad based knowledge and understanding of and support for the goals and the plans to achieve them.

In this section of its report, the Visiting Team provides observations and recommendations regarding the school's Organization for Growth and Improvement based on what was seen and heard during the Team's visit to the school.

Leadership for Growth and Improvement

The primary role of the leadership and governing body of the school—those in positions of authority and influence within the school—in the school improvement process is to serve as the “champions” for developing a planning ethic and the growth and improvement process. Strategic planning experts have long held that champions are extremely important to the success of planning for growth and improvement in any organization. Because the a major goal of the self-study and accreditation process is to ensure that the school has a vision and a plan to achieve the vision that is accepted and supported by all, leaders must communicate publicly, clearly, and often that:

- the planning process is important for the future of the school and its students, and
- they will provide the leadership, resources, and support needed to make the process and the plan successful.

This critical role for leaders also applies to the heads and governing bodies of larger organizations of which the school may be a part. It is very difficult for an individual school within a larger system to plan strategically for improving student performance without the clear support and assistance of its parent organization. They, too, must “champion the cause.”

It is also important for the head of the school and at least one representative of the governing body to serve, when appropriate, on the Planning Team. However, in this role, the leaders should serve as “equals among equals” by serving on the Team as members with the same authority and influence as all other members of the Team. This is often a difficult role to take, because education organizations are typically organized as hierarchies, and the leaders are often expected to make the decisions in a “top down” manner. However, if the goal is to identify a mission and plan to achieve it that is “owned” by all the stakeholders of the school, the mission and plan must be developed through a grass roots level—bottom up, rather than top down.

A. Internal Coordinators

A required component of the protocol is the appointment of a team of Internal Coordinators. The primary functions of the Internal Coordinators are to:

- Coordinate the institution's planning process and development of a plan for growth in student performance.
- Oversee planning and preparation for the Visiting Team visit.
- Prepare for the Mid-Point Review visit.
- Provide the energy, enthusiasm, and expertise to move the process forward.

The Visiting Team observed:

It is apparent that the Al-Huda School Internal Coordinators made a concerted effort to conduct a rigorous and comprehensive self-study process. The three school administrators (principal and two vice principals) acted as the internal coordinators. Internal coordinators met at least once a month and documented meeting minutes, which they provided to the MSA team. All three members articulated a reflective stance and were able to express many lessons learned through the self-study process. Notably, the internal coordinators learned that while they would still like to continue working on their goal of finding a better facility to cater to the school's needs, they should also try to implement better extracurricular programming to meet the request of parents, students, and other stakeholders.

In addition, the internal coordinators stated a commitment to the self-study process as an important learning tool and one in which they were excited to participate because it aligned with their school's mission and with their religious value of continuously purifying their intentions and actions. This belief was reaffirmed by the head of the governing board who stated that the self-study process has allowed the school to practice a tenet of Islam, seeking excellence in all that one does. The governing board also expressed support for the self-study process and affirmed that one member of the board was informed about the internal coordinators' process during his weekly meetings with administrators. Further, the board confirmed its support for the administrators in their role as internal coordinators going forward. They spoke about helping to choose members for the planning team and about providing support in meeting the objectives. Finally, the internal coordinators confirmed that they sent frequent emails to parents and other stakeholders about the self-study process and the orientation, and that they encouraged the Parent Teacher Support Group to share information with all parents.

While there were many positive aspects of the team's process, it was not without obstacles. Al-Huda team had to restart the self-study process because of an anticipated move to another location. It is Al-Huda's priority to acquire a facility that provides more classroom and auxiliary space, however their attempt to do so last year was unsuccessful. As such, they were

able to restart and complete the self-study process this year. Second, although the internal coordinators attempted to include other stakeholders in the planning process, the seven additional stakeholders who were initially involved eventually left the team due to the rigorous workload.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- None

B. The Planning Team⁴

A major commitment the school makes when seeking accreditation is to include a varied spectrum of the school's stakeholders in the process of continually defining a preferred vision, in developing the means to get closer to that vision, and in implementing the action plans developed by these stakeholders. In summary, it is expected that the Planning Team will be given the authority, resources, and support to:

- Develop the vision for the school by creating or reaffirming a statement of mission
- Develop a set of beliefs to serve as the ethical code for the institution
- Develop a profile of the knowledge, skills, and qualities the institution expects of its graduates.
- Identify the areas of student performance that are the priorities for growth and improvement
- Oversee development of the action plans to achieve the performance objectives
- Monitor implementation of the action plans
- Conduct a periodic review of the progress being made to achieving the objectives

The protocol requires that the Planning Team includes a varied spectrum of the school's community of stakeholders. Because Middle States' member institutions are so varied in type and situation, Middle States does not prescribe what groups constitute a school's stakeholders. This is a local decision. However, the school's leadership and the Planning Team will be expected to provide a rationale for the composition of the Planning Team.

⁴ It is important to note that, although the *Excellence by Design* protocol calls this stakeholder group a Planning Team, what the school calls this group is not important. Its purpose, composition, operation, and results are what is key. What the protocol requires for accreditation is that this group meets the letter and spirit of the requirements for a Planning Team without regard to what it is called. In many schools, an improvement team already exists and includes the required stakeholders, so it makes sense for the school to continue that organization with any adjustments necessary to meet the requirements of the *ExBD* protocol. This same principle applies to all requirements of the protocol. It is less important what elements and products of the process are called than it is that the school meets the intentions and results of the requirements.

Because the school is committing itself to developing a planning ethic and a culture of continuous improvement, the Planning Team should be institutionalized. The institution must find ways to integrate the work of the Planning Team into the culture of the school and the work of the school. In most cases, this will require a concerted effort and the opening to examination of how the institution thinks about institutional growth and improvement and who is responsible to lead it.

The Visiting Team observed:

The planning team consisted of the internal coordinators (principal and two vice principals) and other stakeholders that represented a diverse subset of the school community, including the president of the PTSG (Parent Teacher Support Group), two teacher representatives, and one parent. In addition to diversity of position in the school, the planning team reflected the diversity of ethnic population and gender in the school community. The school administration invited all of the members of the planning team to join.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- That the planning team use its plans for implementation of the objectives in order to keep momentum and to make sure that implementation continues to be a central focus throughout the seven-year accreditation period.

C. Role of the School's Leadership and Governance

It is a school's formal leaders—those in positions of authority and influence within the school—who should serve as the primary “champions” for the planning process and the Plan for Growth and Improvement. Strategic planning experts have long held that champions are extremely important to the success of planning. Because a goal of the self-study and accreditation process is to develop a vision and a plan to achieve it that is accepted and supported by the entire community of the school, the school's leaders and governing body must communicate clearly and often that this process is important for the future of the school and its students, and that they will provide the leadership, resources, and support needed to make the process and the plan successful.

The Visiting Team observed:

This area is not applicable because the three school administrators were part of both the IC and Planning Teams.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- None

D. The Plan for Institutionalizing a Planning Ethic

A sound planning ethic is critical to achieving the school's mission, its objectives for growth and improvement in student performance and organizational capacity, and to its capacity to effect the intended growth. An effective planning ethic addresses the essential question: "Does the school and its community of stakeholders have the capacity, the will, and the systematic structures and processes required to develop and implement its plan and achieve its objectives?" A fine plan full of great activities is only as strong as the ability and willingness of the school and its stakeholders to implement it.

While successful planning is reflective of the school's context and culture, it should be visionary in describing what the school and its stakeholder community want for their students and pragmatic in specifying the steps to reach that goal. Successful planning for growth and improvement has been described as a delicate balance between brave steps forward and reassuring steps to the side; between the recognition of the need for growth and a celebration of what already exists that is good, steady, and/or certain; between the bold, frequently scary, visions of future possibilities and the comfort with past and present successes.

When a school seeks accreditation using the *Excellence by Design* protocol, it must commit to working toward establishing and sustaining a planning ethic within the school. A planning ethic means that planning for growth and improvement becomes part of what the school and its community of stakeholders do as much as teaching, and providing programs, resources, services, and activities. A planning ethic requires continuous clarification of the community's unique mission, beliefs, profile of graduates, and student and organizational performance goals. It requires that all of its processes are vision-driven. And it requires that the community is action-oriented by developing and implementing long-term, strategic action plans that integrate programs, services, facilities, and support to address the school's growth objectives.

In the *Excellence by Design* protocol, the school also makes a commitment to continuous growth and improvement. The school and its stakeholders should demonstrate that they are never satisfied with the status quo in terms of how their students perform but are striving constantly to improve the levels of performance. The setting of and striving to achieve challenging growth objectives should become a dynamic process in which the school develops the flexibility to revise and modify its plans to achieve its objectives based on the results received from implementing those plans. As part of the accreditation process, the school must review the results of its efforts periodically and open its processes and results willingly to review by its peers in the Middle States Association.

A planning ethic also requires the school to commit to involving its stakeholders in meaningful ways in the setting of objectives, developing plans to achieve and measure those objectives, and the implementation of those plans. In a planning culture, the school strives to develop broad ownership of both the planning process and the Plan for Growth and Improvement by the entire community by ensuring broad based knowledge and understanding of and support for the objectives and the plans to achieve them.

A planning ethic that provides significant roles for the stakeholders of the school also has the effect of sharing among the stakeholders responsibility for the success of any planning for growth and improvement. *Excellence by Design* builds such roles and responsibilities into the self-study and planning processes. Therefore, if implemented faithfully, *Excellence by Design* can provide the school with the vehicle it needs to build sustainability into its planning for growth and improvement, because ownership of and responsibility for the success of the planning process and the plan for growth and improvement no longer rest with one person (the head of the school) but with all of the school's stakeholders.

The Visiting Team observed:

The planning team reaffirmed an ethos that was expressed by many stakeholders in the school, namely that the process of reflecting on the organization is of central importance. As one planning team member commented, "everything in the school here starts with grass roots, so I believe that the (protocol) is what we are about" (president of Parent Teacher Support Group).

The group spoke to an organic process of choosing objectives that had already been ongoing conversations in the organization, and using the self-study to create "concrete" objectives from those conversations.

The team expressed a commitment to continue to meet regularly throughout the implementation process and continue to take on a reflective process. However, the planning team was unable to delineate the exact structure by which the team would continually assess and revisit its objectives.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- That the planning team create and commit to an appropriate plan of action for continued focus on self-study objectives.

E. The Plan for Communication and Awareness

An important factor in increasing the likelihood that a school will achieve the goals it has set in its Plan for Growth and Improvement is to ensure broad ownership of the planning process

and the Plan for Growth and Improvement across the entire school and its stakeholder community. This is accomplished by ensuring broad based knowledge and understanding of and support for the school's performance objectives and the plans to achieve them.

Therefore, an important element of the planning process is communicating with the school's staff, students, governing board, and other stakeholders to ensure they are aware of the requirements of the *Excellence by Design* protocol, the school's planning process, Mission, objectives, action plans and, eventually, its accomplishments as it implements its plan. The communication process should include means for obtaining from the members of the school's stakeholder community input and feedback regarding the products of the planning process (i.e., mission, objectives, action plans). Stakeholders cannot support and take ownership in what the school is doing unless they first know about it and are invited to join in the process.

The primary purpose of communication is to develop a critical mass within the school's community of stakeholders with knowledge about, understanding of, and support for the planning process and the Plan for Growth and Improvement in student learning and the organization's capacity to produce learning at the level expected.

The Visiting Team observed:

The MSA visiting team commends Al-Huda School for the diversity of its Planning Team. They have clearly committed to continuing to include diverse stakeholders in the implementation phase. The diversity of the team allows continuous input from parents, students, teachers, and school leadership. One Planning Team member noted that it was difficult to wear two hats - that of teacher and of team member - because often she was unsure of what teacher complaints should be brought back to the team. However, all team members expressed that the diversity of the group allowed for a lot of benefits. Team members expressed that during the teamwork sessions there was an "amazing" level of "creative energy" (Parent Teacher Support Group President) and that different points of view allowed for "rich discussion" (teacher). Another teacher commented that there was "no conflict," but that instead there was a positive momentum towards meeting the goal.

In terms of future involvement, one teacher commented about the teachers' involvement in the process, noting that teachers participated in a professional day during which they learned about the team's objectives, and that she felt that now "the teachers are going to be available in our corner." Finally, the team confirmed that both the school administration and the Parent Teacher Support Group sent frequent emails about its progress and affirmed progress updates through the school website and at school events. During the parent meeting, parents affirmed that they had received said communications. The team committed to continuing this type of communication in the future.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- That the school continue its effort to include diverse stakeholder suggestions.

F. The Plan for Periodic Reviews of the Plan for Growth and Improvement

In order to institutionalize a planning ethic, continuous growth and improvement in student and organizational performance must become a way of life within the school. It must be an ongoing, dynamic, and “evergreen” process. It is expected and required that the Plan for Growth and Improvement that is developed and presented for accreditation will be implemented faithfully over the length of the accreditation term.

Consequently, *it should be anticipated, and it should be expected* that implementing the activities of the action plans and gathering the results of the assessments used to measure the student and organizational performance objectives will indicate there is a need to revise the action plans regularly based on what is working and what is not.

Therefore, the *Excellence by Design* protocol includes the requirement that the school conducts formal reviews of the action plans and the progress being made toward achieving the performance objectives and that reviews are conducted periodically but, as a minimum, at least once annually.

The Visiting Team observed:

The planning team spoke at length about the importance of keeping their objectives central. They also were excited that their objectives represented key tasks that were of importance to many stakeholders. The team expressed a commitment to continue to meet regularly throughout the implementation process. Further, the team confirmed that the planning team and department chairs would be responsible for revising and assessing each objective. While the school’s self-study listed action steps for each objective, the planning team was unable to delineate the exact structure by which the team would continually assess and revisit its objectives. However, the planning team was open to suggestions from the MSA Team about ways to ensure the strength of this process.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- That the planning team create and commit to an appropriate plan of action for continued focus on self-study objectives.

THE VISITING TEAM'S RECOMMENDED MONITORING ISSUES

Recommended Monitoring Issues:

In this section, the Team lists any aspects of the school's organization and processes for implementing its Plan for Growth and Improvement that require ongoing monitoring. Monitoring Issues refer to requirements that are not completely absent but that are met only partially and are either in need of completion or improvement. Monitoring issues must be addressed satisfactorily by the mid-term of the school's accreditation.

Requirement of the Protocol	Recommended Action
NONE	

THE PROFILE OF THE SCHOOL

The Profile of the School describes the school and the context in which the school exists and does its work. It presents a portrait of the school's community(ies) and the "distinctive personality" and the unique characteristics of the school. The Profile presents contextual information that establishes a "developmental snapshot" of where the school is in its efforts to achieve its Mission and to ensure the highest levels of student performance.

The Profile of the School includes information and data that describe the school and the context in which the school exists. The Profile also helps the school and its community of stakeholders understand the school's Mission, and describes the opportunities for and challenges to the school as it seeks to achieve its Mission. The Profile includes descriptions of the:

- Community, its schools, and its traditions;
- History of the school;
- Social and economic characteristics of the community, its constituencies, and its schools;
- Climate for teaching and learning in the school;
- Number and qualifications of the professional and support staffs; and,
- Number and characteristics of the student population

The data and information contained in the Profile of the School are not evaluated by the Visiting Team. Instead, the Profile serves two purposes:

- To ensure that the members of the Planning Team have a common knowledge base about the history and current status of the school in those areas on which the accreditation of the school will focus; and
- To "introduce" members of the Visiting Team to the school, and as such, the Profile provides one of the lenses through which Team members will view and evaluate the school. Thus, the Profile section should provide sufficient information about the school and its students' performance to build and enhance Team members' awareness and understanding of the total milieu in which the school exists and operates.

Readers of this report are advised to read it in conjunction with the Self-Study Document prepared by the school. The Self-Study Document provides the information and data the Visiting Team uses as the starting point for its evaluation of the school. Therefore, not all of the details included in the Self-Study Document are repeated in the Team's report.

THE VISITING TEAM'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS – PROFILE OF THE SCHOOL

Observations

In this section, the Visiting Teams shares any general observations and/or areas of strength regarding the school's Profile of the School and how the Profile defines the school and its priorities for improving student performance.

The current head of the governing board, Imam Safi, conceptualized an Islamic community that would allow his congregation to grow and to develop roots together. He believed that the first step to do so would be to create an educational institution that could serve the community and establish a religious identity in its graduates. He, and a small board, founded Al-Huda school in 1995 to serve this purpose. Al-Huda was the flagship institution around which all of the other community programs would be centered. Al-Huda is a unique school, in comparison to other Islamic schools, because of its position at the center of its community.

The school founders conceived of a school model that would provide a very strong religious and secular education, both of which would be used to help its graduates build a strong sense of Islamic identity. Al-Huda is commended for creating a strong mission statement and using the mission statement to determine all aspects of their school schedule, curricula, pedagogical practices, and activities. Teachers, students, and administrators talked widely about the ways in which they use the tenets of the school mission to make decisions regarding educational and social decisions. The school administration revisits the mission every year and continually strives to revise educational programs to meet its mission.

The school incorporates the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah in its Islamic education orthod and has attracted many like-minded families who are happy with the school's program and offerings, especially the Qur'an program. Additionally, the students and parents express pride in the rigorous academic program, highlighting their appreciation for AP classes at the high school.

Recommendations

In this section, the Visiting Team lists any recommendations how the school can capitalize on or respond to the Profile of the School to improve its efforts to achieve its Mission and to achieve its Plan for Growth and Improvement. Recommendations are suggestions and ideas of the Visiting Team, but the school is not required to accept or act on them.

- None

PROFILE OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

The Profile of Student Performance includes the following information and data that describe the levels of student performance on assessments that are most respected by the members of the school's community of stakeholders, valued by the school's professional staff, and/or required by the state or federal governments. The Profile includes:

- Data for standardized academic assessments.
- Data for school-based academic assessments.
- Data for achievement indicators such as graduation rate, college rigorous courses, college acceptance, etc.
- Data for citizenship measures such as attendance, promptness, discipline, etc.
- Data for state academic assessments, if applicable.

Collecting and tracking data that describe how well the school's students are performing in the areas that are normally used by the school's community of stakeholders to determine if the school is accomplishing its mission is important for the following reasons:

- The school needs these data to determine if it is making progress toward achieving its mission;
- The school needs these data to determine if its graduates are meeting the expectations expressed in the school's Profile of Graduates;
- The school needs these data to help it determine in which areas of student performance there are the largest gaps between what is expected and how student are performing and, therefore, what the focus of the school's Plan for Growth and Improvement should be.

THE VISITING TEAM'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS – PROFILE OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Observations

In this section, the Visiting Teams shares any general observations and/or areas of strength regarding the school's Profile of Student Performance and how the profile defines the school and its priorities for improving student performance.

Al-Huda School provided the MSA team with achievement data from AP exams, SATs, ITBS tests, and MAP tests. All of the test scores reflect that about half of the students are reaching grade level proficiency; a large minority of students is testing on grade level, and a small

minority is testing significantly above grade level. The school is concerned about this finding and, therefore, has isolated reading and mathematics instruction and achievement as a growth objective. The MSA team commends the school for its positive first steps in identifying the underlying causes for an achievement gap and for working to remedy them.

The school identified that in order to meet these objectives, they will need to create benchmarks and corresponding benchmark assessments for all K-12 English and Mathematics. The school plans to have the administrative team (one principal and two vice principals) and the lead teachers (Math 6-12, English 6-12, and K-1, 2-3, 4-5 Teacher Leaders) create these benchmarks, beginning in the upper grades and working backwards through kindergarten. The school administration expressed concern for creating valid, reliable, and meaningful benchmark assessments, and are cognizant of the importance of rolling out each stage slowly and with diligence, in order to lead to a sustainable and manageable change effort. The school administration also expressed that it might consider standards-based report cards that align with benchmark assessments in the future.

The school is also looking into ways to use achievement test data to drive instruction and instructional decisions. Currently, the administrative team uses the test data to develop the professional development schedule for the year, to determine grade retention and promotion for borderline students, to confer with individual parents, and to identify trends across grades that may need to be remedied in the school curriculum. The school has also added the MAP test because they would like to follow students longitudinally. They also appreciate that the MAP test is more aligned with Maryland State Standards. The school expressed interest in creating professional development opportunities for teachers around using test data to improve instruction and to create specific action plans for students.

On the positive side, Al-Huda parents express that they are happy with the academic offerings, specifically the inclusion of AP courses in the high school. Al-Huda School also reports that 97% of its graduates are accepted in the college of their choice.

Recommendations

In this section, the Visiting Team lists any recommendations how the school can capitalize on or respond to the Profile of Student Performance to improve its efforts to achieve its Mission and to achieve its Plan for Growth and Improvement. Recommendations are suggestions and ideas of the Visiting Team, but the school is not required to accept or act on them.

- The Visiting Team recommends that Al-Huda School search out constructive professional development offerings for all staff members around data-based decision making.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Al-Huda School consider increasing the uses of test data.

- The Visiting Team recommends that Al-Huda School continue the impetus of creating appropriate benchmarks for English and Mathematics instruction and assessment.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Al-Huda School consider moving towards benchmark-based report cards.

THE SCHOOL'S MISSION, BELIEFS, AND PROFILE OF GRADUATES

The foundation for an effective plan for improving student performance and the organization's capacity to achieve the levels of performance desired and expected is established by the school's Mission, Beliefs, and Profile of Graduates. These foundational documents answer the following questions:

- *What is our vision for a better future for the children of our school?*
- *What beliefs or core values will guide our journey?*
- *What will our students have to know, be able to do, and to demonstrate for us to achieve our mission?*

A. MISSION

A school's Mission should reflect the deepest desires of the school's community of stakeholders for what they want the school to become—its future in terms of what it will do for its students. The mission expresses what the adults in the school community commit themselves to doing for the benefit of the students.

A mission statement should describe in broad and visionary terms what the school is striving to become. A mission should be outcome-based, providing clarity regarding the school's audience (whom it serves), its action (what it commits to doing for its audience), its aim (the purposes for which it exists), and its means (how, in broad terms, it will achieve its purposes).

It is not appropriate for a Visiting Team to determine whether the school's Mission is the right or wrong mission for the school or a good or bad mission. Nor is it appropriate for the Team to require changes to the Mission.

A Visiting Team will, however, offer an objective perspective regarding whether any elements of the Mission are unclear or seem inconsistent or incomplete. The Team will also try to ascertain whether the school's community of stakeholders support the Mission and are "walking the talk." It is then for the school to decide if the Team's comments are legitimate and relevant. It is in this spirit that the following observations on the school's mission.

The school's Mission is:

Al-Huda School's mission is to empower the *Ummah*¹ by developing Muslim students into individuals who will be spiritually, emotionally, and physically wholesome and capable of dealing with today's challenges through the knowledge and implementation

of the Qur'an, Sunnah, and through academic excellence.

What is the school's *audience* as identified in the Mission?

The audiences are families interested in Muslim education for their children, educators, the Muslim community as well as the larger community.

What is the *unique identity* of the school as identified in the Mission?

The school's unique identity is its emphasis on an education integrating both Islamic education and excellence in secular education.

What is the *aim or purpose* of the school as stated in the Mission?

The aim of the school is to develop Muslim students into individuals who will be spiritually, emotionally, and physically wholesome and capable of dealing with today's challenges through the knowledge and implementation of the Qur'an, Sunnah, and through academic excellence.

What the *action* of the school is as stated in the Mission?

The school's action is to provide its multiple programs, each of which is designed to carry out the mission.

What is the *means* the school will use to accomplish its Mission?

All the school's programs constitute the means it will use to accomplish its mission.

To what extent do the school's stakeholders know, understand, and support the school's Mission?

All the stakeholders with whom the team spoke were totally familiar with the mission, understand it, support it and are able to articulate it clearly.

B. BELIEFS

Statements of belief serve as the foundation of a strong strategic plan. They are the formal expression of a school's fundamental values and serve as its ethical code. Beliefs describe the moral character of a school. In a planning process involving diverse stakeholder groups, they represent the composite of the personal values held by individual planning team members.

Because beliefs are a matter of faith, not a matter of fact, they express the school's overriding convictions, its inviolate commitments. They outline what members of the school's community of stakeholders are willing to "go to the mat" defending. Because beliefs identify the "line in the sand," they can be used as a lens through which to examine the worthiness of the school's potential decisions or future actions.

Only members of the school community can identify their deeply held beliefs. A Visiting Team can, however, offer an objective perspective on what is unclear or seems inconsistent or incomplete in the school's Beliefs. Ultimately, however, it is the school that has to decide if the Team's comments are legitimate and relevant. It is in this spirit that the following observations on the school's Beliefs are made.

The school's Beliefs are:

Al-Huda School believes in providing a quality education, to instill a love of learning in the students, and to graduate students who will practice Islam as a complete way of life. Therefore Islamic values and principles are integrated in the curriculum intricately, thus balancing faith and secular education. Al-Huda School believes that discovery and exploration of knowledge will expose students to wonders of the world, while strengthening their faith. With this, students receive excellent academic preparation for higher education, confirming the significance of acquisition of knowledge as an integral part of religion. Thus Al-Huda School achieves a distinguished status due to the ability in providing an environment that encourages the development and flourishing of an Islamic identity, while maintaining high standards in secular education. Furthermore, the school is the foundation upon which it is hoped to build a living and vibrant Islamic community that adheres to the Qur'an and Sunnah.

To what degree do the school's Beliefs meet the criteria of the *Excellence by Design* protocol? If they do not meet the criteria, explain why.

The school's statement of beliefs are indeed "declarations of universal human values as held by the people who make up the organization, values they hold no matter where they were or under what conditions they found themselves, or what business they were conducting." While they are not stated using the language Middle States suggests, they do express the foundational core values upon which the school and the larger organization, Dar-us-Salaam, of which the school is the foundational component, are based.

How well do the school's Beliefs represent what the Team heard from the school's stakeholders?

The school's belief statement is exactly what we heard from the school's stakeholders.

To what extent do the school's stakeholders know, understand, and support the school's Beliefs of core values?

All the stakeholders with whom we spoke know, understand and support the school's statement of its core values and beliefs.

C. PROFILE OF GRADUATES

The Profile of Graduates provides the answer to the following question: When our students have completed our entire educational program and have had the benefit of the services and activities provided by the institution and its community:

- What do we expect them to know?
- What do we expect them to be able to do with what they know?
- What qualities or characteristics do we want them to demonstrate?

A Profile of Graduates:

- Describes the students at the point of exit from the institution.
- States the values, achievement, and readiness that each student will manifest upon graduation.
- Should be considered both as a Bill of Rights and set of corresponding responsibilities for students, faculty, staff, administration, and the institution's community.
- Defines the outcomes each and every student will attain if the mission is operative and appropriately translated into programs and services.

A Profile of Graduates serves to:

- Translate the identity, vision, and values expressed in the beliefs and mission into statements that describe student outcomes.
- Translate and transform concepts from the ideal and global to specific expression in the development of a student in the institution.
- Give expression to what the mission means in the operational life of the institution.
- Define an outline or shape each student is expected to grow into regardless of specific courses taken or post-graduation plans.
- Provide a concrete reference point for faculty, staff, and the institution's community when designing curriculum, instructional experiences, service programs, auxiliary resources, and student and family services.

The school's Profile of Graduates is:

The graduate of Al-Huda High School will be prepared to make positive contributions to their families, community and society as a whole. They will also be able to continue to further their personal growth emotionally and spiritually, and pursue higher learning that will lead to

fulfilling their career demands. In addition, they will develop the skills which will strengthen their Islamic identity, and help them to reach success in the Hereafter, in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah³.

The graduate will be literate and proficient in the following areas:

Core Areas of Knowledge

- English Language
- Mathematics
- The Sciences
- Civics and government
- History
- Arabic Language
- Islamic Studies
- Qur'an

Communal and Social Literacies

- P.E. for strong body and mind
- Health and wellness awareness
- Civic and community awareness
- Social Responsibilities towards friends and families in conjunction with Qur'an and Sunnah.

Learning and Thinking Skills

- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving Skills
- Written and Oral Communication
- Working with the a group/team (Collaboration)
- Contextual learning
- Creativity and innovation
- Information and media literacy

Information and Communication Technology Literacy

- Use of technology to learn how to think critically, solve problems, using information to facilitate communication, creativity and collaboration
- Foster critical thinking

Life skills

- Leadership
- Strong Moral Values
- Accountability
- Adaptability
- Responsibility

- Respectfulness
- Organization and Time Management

In summary, it is hoped that *In shaa Allah* as a result of his/her education at Al Huda High school, the graduate will live his/her life

- bearing witness that there is no God but Allah, and that Muhammad sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam⁴ is His Messenger
- being active in spreading the message of their religion, i.e. becoming an active *daa’ee*⁵
- practicing the Qur’an and Sunnah as a complete way of life
- mastering a rigorous college preparatory curriculum
- thinking critically, and analytically, and communicating effectively
- developing strong work habits and study skills
- working cooperatively with others
- respecting elders and showing mercy to the young
- contributing positively to the community
- striving to become a reflective practitioner of Islam by engaging in continuous self-evaluation of character, according to Quran and Sunnah
- reflecting values of honesty , integrity, and modesty as taught by the Qur’an and Allah’s Messenger sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam

To what degree does the Profile of Graduates express:

- What the school expects its graduates to know?
- What the school expects its graduates to do with what they know?
- What qualities or characteristics the school expects its graduates to demonstrate?

The Al-Huda School Profile of Graduates does define what it expects its graduates to know and to do with what they know. It also clearly defines the quality of character it expects in the behavior of its graduates.

To what extent do the school’s stakeholders know, understand, and support the school’s Profile of Graduates?

The stakeholders we interviewed appeared to be aware and to understand the school’s expectations for its graduates. Not only do they support the profile, it is an important reason for their choice of Al-Huda School.

THE VISITING TEAM’S RECOMMENDATIONS—MISSION, BELIEFS, AND PROFILE OF GRADUATES

THE VISITING TEAM’S RECOMMENDATIONS:

In this section, the Team lists any recommendations to the school regarding how it can improve its Mission, Beliefs, and/or Profile of Graduates. Recommendations are suggestions and ideas of the Visiting Team, but the school is not required to accept or act on them.

- None

THE VISITING TEAM'S RECOMMENDED MONITORING ISSUES:

In this section, the Team lists any requirements for the Mission, Beliefs, and/or Profile of Graduates that require monitoring. Monitoring issues refer to elements of Mission, Beliefs, and Profile of Graduates required by the protocol that are not completely absent but are met only partially and are either in need of completion or improvement. Monitoring issues must be corrected by mid-term in the school's accreditation.

Requirement of the Protocol	Action Recommended
NONE	

THE VISITING TEAM'S RECOMMENDED STIPULATIONS:

In this section, the Team lists requirements for the foundational documents (Mission, Beliefs, and Profile of Graduates) that are entirely absent and, therefore, the school does not meet. Such requirements must be added as a stipulation to the school's accreditation.

Requirement of the Protocol	Action Recommended
NONE	

THE PROFILE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The Profile of Organizational Capacity provides information and data that portray the school's capacity to produce the levels of student performance the school and its community of stakeholders desire and expect. The Profile consists of the results of a self-assessment of the school's adherence to the Middle States Standards for Accreditation.

The twelve Standards for Accreditation reflect research-based best practices for quality in schools. The Standards also represent the organizational "building blocks" that need to be in place to produce high levels of student performance. The self-assessment leads to identifying the school's strengths and areas in need of improvement.

The Profile also provides those responsible for developing the school's Plan for Growth and Improvement with a good understanding of the current status of the school.

Standards for Accreditation for Schools: Elementary, Middle, High, and PreK-12 Institutions

- Standard 1: Philosophy/Mission
- Standard 2: Governance and Leadership
- Standard 3: School Improvement Planning
- Standard 4: Finances
- Standard 5: Facilities
- Standard 6: School Climate and Organization
- Standard 7: Health and Safety
- Standard 8: Educational Program
- Standard 9: Assessment and Evidence of Student Learning
- Standard 10: Student Services
- Standard 11: Student Life and Student Activities
- Standard 12: Information Resources and Technology

PHILOSOPHY/MISSION STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

The Standard: The school has a clearly written and actively implemented statement of philosophy/mission that conveys the general and specific purposes of its educational program, expresses expectations for quality, and serves as the basis for daily operational and instructional decision making as well as long-range planning. Stakeholders give input into the development of the school’s philosophy/mission and understand and accept it. This document is aligned with the community served and is reviewed periodically by stakeholder representatives.

A. THE VISITING TEAM'S ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S ADHERENCE TO THIS STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

X	It is the Visiting Team's assessment is that the school MEETS this Standard for Accreditation
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B. EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE TEAM'S ASSESSMENT

Evidence	Visiting Team
Data from Observations and Interviews	X
The school’s philosophy/mission	X
Samples of publications that communicate the mission/philosophy to the school’s community of stakeholders	X
Marketing, recruitment, and admissions materials	X
Address of the school’s website	X
Policies related to the philosophy/mission	X

C. THE VISITING TEAM’S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Observations

In this section, the Team lists 1) any general observations regarding the degree to which the school meets this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality and 2) any areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality.

The Team's general observations regarding the school's adherence to this Standard for Accreditation and its Indicators of Quality.

The Visiting Team observed that:

Al-Huda is commended for creating a strong mission statement and using the mission statement to determine all aspects of their school schedule, curricula, pedagogical practices, and activities. Teachers, students, and administrators talked widely about the ways in which they use the tenets of the school mission to make decisions regarding educational and social decisions. The school administration revisits the mission every year and continually strives to revise educational programs to meet its mission.

Recommendations

In this section, the Team lists any recommendations to the school regarding how it can improve the degree to which it meets the requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality. Recommendations are suggestions by the Team, but the school is not required to accept or act on them.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- None

Recommended Monitoring Issues:

In this section, the Team lists any requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality that require ongoing monitoring. Monitoring Issues refer to requirements that are not completely absent but that are met only partially and are either in need of completion or improvement. Monitoring issues must be addressed satisfactorily by the mid-term of the school's term of accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
X	NONE	

Recommended Stipulations:

In this section, the Team lists any requirement(s) of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality the school does not meet and, therefore, must be added as a stipulation to the school's accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
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No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
X	NONE	

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

The Standard: The school is chartered, licensed, or authorized by a state, nation, or authority that operates in the public interest. The governance and leadership ensure the integrity, effectiveness, and reputation of the school through the establishment of policy, provision of resources, and assurance of a quality educational program. The governance and leadership act ethically and consistently to assure an atmosphere of mutual respect and purposeful effort on behalf of students and their learning. School leaders foster a productive environment for teaching and learning, timely and open communication with stakeholders, and the vision necessary for day-to-day operations and long-term planning.

A. THE VISITING TEAM'S ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S ADHERENCE TO THIS STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

X	It is the Visiting Team's assessment is that the school MEETS this Standard for Accreditation
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B. EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE TEAM'S ASSESSMENT

Evidence	Visiting Team
Data from Observations and Interviews	X
Job descriptions for the head of the institution and other key administrative personnel	X
Appraisal tool and/or description of the process used to appraise the performance of the head of the institution	X
Chart of lines of authority/responsibilities	X
Policies related to governance and leadership	X
<i>For independent, non-public, and proprietary institutions only</i>	
Names, addresses, and organizational position of the institution's owners	
Names, address, affiliation of the members of the board of governance	X

C. THE VISITING TEAM'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Observations

In this section, the Team lists 1) any general observations regarding the degree to which the school meets this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality and 2) any areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality.

1. The Team's general observations regarding the school's adherence to this Standard for Accreditation and its Indicators of Quality.

The Visiting Team observed that:

Al-Huda embodies organizational responsibility and reflection. Both the board members and the school administrators spoke widely about the importance of continually striving for excellence through a constant process of reflectivity as central to their school's mission and values. They expressed that the self-study protocol allowed them to continue that already existent practice in their school. As such, the school governance is reflective and responsive to the needs of its school and vision-oriented in its leadership. The school administrators (one principal and two vice-principals) and the school board have a collaborative and positive relationship. The board is highly involved in school affairs, but leaves decision-making power to the administrative staff. The school administrators and governing board work in tandem to create and revise school policies and procedures.

The visiting team found evidence of the schools compliance with this standard. For example, the school is part of a larger organization, Dar-us-Salam, however there is no proprietary ambiguity in ownership, control, or responsibility, and the school and umbrella organization are in compliance with all regulations of the town and state.

Also, written policies were provided for the visiting team and were comprehensive. Further, school leaders spoke about a lengthy interview and orientation process for new staff and about both responsive and progressive professional development opportunities. The school administration also maintains positive relationships with families and staff, as evidenced by communication documents, and unique programs to support families with school and non-school related programs.

2. The Team's observations regarding areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of this Standard and its Indicators of Quality.

The Visiting Team determined that the school exceeds the expectations of this Standard in the following ways:

- The school's central mission drives the way in which students and staff are recognized for accomplishments. For example, students are recognized for Islamic character through the "Ummah Badge" program.
- The school leadership uses many opportunities throughout the school day to reaffirm its commitment to the faith-based mission of the school.

Recommendations

In this section, the Team lists any recommendations to the school regarding how it can improve the degree to which it meets the requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality. Recommendations are suggestions by the Team, but the school is not required to accept or act on them.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- That the governing board consider developing and using a more defined set of expectations in its protocol for the performance evaluation of the school administrative team.
- That the school explore additional innovative ways to reach out to local community members and civic authorities to bolster support for the school.

Recommended Monitoring Issues:

In this section, the Team lists any requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality that require ongoing monitoring. Monitoring Issues refer to requirements that are not completely absent but that are met only partially and are either in need of completion or improvement. Monitoring issues must be addressed satisfactorily by the mid-term of the school's term of accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
X	NONE	

Recommended Stipulations:

In this section, the Team lists any requirement(s) of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality the school does not meet and, therefore, must be added as a stipulation to the school's accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
X	NONE	

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

The Standard: The school uses a collaborative process to develop and implement a written strategic or long-range plan to improve its educational program and services. Plans are aligned with the school's philosophy/mission and its operational plans, and are focused on continuous improvement of student performance, staff professional and organizational growth.

A. THE VISITING TEAM'S ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S ADHERENCE TO THIS STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

X	It is the Visiting Team's assessment is that the school MEETS this Standard for Accreditation
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B. EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE TEAM'S ASSESSMENT

Evidence	Visiting Team
Data from Observations and Interviews	X
Strategic and/or long-range plan	X
Development/institutional advancement plan	X
Enrollment plan	X
Policies related to school improvement planning	X

C. THE VISITING TEAM'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Observations

In this section, the Team lists 1) any general observations regarding the degree to which the school meets this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality and 2) any areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality.

The Team's general observations regarding the school's adherence to this Standard for Accreditation and its Indicators of Quality.

The Visiting Team observed that:

The school develops plans that include a broad base of stakeholders including administration, faculty, students and parents. The stakeholders are chosen for their “diverse backgrounds” to create inclusive, well-rounded plans for improving the school community. The school’s planning team is also comprised of a diverse group of stakeholders that are elected to represent each group of constituents. The school uses different means to communicate the planning process and the final recommendations to its stakeholders, such as email and online surveys.

Recommendations

In this section, the Team lists any recommendations to the school regarding how it can improve the degree to which it meets the requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality. Recommendations are suggestions by the Team, but the school is not required to accept or act on them.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- That the planning team consider ways to consistently inform the school community and all stakeholders on all decisions and changes made to the school improvement plan.
- That the planning team consider how they will integrate next steps from the data into the long-term plan.
- That the planning team capture longitudinal data to inform any decisions that are made in alignment with the plan.

Recommended Monitoring Issues:

In this section, the Team lists any requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality that require ongoing monitoring. Monitoring Issues refer to requirements that are not completely absent but that are met only partially and are either in need of completion or improvement. Monitoring issues must be addressed satisfactorily by the mid-term of the school’s term of accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
X	NONE	

Recommended Stipulations:

In this section, the Team lists any requirement(s) of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality the school does not meet and, therefore, must be added as a stipulation to the school’s accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
X	NONE	

FINANCES STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

The Standard: Financial resources are sufficient to provide the educational opportunities defined in the school's philosophy/mission. The business practices of the school are ethical. These practices promote confidence in the school's ability to manage fiscal and material resources in a responsible manner and follow prescribed budgeting and accounting principles. The majority of resources raised for school purposes is dedicated to the school's operations.

A. THE VISITING TEAM'S ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S ADHERENCE TO THIS STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

X	It is the Visiting Team's assessment is that the school MEETS this Standard for Accreditation
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B. EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE TEAM'S ASSESSMENT

Evidence	Visiting Team
Data from Observations and Interviews	X
Current operating budget	X
Certified external audit letter conducted within the last two years	X June, 2012
Student tuition and fee schedule	X
Long-range financial plan	X
Schedule of student tuition and fees	X
Evidence that the institution has no contingent liabilities or on-going litigations that potentially could affect the institution's ability to continue operation (Statement from lawyer)	X
List of grants and other funding sources obtained in the last calendar year	X
Publications provided to students outlining students' financial obligations	X
Summary of the institution's insurance coverage	X
Policies related to finances, financial aid, and refunds	X

C. THE VISITING TEAM'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Observations

In this section, the Team lists 1) any general observations regarding the degree to which the school meets this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality and 2) any areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality.

1. The Team's general observations regarding the school's adherence to this Standard for Accreditation and its Indicators of Quality.

The Visiting Team observed that:

Financial constraints are part of nearly every conversation at Al-Huda School. Both adults and students are well aware of the limits of funds available for programs, facilities, equipment and supplies. Any optional student programs or activities must charge additional fees in order to cover costs.

The most recent audited financial statement available was for the year ending June 30, 2012. (Prior to that, the most recent audited financial statement was from 2002.) Cost was cited as the reason for not having more frequent audits. For several years prior to 2012, Dar-Us-Salaam had not paid employee withholding taxes, as a result of a cash flow shortage. Administration negotiated a 10-year payment agreement with the IRS for the \$1.25 million outstanding liability of taxes, interest and fines.

Clearly, Al-Huda has struggled throughout its history, and especially in recent years, with cash flow. The 10% tuition increase for '13-14 school year (as opposed to low single digits most years) was an attempt to improve the school's financial position. Despite this, the '13-14 financial report indicated a greater than \$1000 difference between net tuition & fees collected and the average expense per Al-Huda student. As a result, funds are consistently being moved from other sources in Dar-Us-Salaam to offset shortfalls at Al-Huda.

Tuition is reasonable, at \$7200 per student. Tuition amounts and payment terms are clearly communicated to parents, including the availability of discounts for additional children (25 to 60%) and financial aid options. Various payment plans (monthly, quarterly) and means (check, credit cards, ACH) are described and available. Discounts and financial aid total close to 20% of tuition.

The Home of the Heart (HoH) is a \$10 million fundraising campaign for a planned new school facility. Two million dollars of this has been designated for operating expenses, while the balance is restricted to capital.

2. The Team's observations regarding areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of this Standard and its Indicators of Quality.

The Visiting Team determined that the school exceeds the expectations of this Standard in

the following ways:

- The school leadership uses many opportunities throughout the school day to reaffirm its commitment to the faith-based mission of the school.

Recommendations

In this section, the Team lists any recommendations to the school regarding how it can improve the degree to which it meets the requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality. Recommendations are suggestions by the Team, but the school is not required to accept or act on them.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- Although the Visiting Team was comfortable with the Board’s explanations of movement of funds between the different Dar-Us-Salaam entities, that the school consider moving toward increased visibility of these flows, particularly for donors and other constituents.
- The governance model of Al-Huda/Dar-Us-Salaam is unusual, in that the business manager, who is an employee, is also a member of the very small Board. The Visiting Team experienced the overall financial management of the organization to be sound and ethical; however, the Board may want to address issues of perception.
- That the school may want to consider its policies and procedures to ensure that the appropriate “checks and balances” are in place, to eliminate any possibility of misunderstanding.

Recommended Monitoring Issues:

In this section, the Team lists any requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality that require ongoing monitoring. Monitoring Issues refer to requirements that are not completely absent but that are met only partially and are either in need of completion or improvement. Monitoring issues must be addressed satisfactorily by the mid-term of the school’s term of accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
X	NONE	

Recommended Stipulations:

In this section, the Team lists any requirement(s) of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality the school does not meet and, therefore, must be added as a stipulation to the school’s accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
X	NONE	

FACILITIES STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

The Standard: School facilities are safe, clean, and well maintained. The physical environment supports delivery of the educational program/services as well as optimal student development and achievement. Facilities are appropriate and adequate to implement the philosophy/mission of the school. They are regularly inspected for effective operation and meet all applicable laws including health and safety code requirements.

A. THE VISITING TEAM'S ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S ADHERENCE TO THIS STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

X	It is the Visiting Team's assessment is that the school MEETS this Standard for Accreditation
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B. EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE TEAM'S ASSESSMENT

Evidence	Visiting Team
Data from Observations and Interviews	X
Floor plan of facilities	X
Long-range facilities plan	X
Maintenance/repair schedules	X
Plans for any facilities improvements	X
Policies related to facilities	X

C. THE VISITING TEAM'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Observations

In this section, the Team lists 1) any general observations regarding the degree to which the school meets this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality and 2) any areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality.

The Team's general observations regarding the school's adherence to this Standard for Accreditation and its Indicators of Quality.

The Visiting Team observed that:

The school community uses nearly every possible space within the current building for academic purposes. There are some offices and a communal space within the building. The school community has converted some spaces into classrooms to accommodate the growing school size. The school also uses the multi-purpose space for several functions including prayer and a cafeteria. Although the building is a bit dated, the school community maximizes available space effectively, and they are very open with the stakeholders about what can and cannot be done in the building. The school's facilities and equipment are appropriate for achieving its mission. Al-Huda School is clean, well maintained, and plans are in place to coordinate the routine maintenance needed to sustain the facilities in the condition that is best for students and staff. Plans are in place and long-range plans have been submitted to the school's governance to complete needed maintenance of the school's roof structure.

Recommendations

In this section, the Team lists any recommendations to the school regarding how it can improve the degree to which it meets the requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality. Recommendations are suggestions by the Team, but the school is not required to accept or act on them.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- That the school community consider not allowing access (from outside to inside) of any doors with exception to the front (main entrance) doorway. With limited access (from outside to inside), there will be little to no potential of any unwanted adults gaining entry into the school building.
- That the school consider ways to minimize the piles of backpacks in classroom space.
- That the school consider more effective ways to ensure the cleanliness of all areas of the school including bathrooms and the multi-purpose space, perhaps more frequent cleaning of bathrooms.
- That during morning arrival, adults be present to provide supervision of all students and proper entry of any adults during that time.

Recommended Monitoring Issues:

In this section, the Team lists any requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality that require ongoing monitoring. Monitoring Issues refer to requirements that are not completely absent but that are met only partially and are either in need of completion or improvement. Monitoring issues must be addressed satisfactorily by the mid-term of the school's term of accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
X	NONE	

Recommended Stipulations:

In this section, the Team lists any requirement(s) of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality the school does not meet and, therefore, must be added as a stipulation to the school's accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
X	NONE	

SCHOOL CLIMATE AND ORGANIZATION STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

The Standard: The school’s organizational structure and climate facilitate achievement of its core values as expressed in the philosophy/mission. The school culture supports successful implementation of age- and developmentally appropriate educational programs and services. Roles, responsibilities, expectations, and reporting relationships are clearly defined. Administrative, instructional, and support staff are qualified, competent, and sufficient in number to effectively provide quality educational experiences. The school regularly conducts staff performance appraisals and offers professional development opportunities informed by its philosophy/mission. Relationships among the staff and leadership are collegial and collaborative.

A. THE VISITING TEAM'S ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S ADHERENCE TO THIS STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

X	It is the Visiting Team's assessment is that the school MEETS this Standard for Accreditation
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B. EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE TEAM'S ASSESSMENT

Evidence	Visiting Team
Data from Observations and Interviews	X
Organizational chart for the school and school system	X
List of members of the professional and support staffs	X
Salary schedules and descriptions of benefits packages for teachers, specialists, and support staff	X
Contracts (e.g. union, collective bargaining agreements)	X
Results of any climate survey	X
Instruments used for evaluating the performance of the staff	X
Professional development plan	X
Policies related to school climate and organization	X

C. THE VISITING TEAM'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Observations

In this section, the Team lists 1) any general observations regarding the degree to which the school meets this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality and 2) any areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality.

1. The Team's general observations regarding the school's adherence to this Standard for Accreditation and its Indicators of Quality.

The Visiting Team observed that:

The school climate was warm. Staff members were very welcoming to guests to their environment. The staff members were very warm and courteous to the students and the peer-to-peer interaction amongst the students was warm as well. The staff members' conversations and actions were aligned to the school's mission of developing the whole child to ensure academic success. The administration and school staff is qualified and competent to ensure that academic achievement occurs for all students. The relationships amongst staff members is collaborative and fosters a community of support to ensure that every student grows and becomes proficient or advanced in all content areas. The organization has ensured that the students have a deep sense of pride in the school and that their accomplishments will be recognized. The students have a thorough understanding of self and how they play a vital role in living out the school's mission. The students spoke to their personal experiences of how the school has helped shape their lives. This included their perceptions of how they can fit into the world outside of their school, how they can contribute to the world outside of their school, and how their religion is the base of their academic and life experience. The school's organizational structure has designated leadership responsible for each aspect of the school's educational program and the implementation of the school's mission statement. Each member of the administrative team is responsible for a portion of overseeing the educational program. Administrative duties and staff assignments are clearly defined and are organized based on educational experience, certification, and expertise. The school's personnel contracts cover clear procedures for compensation, work assignments, working conditions, and the procedures for evaluation of work and grievances. The methods of performance appraisal are outlined in the teacher handbook. Teachers are subject to performance observations and reviews. Students and parents are provided with a handbook that clearly defines the student code of conduct. This information is also disseminated via the district web site so that all stakeholders have access to the information.

2. The Team's observations regarding areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of this Standard and its Indicators of Quality.

The Visiting Team determined that the school exceeds the expectations of this Standard in the following ways:

- The school adheres to its vision and mission statement in a way that allows stakeholders to

have a transparent understanding of the climate that the school seeks to establish. Stakeholders report pride in this aspect of the school’s climate.

Recommendations

In this section, the Team lists any recommendations to the school regarding how it can improve the degree to which it meets the requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality. Recommendations are suggestions by the Team, but the school is not required to accept or act on them.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- That the school consider more ways to involve students in improving the school climate and culture. The students feel that there are not many outlets to address their physical and emotional needs. They feel that although there are activities in which they can participate, they are not consistent, and that the activities are limited. The female students in particular feel that there are far fewer activities for them than for boys.

Recommended Monitoring Issues:

In this section, the Team lists any requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality that require ongoing monitoring. Monitoring Issues refer to requirements that are not completely absent but that are met only partially and are either in need of completion or improvement. Monitoring issues must be addressed satisfactorily by the mid-term of the school’s term of accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
X	NONE	

Recommended Stipulations:

In this section, the Team lists any requirement(s) of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality the school does not meet and, therefore, must be added as a stipulation to the school’s accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
X	NONE	

HEALTH AND SAFETY STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

The Standard: A safe, orderly, and healthy environment for teaching and learning is provided. The school adheres to local, state, and federal government health and safety requirements. Health, safety, preventive/emergency procedures, and crisis management policies are clearly written, well documented, implemented, and updated regularly.

A. THE VISITING TEAM'S ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S ADHERENCE TO THIS STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

X	It is the Visiting Team's assessment is that the school MEETS this Standard for Accreditation
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B. EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE TEAM'S ASSESSMENT

Evidence	Visiting Team
Data from Observations and Interviews	X
Emergency and crisis plans	X
Records of most recent health and safety inspections	X
Record of emergency drills	X
Emergency Code Posters are on classrooms walls	X
Emergency Procedures section of Administrative Handbook	X
Red Emergency Procedures Folders located on classroom walls	X

C. THE VISITING TEAM'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Observations

In this section, the Team lists 1) any general observations regarding the degree to which the school meets this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality and 2) any areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality.

The Team's general observations regarding the school's adherence to this Standard for Accreditation and its Indicators of Quality.

The Visiting Team observed that:

Al-Huda complies with the Middle States Health and Safety Standard by conducting, and maintaining written records of regular emergency drills and keeping documentation in an evidence binder located in the principal's office. Teachers keep written safety procedures in Red Emergency Folders located inside classrooms near class entrances. A visiting team member could not readily locate the folder in two classrooms. Classrooms have working phones containing intercoms to communicate with other staff members and to hear building announcements. There are functional alarms, sprinklers, and fire extinguishers throughout the school building. Members of the administrative team, custodial team and security team communicate by hand held walkie-talkies.

During an unannounced fire drill team members observed some students leaving the building loudly in a disorderly manner. An impressive alarm with a repeated recorded announcement communicated to staff and students, "This sound indicates there is a fire somewhere in the building. Please exit and do not return until an "all clear signal" is given by designated staff members." Most students exited out of the building with teachers at end of the lines. A group of second grade boys immediately ran to a nearby hill and began rolling downwards.

The educational program includes opportunities for students to develop knowledge, attitudes, and practices necessary for personal wellness and a healthy lifestyle by integrating health related topics into the curriculum. Every classroom displays nutrition posters containing information about making a healthy plate. Every Tuesday and Thursday a staff member rolls out a healthy cart to classrooms inviting students to purchase healthy food choices for morning snacks.

The school has the potential to have an effective system of controlling access to the school by visitors and other non-school personnel. Buzzers with cameras and intercoms are located outside most of the school's entrances. It is expected office personnel will monitor these security devices and allow entry of recognized individuals only at the main entrance of the school. However it was observed on several occasions that visitors are buzzed in at these various locations anytime and allowed to proceed through the hallways of the school. Upon conversing with a parent, visitors are not consistently asked to show identification or directed to report to the front office when entering the building.

Two visiting team members had a side door held open for them by an elementary student. One team member asked the student if she recognized them. The student responded by shaking her head no. The team member reminded the student not open the door for strangers.

Supervision is variable before the morning assembly. Team members observed students on both male and female sides of the multipurpose room unattended and doing cartwheels across the floor. These students were alone for at least 10 minutes. Team observations and student interviews also revealed monitoring the males' recess time is also variable. Students

complained of bullying and use of foul language during this time period.

A recent water quality test was done providing access to safe drinking water for students and staff throughout the day. The school recently replaced two old water fountains with new fountains, primarily for cosmetic purposes.

Designated members of the staff inform faculty and families (as appropriate to maintain confidentiality) about students' health or physical needs. The school ensures that the staff is kept up-to-date on relevant health, wellness, and safety information and practices, including procedures to deal with individual student needs. Parents are required to complete medical information forms indicating students' health needs. Students needing medication have on file signed school medication permission slips. Four staff members are trained as medication technicians. Staff attended an Ebola presentation sponsored by Prince George's County School District. Information about controlling the spread of infectious diseases is included in the School's Faculty Handbook. A License Certified Practicing Nurse visiting the school twice a month and on an as-needed basis. She also provides the overall monitoring and compliance of Al-Huda's health care needs of students and staff.

Recommendations

In this section, the Team lists any recommendations to the school regarding how it can improve the degree to which it meets the requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality. Recommendations are suggestions by the Team, but the school is not required to accept or act on them.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- That the school hold more frequent fire drills.
- That the school consider having classroom teachers review procedures for opening school doors.
- That the administration, security and office staff review school policies for monitoring visitors' movements throughout the school building.
- That the school consider displaying diagrams of emergency plans near the exit doors of all rooms in the building.

Recommended Monitoring Issues:

In this section, the Team lists any requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality that require ongoing monitoring. Monitoring Issues refer to requirements that are not completely absent but that are met only partially and are either in need of completion or improvement. Monitoring issues must be addressed satisfactorily by the mid-term of the school's term of accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
X	NONE	

Recommended Stipulations:

In this section, the Team lists any requirement(s) of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality that the school does not meet and, therefore, must be added as a stipulation to the school's accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
X	NONE	

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

The Standard: An effective educational program for a school consists of both carefully planned and well executed curriculum programs and solid instructional pedagogy. Also fundamental to a successful educational program are the means to assess student performance and growth as well as programmatic evaluation. Thus, curriculum, instruction, and assessment are often considered to be the “heart” of any school since these three components have such an impact on the total school experience of students. The curriculum outlines what students should know and be able to do. Instruction identifies effective ways for teachers to ensure student learning takes place. Assessment indicates at what level students are able to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

A. THE VISITING TEAM'S ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S ADHERENCE TO THIS STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

X	It is the Visiting Team's assessment is that the school MEETS this Standard for Accreditation
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B. EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE TEAM'S ASSESSMENT

Evidence	Visiting Team
Data from Observations and Interviews	X
Program of studies or other overview of the components of the educational program	X
Scope and sequence charts	
Written curriculum guides for each component of the educational program	X
Master schedule	X
Policies related to educational program	X
Student Made videos	X
Report Card	X
Observation Notes	X
Lesson Plans	X

C. THE VISITING TEAM'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Observations

In this section, the Team lists 1) any general observations regarding the degree to which the school meets this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality and 2) any areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality.

The Team's general observations regarding the school's adherence to this Standard for Accreditation and its Indicators of Quality.

The Visiting Team observed that:

Al-Huda School shared with the Visiting Team a binder containing descriptions of all the courses included in Al-Huda's educational program. This binder contained yearly plans referencing Maryland State Voluntary Curriculum and Common Core Objectives in the basic subject areas of language arts, literature, mathematics, the sciences, and social sciences. An overview of the educational program, along with school policies and procedures, and other pertinent information are available in the Parent Student Handbook.

During a discussion of the program several teachers expressed how they work collaboratively to ensure the school's mission is reflected in each course and are devising ways of effectively integrating Islamic ideas and practices into those courses. Displaying student murals depicting positive characteristics affirms that Al-Huda provides educational experiences in visual arts and demonstrates that the school has found creative ways for Islam to permeate their educational program.

Project-based lessons have enhanced students' critical thinking, reasoning, problem-solving skills, and study skills. Student created videos promoting Al-Huda's character of the month provide an effective display of integrating religious education into the technology curriculum.

Team members observed several classes where students often worked in both small and large groups. Student engagement was higher in these classrooms. There we saw few off-task behaviors. However, we observed in many classrooms that direct instruction (lecture) is the primary method for delivery of instruction. Consequently, the learners were less engaged. This phenomenon is possibly a contributing factor in some way to the low reading performance on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (IBS).

Awarding of certificates to students for portraying character is part of the recognition process for the Ummah Badge Program. It is also a form of positive behavior modification. We also witnessed a few examples of punitive approaches to motivating students.

Arabic is the official World Language offered at Al-Huda. However, we observed a teacher providing directions in Spanish to students in an elementary math class. In another classroom, middle school boys were engaged in a physical education comparative lesson about the types

of runs in baseball and handball. Students demonstrated the concepts by playing handball outside on the basketball court/ blacktop. High school students have the opportunity to participate in internships with community organizations and local businesses. Several of the students have contributed to projects found at these organizations.

The Visiting Team considers these examples as evidence that Al-Huda maintains a continuing effort to develop and refine its educational program in its commitment to meet students’ needs in accordance with the school’s philosophy/mission.

Recommendations

In this section, the Team lists any recommendations to the school regarding how it can improve the degree to which it meets the requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality. Recommendations are suggestions by the Team, but the school is not required to accept or act on them.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- That during morning arrival, adults be present to provide supervision of all students and proper entry of any adults during that time.
- That administrators monitor classrooms for differentiated instruction and/or child-centered activities.
- That team leaders encourage colleagues to use positive behavioral modification plans and incentives to motivate the youngest learners.
- That team leaders consider using scope and sequence charts as part of their efforts to ensure skills are taught concurrently.
- That the school expand its program to help students transition into the “real world” without compromising their Islamic identity.
- That the school explore a way to inform students routinely of daily lesson objectives.

Recommended Monitoring Issues:

In this section, the Team lists any requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality that require ongoing monitoring. Monitoring Issues refer to requirements that are not completely absent but that are met only partially and are either in need of completion or improvement. Monitoring issues must be addressed satisfactorily by the mid-term of the school’s term of accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
X	NONE	

Recommended Stipulations:

In this section, the Team lists any requirement(s) of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality the school does not meet and, therefore, must be added as a stipulation to the school's accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
X	NONE	

ASSESSMENT AND EVIDENCE OF STUDENT LEARNING STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

The Standard: The school systematically collects and rigorously analyzes quantifiable and observable evidence of individual learning and growth from multiple valid and reliable sources. Evidence of student learning is used to evaluate and improve curriculum effectiveness, instructional practices, professional development, and support services. Progress in student learning and performance is expected and is accurately, clearly, and systematically reported to the school community.

A. THE VISITING TEAM'S ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S ADHERENCE TO THIS STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

X	It is the Visiting Team's assessment is that the school MEETS this Standard for Accreditation
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B. EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE TEAM'S ASSESSMENT

Evidence	Visiting Team
Data from Observations and Interviews	X
Example of student transcript	X
Example student report card	X
Reports of the results of assessments administered to students	X
Policies related to assessment of student learning	X

C. THE VISITING TEAM'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Observations

In this section, the Team lists 1) any general observations regarding the degree to which the school meets this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality and 2) any areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality.

1. The Team's general observations regarding the school's adherence to this Standard for Accreditation and its Indicators of Quality.

The Visiting Team observed that:

Al-Huda school has a procedure in place for student assessment and the school has committed itself to choosing assessment strategies that reflect their academic standards and their needs as a school. The school realizes that this area is in need of improvement and will commit time and resources to this standard in the future. The school uses ITBS and MAP tests across many grades and SAT tests and AP tests at the high school level to assess student academic learning. School administrators use data from these assessments to set school-wide and individual teacher professional learning goals. The school has committed to using data in more comprehensive ways in the future. The school is also committed to incorporating content benchmarks and benchmark assessments that are “valid, reliable, and meaningful.” On a positive note, parents report that the school is very communicative about student academic achievement and that the school uses electronic outlets such as TeacherEase and email to keep parents constantly informed. Parents also expressed appreciation for school administrators’ and teachers’ open-door policies regarding student progress.

The school’s mission also expresses a strong value in religious and whole-child/ social and emotional education. Many stakeholders expressed an interest in the strength of a comprehensive educational program including board members, administrators, teachers, parents, and students. For example, one administrator noted that “we see it as part of our religious responsibility to excel in the world, as a way of becoming a better Muslim.” Parents appreciate that students are accountable for their behavior, and that student behavior is reported in formal report cards. While the school uses anecdotal observations to understand to what extent students are incorporating their Islamic identity into their daily lives, the school does not have formal avenues by which to assess this important aspect of their mission.

2. The Team's observations regarding areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of this Standard and its Indicators of Quality.

The Visiting Team determined that the school exceeds the expectations of this Standard in the following ways:

- Teachers and parents expressed a general consensus that teachers are very invested in student growth. One student noted that “teachers are very helpful here, and they won’t stop teaching you until you get it.”
- The high school internship program is a great way for students to incorporate the academic and religious aspects of the mission statement.

Recommendations

In this section, the Team lists any recommendations to the school regarding how it can improve the degree to which it meets the requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators

of Quality. Recommendations are suggestions by the Team, but the school is not required to accept or act on them.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- That the school continue to work on a comprehensive benchmark system for English and Mathematics and that the school consider incorporating these benchmarks in the school report card system.

Recommended Monitoring Issues:

In this section, the Team lists any requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality that require ongoing monitoring. Monitoring Issues refer to requirements that are not completely absent but that are met only partially and are either in need of completion or improvement. Monitoring issues must be addressed satisfactorily by the mid-term of the school’s term of accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
X	NONE	

Recommended Stipulations:

In this section, the Team lists any requirement(s) of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality the school does not meet and, therefore, must be added as a stipulation to the school’s accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
X	NONE	

STUDENT SERVICES STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

The Standard: The school implements written policies and procedures, in partnership with families and the community, that provide all students with, or refer them to, services that are age- and developmentally appropriate to optimize opportunities for life-long success. Student services are systematic and integral to the educational program. They are provided by qualified personnel, sufficiently financed, periodically evaluated, and philosophy/mission appropriate.

A. THE VISITING TEAM'S ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S ADHERENCE TO THIS STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

X	It is the Visiting Team's assessment is that the school MEETS this Standard for Accreditation
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B. EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE TEAM'S ASSESSMENT

Evidence	Visiting Team
Data from Observations and Interviews	X
Guidance and counseling plan	
Examples of student schedules	X
Results of follow-up studies of graduates – only anecdotal	
Policies related to student services, including guidance and counseling, admissions, transportation, food services, and special education	X
Admissions criteria, policies, procedures and forms	X

C. THE VISITING TEAM'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Observations

In this section, the Team lists 1) any general observations regarding the degree to which the school meets this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality and 2) any areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality.

1. The Team's general observations regarding the school's adherence to this Standard for Accreditation and its Indicators of Quality.

The Visiting Team observed that:

Services available to Al-Huda students are not extensive, primarily due to limited financial resources. It's worth noting that although the elementary school program has been in place since the first days of the school, upper grades were only added later, with the first high school class graduating in 2011.

Although the official listing of student services staff includes only one part-time FTE, in fact, the five women who are included under "Secretaries and Clerks" provide an extensive program of student services. (Incidentally, all are also current or former parents of Al-Huda students.) Identified as the "Front Office Staff," this group provides the functions of admissions, accounting and payroll, health services, food service, attendance and security. Several of these responsibilities have required specialized training or certification, e.g., medication assistants, food handling. They are entirely cross-trained to perform each other's responsibilities. This is a perfect example of how Al-Huda is able to provide its program and services, fulfilling its mission at a relatively low cost per pupil.

There is currently no guidance counselor, although one had been hired at the start of the '14-15 school year, who left the school after only six weeks. Currently, most issues that would be handled by a guidance counselor, end up with the Principal and Vice Principals.

There is a part-time college counselor, whose other responsibilities include teaching two upper level classes, and also serving as the math department head. She also coordinates the programs for community service and internships within the high school. While the staffing for college counseling appears to be adequate for the current size of the high school, it will be less so over time, as the high school program continues to grow.

Al-Huda is not equipped for students with special learning needs. The school uses instructional aides in early primary classes (which can number close to 30 students), and to provide some differentiated instruction in Arabic and Qur'an classes.

Lunch food service at Al-Huda is limited because of the lack of space and resources for a licensed, commercial kitchen. Food is brought in daily from a local Muslim-owned restaurant; however, there are many complaints from students about the food. Until Al-Huda has a new facility, it is probably not feasible to consider a better alternative to the current situation.

2. The Team's observations regarding areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of this Standard and its Indicators of Quality.

The Visiting Team determined that the school exceeds the expectations of this Standard in

the following ways:

- Admissions and student placement policies are strong. Prospective students (grade 4+) and parents are interviewed separately, with structured sets of questions. These interviews serve to inform about the Al-Huda mission, particularly the Islamic nature of the school, its programs and procedures (including discipline.) All incoming students are tested to qualify for entry to their grade level.
- Tuition rates and policies are very clearly communicated, with various payment options – including monthly and quarterly plans, acceptance of credit cards and monthly bank withdrawals, as well as a discount for spring payment of tuition in full.

Recommendations

In this section, the Team lists any recommendations to the school regarding how it can improve the degree to which it meets the requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality. Recommendations are suggestions by the Team, but the school is not required to accept or act on them.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- That Al-Huda explore the hiring of a full-time guidance counselor, within their financial and resource limitations. It was noted by staff members that even the short tenure of a guidance counselor this past fall, was beginning to have a positive impact. A guidance counselor may be supportive to both students and faculty in dealing with behavior and emotional issues, as well as classroom management problems. We did not pursue the details behind the previous counselor’s brief tenure, so it may be worthwhile to evaluate if the job qualifications and structure were adequate to the demands of the school community.

Recommended Monitoring Issues:

In this section, the Team lists any requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality that require ongoing monitoring. Monitoring Issues refer to requirements that are not completely absent but that are met only partially and are either in need of completion or improvement. Monitoring issues must be addressed satisfactorily by the mid-term of the school’s term of accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
X	NONE	

Recommended Stipulations:

In this section, the Team lists any requirement(s) of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality the school does not meet and, therefore, must be added as a stipulation to the school's accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
X	NONE	

STUDENT LIFE AND STUDENT ACTIVITIES STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

The Standard: A healthy atmosphere exists for all students. At all levels, non-discriminatory, appropriate student activities that supplement classroom experiences or community life are provided. An appropriate student activities program fosters a positive intellectual, cultural, and social climate, promotes growth in student leadership and social interaction skills, and encourages students' special interests.

A. THE VISITING TEAM'S ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S ADHERENCE TO THIS STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

X	It is the Visiting Team's assessment is that the school MEETS this Standard for Accreditation
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B. EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE TEAM'S ASSESSMENT

Evidence	Visiting Team
Data from Observations and Interviews	X
Samples of student publications—e.g., yearbook, student newspaper, literary magazine	X
Budget for all athletic activities	X
Budget for all non-athletic activities	X
Policies on academic eligibility	X
Policies related to student life and student activities	X
SGA Policies	X
Pictures displayed in School Brochure	X
Certificates	X
Pictures displayed in Promotional Materials	X
<i>For boarding schools</i>	
Description of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs to develop healthy relationships with adults • Plan for continuous and responsible supervision by responsible adults 	
Descriptions of <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provisions for student privacy 2. Recreational programs 3. Provisions for religious practice 	

C. THE VISITING TEAM'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Observations

In this section, the Team lists 1) any general observations regarding the degree to which the school meets this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality and 2) any areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality.

The Team's general observations regarding the school's adherence to this Standard for Accreditation and its Indicators of Quality.

The Visiting Team observed that:

Al-Huda students are offered opportunities to build their skills in handling responsibility, taking initiative, leadership competencies, cooperation, and self-direction by becoming members of the Student Government Association (SGA), competing in statewide academic bees, winning several Muslim Inter-Scholastic Tournaments (MIST), participating in internships with community organizations and local businesses. Both middle and high school students contribute to the school's magazine "Muslim Link" by submitting articles and thought provoking editorials.

College counseling services are provided by the Math Department Chairperson. This individual monitors students' academic performance, completion of credits and the total number of community service hours needed for graduation.

High school students are required to participate in internships with community organizations and local businesses. Several of the participating students have contributed to projects found at these organizations. They also provide tutoring services to younger students.

Female middle school students expressed wanting more sports related activities. They also echoed sentiments of limited use of the Blacktop area for outdoor recess.

Most of the activities are approved by the school's leadership team and are supervised by staff members, parents, and other suitably qualified volunteers. The school recognizes student accomplishments, contributions, and responsibilities in these activities via school newspaper, brochures, and power point presentations for fundraising events, and assemblies. Through conversations, awarding of certificates, student writings, and visual displays a climate of respect, fairness, and understanding exist amongst staff, volunteers, and students of Al-Huda. Several students voluntarily choose to help a visiting team member carry books to the

designated Team Work Room.

Thus these instructional examples, conversations with students and community involvements shows overall Al-Huda has designed an educational program to meet students' needs in accordance with the school's philosophy/mission.

Recommendations

In this section, the Team lists any recommendations to the school regarding how it can improve the degree to which it meets the requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality. Recommendations are suggestions by the Team, but the school is not required to accept or act on them.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- Staff use a more anonymous process for selecting Student Government Association (SGA) members.
- Staff establish academic eligibility requirements for student participation in extra-curricular activities.
- The exploration of sports related activities for females utilizing Al-Huda's current spaces available for indoor recess and for outdoor recess.

Recommended Monitoring Issues:

In this section, the Team lists any requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality that require ongoing monitoring. Monitoring Issues refer to requirements that are not completely absent but that are met only partially and are either in need of completion or improvement. Monitoring issues must be addressed satisfactorily by the mid-term of the school's term of accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
X	NONE	

Recommended Stipulations:

In this section, the Team lists any requirement(s) of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality the school does not meet and, therefore, must be added as a stipulation to the school's accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
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No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
X	NONE	

INFORMATION RESOURCES AND TECHNOLOGY STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

The Standard: Information resources, materials, and technology are accessible and of adequate scope, quantity, and quality to facilitate the school’s pursuit of its total educational program. These resources encourage all students and staff to broaden and extend their knowledge and skills. Access to appropriate information resources and technology is provided for students and staff. Appropriate instruction is offered to develop student and staff inquiry, research, and information literacy skills. Information technology equipment is functional and well maintained.

A. THE VISITING TEAM'S ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S ADHERENCE TO THIS STANDARD FOR ACCREDITATION

X	It is the Visiting Team's assessment is that the school MEETS this Standard for Accreditation
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B. EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE TEAM'S ASSESSMENT

Evidence	Visiting Team
Data from Observations and Interviews	X
The information resources and technology plan(s)	X
Budget for information resources and technology	X
Information skills curriculum – 11 th grade only	X
Inventory of information resources	X
Inventory of information technology equipment	X
Policies related to information resources and technology	X

C. THE VISITING TEAM'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Observations

In this section, the Team lists 1) any general observations regarding the degree to which the school meets this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality and 2) any areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality.

1. The Team's general observations regarding the school's adherence to this Standard for Accreditation and its Indicators of Quality.

The Visiting Team observed that:

Compared to many schools today, Al-Huda is limited in the information resources available to the community, particularly to its students. This situation is created by two primary factors: 1), the financial situation of the school limits such expenditures; and 2), the particular mission of Al-Huda to “create a school where students can practice faith in its complete form.” The latter means that all technology decisions are made in light of the potential impact that they may have on the spiritual life of the community. At the same time, Al-Huda does make thoughtful investments in the purchase and implementation of technology. Examples include: a web-based grading system that is accessible to parents; wireless internet access throughout the facility; an automated time system (swipe cards) for employees that feeds the payroll system; a video security system with interior and perimeter cameras.

The IT department consists of one full-time and one part-time staff member for a total of 1.5 FTEs. (The full-time staff member is shared with the other Dar-Us-Salaam entities.) Both are professionally trained, with computer-related work experience in other organizations.

Each 7-12th grade classroom has at least two computers (laptop or desktop) and a projector available. IT staff install software and make web-based resources to teachers upon request and review. Technology support is focused primarily on staff – providing the resources to support teachers in their classrooms. Technology is made available to students primarily through the use of a mobile cart with 25 laptops.

Training initiatives are focused primarily on staff. Training for students is handled on an as-needed basis (when a technology-related project is introduced in a class), with the exception of a one-credit technology course for the 11th graders.

The objective of Al-Huda’s technology plan is useful in understanding the role of technology resources within the school: “to integrate its use in the existing curriculum and instruction, in line with the overall educational mission and vision of the school.”

Technology does not have inherent value on its own, but is a tool to support the principles of Islam and the education of students.

Al-Huda has detailed and well-thought-out policies and procedures regarding the use of technology within the community. The social media policy provides guidance to manage the public image of Al-Huda as portrayed by faculty, staff and students. Students sign a 20-point pledge of appropriate use, including stipulations that all “computer system” usage be school-related.

In terms of more traditional information resources, Al-Huda does not have a library or other means of making books, periodicals and other reference materials available to students. Individual classrooms do contain selections of books and other reading materials.

2. The Team's observations regarding areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of this Standard and its Indicators of Quality.

The Visiting Team determined that the school exceeds the expectations of this Standard in the following ways:

- Al-Huda School has a very thoughtful approach to the use of technology by its students, consistent with the mission of the school.
- Policies and procedures, particularly those related to appropriate usage, are better than the “boilerplate” language that is often seen in such policies.

Recommendations

In this section, the Team lists any recommendations to the school regarding how it can improve the degree to which it meets the requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality. Recommendations are suggestions by the Team, but the school is not required to accept or act on them.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- Al-Huda will need to continue the sensitive balancing act between making information resources available, and limiting student exposure to technology and media that may threaten their Islamic principles. Graduating students express confidence in their Al-Huda experience and the solid moral foundation it has provided them. However, it may be helpful for students to have further exposure and guided practice in living faithfully amidst modern technology and media.
- The assessment portions of the student performance action plans describe the expanded implementation of MAPS and other online assessments. As a result, the Visiting Team recommends that the overall technology plan consider the requirements of an online assessment program in its timing and priorities. We believe that the continuing improvement of the Al-Huda educational program will depend upon this.

Recommended Monitoring Issues:

In this section, the Team lists any requirements of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality that require ongoing monitoring. Monitoring Issues refer to requirements that are not completely absent but that are met only partially and are either in need of completion or improvement. Monitoring issues must be addressed satisfactorily by the mid-term of the school’s term of accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
X	NONE	

Recommended Stipulations:

In this section, the Team lists any requirement(s) of this Standard and/or its Indicators of Quality that the school does not meet and, therefore, must be added as a stipulation to the school's accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Standard or Indicator	Recommended Action
X	NONE	

THE PLAN FOR GROWTH AND IMPROVEMENT

Introduction

The purpose of the self-study and accreditation process is first and foremost to establish whether the school meets the Standards for Accreditation, the fundamental requirement to be accredited. However, establishing that the school has in place the building blocks for a quality school is largely an exercise of looking backward to see what has been accomplished.

The *Excellence by Design* protocol is based in the principles and concepts of strategic planning. Therefore, the protocol requires the school to be forward thinking, not focusing so much on the past and past accomplishments but, instead, focusing on the future—what does the school have to do differently or do better to further its mission and to ensure that all of its students are able to achieve the knowledge, skills, and characteristics the school has defined in its Profile of Graduates.

Therefore, the culminating activity of the self-study and accreditation process is the developing of a Plan for Growth and Improvement in Student Performance.

Developing a Plan for Growth and Improvement involves:

- Establishing a vision for the school by creating or reaffirming a statement of mission.
- Identifying a set of beliefs that will serve as the school's ethical code.
- Developing a profile of the knowledge, skills, and qualities the school expects of its graduates.
- Identifying the areas of student performance that are the priorities for growth and improvement.
- Developing action plans to achieve the performance objectives.
- Monitoring implementation of the action plans.
- Conducting periodic reviews of the progress being made toward achievement of its objectives.

Following are the required components of the Plan for Growth and Improvement:

- A Mission
- Beliefs
- A Profile of Graduates
- Three, four, or five objectives measurable student performance/organizational capacity objectives; at least two must be focused on growing and improving student performance
 - One or more assessments for each objective
 - Baseline data for at least one assessment for each objective
 - Technical approval of the objectives

- Comprehensive action plans to achieve the objectives
- A plan for regular monitoring and review of the Plan (at least once annually)

A. STUDENT PERFORMANCE/ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY OBJECTIVES AND ACTION PLANS

The centerpiece of the school's Plan for Growth and Improvement is formed by the three, four, or five areas of measurable objectives the school has identified as being the highest priorities for growth and improvement if the school is to move closer to achieving its Mission. At least two of the objectives must focus on areas of student performance that have been determined to be priorities for growth and improvement. The remaining one, two, or three objectives may either be student performance objectives and/or objectives focused on growing and improving the school's organizational capacity to produce the levels of student performance desired and expected by the school's community of stakeholders. Space is provided below to evaluate the maximum number of objectives. This limited number of objectives is suggested so the school can focus on the most critical aspects of student performance without diverting its energies in too many directions.

To identify these priority areas, the Planning Team asked itself:

- *What are the gaps between what we say in our Profile of Graduates regarding what we want our graduates to know, be able to do, and/or what qualities we want them to demonstrate and our students' actual performance in those areas?*
- *Which of these gaps constitute the highest priorities for narrowing if we are to move closer over the next seven years to achieving our mission?*
- *Are there area of our organization's capacity the must be improved in order to improve our students' performance to the levels we desire and expect*

Specifying clear and measurable student performance objectives identifies the school's commitment to achieve specific end results and thus, is tied directly to accountability. The objectives must be written in such a way that they outline growth in student performance for the next seven years and represent a major focus for growth and improvement in student performance in the school. The objectives should be consistent with the mission and should extend and define the *aim* portion of the mission in more specific detail. Objectives explicate in measurable terms the key end results that the school seeks to realize from its mission, as expresses in its Profile of Graduates. Not only should the objectives be related to the school's mission, but where there is also a district or system plan, the objectives should be linked to one or more of the district's or system's objectives.

The term “student performance” is intended to be defined in the broadest possible terms. The objectives submitted for accreditation may be focused on *any* of the outcomes expected of students as stated in the Profile of Graduates.

Action plans describe the methods the school will use to accomplish its mission/philosophy and its performance/capacity objectives. Action plans provide detailed descriptions of the specific actions required to achieve desired results outlined in the student performance improvement and organizational capacity objectives. This is the “doing” part of the plan. Action plans can and should include multiple activities that will engage the school in improvement activities for the next seven years. Action plans should be specific and tell in detail how the school will accomplish its objectives. Action plans should relate directly to the objectives, but they also should be related to the mission/philosophy.

The Visiting Team examined the action plan(s) for the performance/capacity objectives in the school’s Plan for Growth and Improvement according to the criteria for effective action plans.

A.1. Objective #1

X	This is a student performance objective
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By the year 2022, the number of Al-Huda School students proficient in reading will increase by 50%, or will increase to 85% (whichever is smaller).

	YES	NO
Is the objective:		
Closely associated with the exit outcomes for students as expressed in the Profile of Graduates, graduation requirements, and/or performance expectations for the school’s students?	X	
Reflective of the school’s mission, and supportive of the strategic plan of the larger organization?	X	
Does the objective:		
Include baseline data, and are they logically organized and presented in an easily understood format?	X	
Enjoy the support of the school’s stakeholders as one of the highest priorities for growth and improvement in student performance?	X	
Does the school:		
Have sufficient energy and resources to support the implementation of the action plans and the achievement of the objectives?	X	
Have an effective and efficient way to gather data to assess the progress of the objective?	X	

	YES	NO
Is the objective reasonable and achievable?	X	

What recommendations can the Team offer to the school for any areas evaluated No and/or to improve the clarity and focus of this objective?

- None

A.2. Action Plan for Objective #1:

In the table below, evaluate the degree to which this action plan meets the criteria for an effective action plan.

Does this action plan:	YES	NO
Include strategies/action steps that are comprehensive in scope?	X	
Include a logical sequence of strategies and/or action steps?	X	
Outline clearly and in detail the action steps to be taken in the first two to three years of the plan?	X	
Include enough activities to ensure that the objective will be achieved?	X	
Address as many aspects of the institution's programs, activities, and services as appropriate?	X	
Address aspects of the Middle States Standards for Accreditation identified as weak in the institution's self-assessment of how well it meets the Standards?	X	
Identify the resources required to implement the action steps?	X	
Identify the persons/groups responsible for implementing each action step?	X	
Vary the groups/individuals responsible so that the burden for implementation does not fall on just one or two individuals?	X	
Include clear indicators of success for each action step so the institution knows what action steps have been implemented and with what result?	X	
Establish reasonable timelines for implementing the action steps?	X	
Demonstrate discipline and reasonableness by spreading action steps throughout the entire life of the plan so as not to overwhelm the time, energy, and resources available for implementing a plan?	X	

What recommendations can the Team offer to the school for any areas evaluated "No" to improve the clarity and focus of this action plan?

- None

A.3. Student Performance Objective #2:

X	This is a student performance objective
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By the year 2022, the number of Al-Huda School students proficient in Math will increase by 50%, or will increase to 85% (whichever is smaller). A student will be considered proficient:

- a) By placing in the range of 76th to 100th National Percentile Rank in Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) (conceptual skills, computational skills, probability and statistics);
- b) By scoring at grade level proficiency on the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP);
- c) By demonstrating competency (70th to 100th percent) on students' benchmark assessments;
- d) By scoring 3 or above in the AP Calculus AB Test

	YES	NO
Is the objective:		
Closely associated with the exit outcomes for students as expressed in the Profile of Graduates, graduation requirements, and/or performance expectations for the school's students?	X	
Reflective of the school's mission, and supportive of the strategic plan of the larger organization?	X	
Does the objective:		
Include baseline data, and are they logically organized and presented in an easily understood format?	X	
Enjoy the support of the school's stakeholders as one of the highest priorities for growth and improvement in student performance?	X	
Does the school:		
Have sufficient energy and resources to support the implementation of the action plans and the achievement of the objectives?	X*	
Have an effective and efficient way to gather data to assess the progress of the objective?	X	
Is the objective reasonable and achievable?	X	

What recommendations can the Team offer to the school for any areas evaluated No and/or to improve the clarity and focus of this objective?

- Al-Huda's proposed target performance level is the lower of 85% of students achieving proficiency OR a 50% increase in the current percentage of proficient students. Based on Objectives 2a-2d, baseline proficiency ('13-14) is at or below 30% of students; a 50% increase will get the School to 45% of students. This makes their target performance range very wide – for Al-Huda, the difference between 45% and 85% proficiency is approximately 200

students. However, it does accommodate in a reasonable way the wide range of abilities in the student population.

- When the Visiting Team raised this concern with the Al-Huda administration, they cited the desire for an achievable, yet ambitious target. Furthermore, they noted the wide range of performance levels within the Al-Huda student body. This broad target supports the need for disaggregated student performance data, as noted in the MSA Technical Review document. It may be appropriate to track separate data for students of different grade levels, genders, ethnicities and other factors relevant to Al-Huda.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Al-Huda consider their ability to provide, on an ongoing basis *“sufficient energy and resources to support the implementation of the action plans and the achievement of the objectives.”* The action plans around curriculum, instruction and assessment are ambitious, with many tasks falling to a relatively small number of people – primarily the Administrators and Team Leaders. While the Visiting Team is not certain that all of the steps within each plan are feasible, the accomplishment of a subset of them makes achieving the target goals very likely, particularly given the wide range noted above.

A.4. Action Plan for Objective #2:

In the table below, evaluate the degree to which this action plan meets the criteria for an effective action plan.

Does this action plan:	YES	NO
Include strategies/action steps that are comprehensive in scope?	X	
Include a logical sequence of strategies and/or action steps?	X	
Outline clearly and in detail the action steps to be taken in the first two to three years of the plan?	X	
Include enough activities to ensure that the objective will be achieved?	X	
Address as many aspects of the institution’s programs, activities, and services as appropriate?	X	
Address aspects of the Middle States Standards for Accreditation identified as weak in the institution’s self-assessment of how well it meets the Standards?	X	
Identify the resources required to implement the action steps?	X	
Identify the persons/groups responsible for implementing each action step?	X	
Vary the groups/individuals responsible so that the burden for implementation does not fall on just one or two individuals?	X	
Include clear indicators of success for each action step so the institution knows what action steps have been implemented and with what result?	X	
Establish reasonable timelines for implementing the action steps?	X	
Demonstrate discipline and reasonableness by spreading action steps	X*	

Does this action plan:	YES	NO
throughout the entire life of the plan so as not to overwhelm the time, energy, and resources available for implementing a plan?		

What recommendations can the Team offer to the school for any areas evaluated “No” to improve the clarity and focus of this action plan?

- The action plan included in the self-study is only for the first 3-4 years of the accreditation period, through the summer of 2018. As a result, the “Yes” to the final item comes with some reservations.
- In reviewing the *Assessment* action plan, the Visiting Team recommends that Al-Huda re-evaluate the timeline and sequence for MAPS implementation across the grades. Although activities like curriculum re-design may require additional time (e.g. several grades each summer), the availability of basic assessment data for all students could enhance the academic program almost immediately. Given the smaller size of the higher grades, implementing MAPS at these levels should require fewer resources.

A.5. Objective #1:

X	This is an organizational capacity objective
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By the year 2022, improved programs, services and facilities at Al-Huda School will support the academic, physical, social, and emotional development of students as measured by the following:

- 100% of all meals will meet state’s nutritional guidelines
- 50% increase in extracurricular activities offered at each school level
- 50% increase in academic support and enrichment activities (i.e. Math and English) offered at each school level
- 50% increase in life-skill activities offered at each school level
- 25% increase in information resources available to students

	YES	NO
Is the objective:		
Closely associated with the exit outcomes for students as expressed in the Profile of Graduates, graduation requirements, and/or performance expectations for the school’s students?	X	
Reflective of the school’s mission, and supportive of the strategic plan of the larger organization?	X	
Does the objective:		
Include baseline data, and are they logically organized and presented in	X	

	YES	NO
an easily understood format?		
Enjoy the support of the school's stakeholders as one of the highest priorities for growth and improvement in student performance?	X	
Does the school:		
Have sufficient energy and resources to support the implementation of the action plans and the achievement of the objectives?	X	
Have an effective and efficient way to gather data to assess the progress of the objective?	X	
Is the objective reasonable and achievable?	X	

What recommendations can the Team offer to the school for any areas evaluated No and/or to improve the clarity and focus of this objective?

- None

A.6. Action Plan for Objective #1:

In the table below, evaluate the degree to which this action plan meets the criteria for an effective action plan.

Does this action plan:	YES	NO
Include strategies/action steps that are comprehensive in scope?	X	
Include a logical sequence of strategies and/or action steps?	X	
Outline clearly and in detail the action steps to be taken in the first two to three years of the plan?	X	
Include enough activities to ensure that the objective will be achieved?	X	
Address as many aspects of the institution's programs, activities, and services as appropriate?	X	
Address aspects of the Middle States Standards for Accreditation identified as weak in the institution's self-assessment of how well it meets the Standards?	X	
Identify the resources required to implement the action steps?	X	
Identify the persons/groups responsible for implementing each action step?	X	
Vary the groups/individuals responsible so that the burden for implementation does not fall on just one or two individuals?	X	
Include clear indicators of success for each action step so the institution knows what action steps have been implemented and with what result?	X	
Establish reasonable timelines for implementing the action steps?		X
Demonstrate discipline and reasonableness by spreading action steps	X	

Does this action plan:	YES	NO
throughout the entire life of the plan so as not to overwhelm the time, energy, and resources available for implementing a plan?		

What recommendations can the Team offer to the school for any areas evaluated “No” to improve the clarity and focus of this action plan?

- The visiting team recommends that the school establish more explicit timelines for implementing the action steps to show their progress in the 7-year plan of implementation, that the plan show the implementation team’s thinking around when specific tasks within the plan will be completed.
- The visiting team recommends that the school think of additional ways to implement the healthy snack initiative throughout the campus, e.g., healthy snacks and meals could go beyond the lunch that is served, to all snacks given to students before, during, and after the school day.

B. THE VISITING TEAM’S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, the Team reports its observation and recommendations regarding the degree to which the school's Plan for Growth and Improvement meets the requirements of the protocol.

The Requirements of the Protocol for the Plan for Growth and Improvement

In this section, the Visiting Team reports whether the school's Plan for Growth and Improvement meets the requirements of the protocol.

Requirement of the Protocol	Met	Not Met
Three, four, or five objectives measurable student performance/organizational capacity objectives; at least two must be focused on growing and improving student performance.	X	
▪ One or more assessments for each objective	X	
▪ Baseline data for at least one assessment for each objective	X	
▪ Technical approval of the objectives	X	
Comprehensive action plans for each objective	X	
Plan for regular monitoring and review of the Plan (at least once annually)	X	

Observations

In this section, the Team lists 1) any general observations regarding the degree to which the school meets the requirements of the protocol for the Plan for Growth and Improvement (objectives and action plans) and 2) any areas in which the school exceeds the requirements of the requirements of the protocol.

The school meets the requirement of the protocol for the Plan for Growth and Improvement. The Technical Review stated, "Objectives are approved as submitted. This approval denotes that the objective(s) meet the technical criteria. The Visiting Team will conduct the Second Level of Review (see the *Guide for Self-Study and Accreditation* for the criteria) during the Team's visit." and "Minor modifications recommended. Do not resubmit." and "Baseline data needed. Please be prepared to present to the Visiting Team."

The Visiting Team saw documents that demonstrate that the school has made the modifications and are now are in compliance with the recommended modifications.

Recommendations

In this section, the Team lists any recommendations to the school regarding how it can improve the degree to which it meets the requirements of the protocol for the Plan for Growth and Improvement. Recommendations are suggestions by the Team, but the school is not required to accept or act on them.

The Visiting Team recommends:

- That the school include in its Action Plans a method for analysis and application of the disaggregated data.
- That the school develop more fully the links between annual benchmarks and the details of the action plans.

Recommended Monitoring Issues:

In this section, the Team lists any requirements of the protocol for the Plan for Growth and Improvement—Student Performance Objectives and Action Plans—that require monitoring. Monitoring issues refer to elements of Student Performance Objectives and Action Plans required by the protocol that are not completely absent but are met only partially and are either in need of completion or improvement. Monitoring issues must be corrected by mid-term in the school's accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Protocol	Action Recommended
X	NONE	

Recommended Stipulations:

In this section, the Team lists any requirements for the Plan for Growth and Improvement—Student Performance Objectives and Action Plans—that are absent and, therefore, must be added as a stipulation to the school’s accreditation.

No.	Requirement of the Protocol	Action Recommended
X	NONE	

ACCREDITATION RECOMMENDATION

After its visit to the school, and after considering the evidence seen and heard during the visit, the Middle States Association's Visiting Team is charged with making a recommendation to the Commission(s) regarding the accreditation action the Commission(s) should take.

Based on the evidence presented by the school in its Self-Study Document and supporting documentation, and based on the evidence seen and heard by members of the Team from the school's community of stakeholders, the Team recommends to the Middle States Commission(s) that it take the following accreditation action:

ACCREDITATION

An "Accredited" institution is an educational organization that meets all MSA Standards for Accreditation, adheres to applicable MSA policies, and meets the requirements of the self-study protocol used. The institution agrees to adhere to the requirements for maintenance of accreditation, and there are no outstanding issues related to the Standards or requirements of the protocol that would require monitoring or onsite visits beyond the normal expected events required by the protocol utilized.

NEXT STEPS

As Al-Huda School proceeds with the implementation of its Plan for Growth and Improvement, there are a number of “next steps” the school will be expected to take in order to maintain accredited status. These include the following:

- **Maintain Adherence to the Middle States Standards for Accreditation.**

The twelve Standards for Accreditation reflect research-based best practices for quality in schools. The Standards also represent the organizational “building blocks” that need to be in place to produce high levels of student performance. An accredited school is required to maintain its adherence to the Standards for Accreditation throughout its term of accreditation.

- **Implement the Plan for Growth and Improvement.**

When the Middle States Association grants accreditation to a school using the *Excellence by Design* protocol, it does so with the understanding that the school will make a good faith effort to implement the Plan for Growth and Improvement that served as one of the bases for accreditation.

- **Submit an Annual Profile and Nominations to Serve on Visiting Team.**

As a requirement to maintain its accreditation, the school is required to submit an Annual Profile in which it either confirms or revises basic data about the school. A second requirement is that the school nominates members of its staff to serve on Visiting Teams to other schools.

- **Conduct Periodic Reviews of the Plan for Growth and Improvement**

While Middle States does not “collect” evidence of the school’s annual review, the school is expected to conduct periodic reviews of its Plan. The purpose of the periodic reviews is to ensure that progress is being made in implementing the Plan, to update and revise the Plan as needed, and to pause to celebrate successes. The school should keep records of what transpired during each review such as meeting agendas, minutes, documented changes to the Plan, and summaries of results of the assessments being used to measure progress toward achieving the objectives. Documentation will be required for the Mid-Term Report and by the next Visiting Team.

- **Complete a Mid-Term Report**

At the beginning of the third year in the accreditation term, the school will be required to submit a Mid-Term Report in which it will provide evidence of its implementing its Plan for Growth and Improvement and of progress being made toward achieving its objectives. The Report will be reviewed by the Middle States staff, which may determine that an on-site visit should be conducted to examine any areas of concern.

- **Prepare for Reaccreditation**

At the beginning of the sixth year of the school's accreditation term, begin a new self-study in preparation for the visit of the next Visiting Team. It should be noted, however, that if the school has implemented a planning ethic and the *Excellence by Design* school improvement process has been ongoing as expected, and preparing for the next team visit should be an extension of work already underway.

SUMMARY AND CLOSURE

ORAL REPORT – Al-Huda School

Welcome! We're glad you are all here for our report. This oral report represents the thinking of our entire Team, not just my opinions.

Now we know you are accustomed to discussion and open dialogue, and up until now we have asked for questions and discussion. However, I will read the team report, to curb any temptation to *ad lib*, and when I am finished, we will head home—no Q & A, no discussion. I know it sounds abrupt, and it is. But we don't want to get in the way of your opportunity to celebrate. Besides, there will be plenty of time for discussion and reflection when you have received the approved report from Middle States.

At the outset, I want to recognize and thank publicly the other members of our Team for their service to you and to the Middle States Association—Heba Abdo, Rictor Craig, Fahmeeda Hassan and Krista Peterson. This is an outstanding team of educators. I don't know if you are aware of this, but they are volunteers who have given their professional and personal time to provide this service to you. The team members were all strangers to each other before we came together at the hotel late Monday morning, but we have bonded as a team. Heba, Rictor, Fahmeeda, and Krista have worked hard day and night to conduct as thorough an evaluation of your school as is possible. It is a tribute to their professionalism and expertise that they were able to come together with me as a team so quickly and to produce such fine work in service to your school. I believe you owe them your thanks for their service to Al-Huda School.

It is important that you remember that accreditation is a voluntary activity. We are here because you invited us. You asked us to study the work that you are doing and your plans for the future. Therefore, we came here with several purposes.

First, we were charged with ensuring that Al-Huda School meets the Middle States Standards for Accreditation.

In addition to meeting the standards, the protocol you chose, *Excellence by Design*, requires that you have a system of continuous planning for school improvement. It also requires that you develop goals for improving areas of student performance and that you create plans to achieve those goals. Furthermore, your school was asked to develop one or more organizational growth objectives. The expectation is that, after our team departs, you will faithfully implement your improvement plan over the next seven years and make a good-faith effort to achieve the objectives you set.

First I'd like to tell you what the Middle States guidelines require me to not tell you today. I cannot tell you anything specific about our detailed findings and recommendations, and I cannot answer any questions about our visit.

I'm happy to report that the first draft of our team report is written. Once it is assembled and edited, Brother Haroon will have the opportunity to check it confidentially for factual accuracy. He will send me any corrections that need to be made. I will make the corrections and send the revised copy to the Middle States office. There, it will be analyzed by a staff person and reviewed by the Domestic Schools Advisory Committee, by the Commission on Elementary and Secondary Schools and, finally, by the Middle States Board for final approval. In a few months, Brother Haroon will get the written report to share, as he determines, with the community here. At that point you will have the official decision of the Board of the Middle States Association.

So now here's what I can and will tell you about our findings:

I will share with you (1) what our Team considers your outstanding strengths, (2) your areas most in need of attention, as well as (3) our Team's overall recommendation in terms of accreditation.

Here's what we see as your Outstanding Strengths:

- + A warm, energetic and purposeful atmosphere that makes students, staff, families and visitors all feel welcome... Your commitment to the mission is impressive. The deep sense of the spirit of your mission is a palpable presence here.
- + A visionary leadership team with the skills and energy to drive Al-Huda School well on into the 21st century as a model Islamic school of the future.
- + A dynamic, model program that is true to the two elements of your mission, and that is ever-evolving to develop and incorporate the latest best practices to meet the educational and spiritual needs of this community of talented children and young people.
- + Your thoughtful, innovative use of limited resources, from limited space in the building, to moving some Dar-us-Salaam functional activities to other venues, to your management of school finances.
- + The passionate commitment to Al-Huda School's mission that is evident in all the people with whom we interacted and observed.

The Major Areas we see as in need of attention:

- ~ The issue of inadequate facilities to support the program needs the urgent attention it is receiving. The school will be limited in its trajectory of growth and development until this issue is resolved.

~ The wide range of academic needs among the student population suggests that a more learner-centered, differentiated instruction would be helpful.

~ The expressed need for added student activity opportunities that do not depend on added facilities, and soon for those that will be accommodated by expanded facilities.

~ Several features of the school need to be reviewed with respect to safety and security. Examples are security at entrance into the building, visitors' and students' movements within the building and school evacuation frequency and procedures.

Furthermore, as I have shared with some of you, we will be recommending that Al-Huda be re-accredited. But remember, it is a recommendation only. It will be official only when the Middle States Commission approves it.

We hope our report will be helpful to you as you continue on your trajectory of continuous improvement in this exceptional Islamic educational adventure.

On behalf of our entire Visiting Team, Heba, Rictor, Fahmeeda, Krista and me, I want to express our gratitude to all of you and to the entire Al-Huda community. You have warmly welcomed us into your lives here. You have taken superb care of us both here and at the Hampton Inn. And we especially appreciated being treated to a variety of international cuisines in the beautiful lunches prepared by parents and staff. We feel as if we are now members of the Dar-us-Salaam family. We appreciate the candor with which you have shared your pride in your school, your concerns and your greatest wishes.

You have an extraordinarily effective program here at Al-Huda School. We heard testimony countless times from students, parents and staff at all levels asserting that Al-Huda changes people for the better, not only as learners, but also as confident young people with a secure Islamic identity. One of the highlights of our visit was our conversation with the high school students, particularly the seniors. Each of them described the foundation of their Muslim faith, developed and practiced at Al-Huda. They expressed their sincere pleasure feeling free to practice their religion throughout each day at school. They feel this Islamic foundation will enable them to stay true within themselves as they address the challenges of life at university.

We saw some examples of exemplary student-centered teaching, and we were happy to witness clear and rapid learning progress happening before our very eyes. For example, one middle school English teacher used literature circles to allow students to express their opinions about and connections with *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. In another classroom, the teacher encouraged the students to teach the content, while she acted in the role of student. Students in this classroom were able to articulate a comprehensive understanding of course material.

Another theme that emerged in all our meetings with students, parents and teachers was the sense of a close-knit community at Al-Huda. We have observed here a climate of mutual respect, shared values and productive energy. The care and concern that you, the faculty, staff and administrators, have for your students is palpable. You are appropriately proud of your students. At all times as we observed them, they were polite and respectful to us and to each other. Their pride in their school and their sense of emotional safety here to explore, to risk and to grow are in evidence always and everywhere. The way students and the staff treat each other is direct evidence that the school is living its mission.

Your self-study and your preparations for our visit were outstanding. Your Head of School, Brother Haroon and your Vice Principals Brother Abdul Qadir and Sister Aisha certainly made us feel welcome, as did you all. Special kudos to the three of them as they served as your Internal Coordinators, led the self-study and orchestrated our visit beautifully, helped by many of you. We have been able to complete our work thoroughly and in a timely way because of the comprehensive and thoughtful effort you made to honestly examine every aspect of your program. As we discovered in writing our report, it was easy to find commendations, but we had to look harder to develop recommendations. Rest assured, we have made recommendations in the report. We wouldn't want you to be disappointed.

In closing, let me say that Al-Huda is clearly fulfilling its mission. You do amazing work with your crowded facilities. From the moment we arrived on Monday, we could feel the compassionate essence of the Al-Huda culture. We have loved being here, being part of such an effective school. We leave today knowing that we have had a full and rich experience of your school. We have learned much from you, much that we can digest and carry back to our own work.

We sincerely thank you for so fully and openly sharing your community with us. It has been a pleasure to be part of the Al-Huda School during the short time we have been here.

In respect for your culture here of remembering God in all that you do, I would like to leave this time for all of us to implore God's blessings as you go forward in your implementation of your plans for the future. (Silence)

Thank you.

VISITING TEAM ROSTER

Role	Name	School/Organization
Chair of the Team	George Vosburgh	Middle States Ambassador
Assistant Chair of the Team	Heba Abdo	Rutgers University School System Improvement Project
Team Member	Rictor Craig	Friendship Woodridge Elementary and Middle
Team Member	Fahmeeda Hassan	Al-Rahmah School
Team Member	Krista Peterson	The Church Farm School