

Muslim Parents' Activism in the Multicultural Education (MCE) Curriculum

Gulafshan Alavi

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to study the role of parental involvement in the public school system and its effects on Muslim students' achievements, their perceptions of school culture, and the feeling in the community-at-large about Islam. The study analyzes two neighboring communities of Muslims in the State of Connecticut, Stamford and Norwalk. The paper also studies the Multicultural Education (MCE)/Diversity curriculum in public schools to find effective ways for Muslim parents to become involved in their children's education. In this context, an examination will be made of education issues affecting Muslim families: ways of increasing achievement scores; the role played by the socio-economic status of a student and his/her schooling experience; the importance of the teacher; and the positive relationship between the MCE/Diversity curriculum and the ideals of democracy that we cherish in this country.

"By God every Muslim community will have to impart education to their neighbors and inculcate in them the craving for learning; exhort and advise them, enjoin upon them to do good and refrain them from doing evil." Hadaith of Sayyedna Mohammad (peace be upon him) as narrated by 'Alqama (r.A.) in Al-Mo-jamul Kabeer.

Parental Involvement: A Summary

Parental involvement constitutes, but is not limited to, visiting classes, attending parent-teacher conferences, attending PTA/PTO meetings and

Gulafshan Alavi is a freelance journalist and has completed her Ph.D. course work in American Government from New York University.

getting involved in volunteer work at school.¹ To be part of a public relations campaign in the school or to be involved in a one-way communications program is not an example of effective parental involvement. (Armor 1976²; Gillum 1977; Wellisch³ 1976). Gordon's "Parent Impact Model" and "Community Impact Model" explain what is meant by parental involvement for the purpose of this study. The Parent Impact Model refers to the influence of the parents and the home on a child's learning patterns; the Community Impact Model refers to parental involvement in all possible roles, from teacher at home to active member of the local community.⁴

In the general population of the United States there is a wide spectrum of parental involvement in the school system. There have been parents whose activism has resulted in lawsuits against the schools, while at the same time there have been parents who have never met the teachers that teach their children. The reaction to parental involvement by the administration at schools has also varied. It has ranged from encouragement to indifference to hostility. However, there are scores of studies that have shown that parental involvement in the schools not only improves the child's performance on standardized tests, it also has a positive impact on the long-term academic achievement of the student. Parental involvement has also shown that a positive attitude towards schools by the children results in more effective and successful schools. (Benson⁵, 1980; Phillips⁶, 1985; Epstein⁷, 1987; Gordon⁸ 1978; Lazar⁹, 1978; McDill¹⁰, et al, 1969; Revicki¹¹, 1981; see also Henderson¹², 1987).

Multicultural Education (MCE)/Diversity Curriculum: A Summary

To study parental involvement in the public schools, the Multicultural (MCE) or Diversity Education program has been used as an appropriate vehicle to survey the role of Muslim parents in their children's educational institutions. The call for a Multicultural, Inclusive or Diversity Education curriculum.¹³ was the result of anger and frustration on the part of the minority populations in American schools who were troubled by the lack of progress and achievement of non-white/minority students. This was blamed in part on a feeling of alienation fostered by a nationwide school system that "was structured by a pervasive Eurocentrism that diminishes or dismisses the experiences of other cultures, races and ethnicities, thereby fundamentally distorting the past and current realities all

Americans need to study and understand." ¹⁴

The Tale of Two Cities — Norwalk and Stamford

Demographics	Stamford	Norwalk
Minority population in schools (total)	53.00 %	50.30 %
Professional Muslims (white collar)	28.68 %	32.35 %
Blue-collar Muslims	59.83 %	57.84 %
Owners of businesses (Muslims)	11.47 %	09.80 %
Non-English speaking population (total)	22.50 %	22.50 %
Muslim mothers speaking English	81.00 %	78.00 %

Norwalk

Until a couple of years ago, the city of Norwalk had been hosting large gatherings of Muslims for annual Eid prayers. Norwalk is also one of the few cities in Connecticut where Muslim speakers from around the country and the Islamic world have been coming to make their presentations. These meetings take place in public halls and local community centers, since there is no Masjid/Islamic center in the city.

In 1994-95, Norwalk High School elected an exceptional Muslim student as President of the Student government. The young lady, an immigrant from the age of three, proudly donned a *hijaab* in her high school. While the Muslim community was active outside the school system, they were not able to build bridges for sustained and intensive parental involvement in the schools. During the course of this study, the Norwalk Board of Education's Public Relations Director stated that although he is aware of a Muslim presence in the school system, he is unaware of any leadership or a mosque in the area. He said that he knows of only one Muslim gentleman who sometimes attends the Norwalk Board of Education events, but "there is no push from within the community to change the perception that the Islamic community is almost non-existent in the school system".¹⁵

Despite the fact that Norwalk High School elected an exceptionally bright minority student who was also a Muslimah as the Student Body President in 1995, the administration of the school has been deeply

concerned about the low achievement scores of the minority population in general, the lack of parental participation and the "racial overtones of the (school) district". A comprehensive study conducted by the Principal of Norwalk High School has called for urgent measures to deal with the increasing alienation and under-achievement of the minorities in the district. The Gap Study, as it is referred to, has made several recommendations including the need for increased parental involvement in the school system to bring the district out of its straits.¹⁶

Whereas Norwalk school personnel describe Stamford newspaper's coverage of multicultural/diversity issues as "excellent", the Norwalk Board of Education Human Relations Director believes that his city's newspaper is "slower" than Stamford's, but is moving in the right direction. A brief summary of The Norwalk Hour (newspaper) demonstrates this adequately (Appendix A).

Stamford

For the past ten years, the Muslim families in Stamford have made a concerted effort to "educate the educators" about Islam and Muslim holidays like *Eid-al-Fitr* and *Eid-al-Adha*. This effort has resulted in the formation of "The Islamic Women's Group"¹⁷, that sends "Eid Cakes" to the 20 schools in the district on both Eids. The Group also sends a brief written explanation of the holidays, encouraging the teachers to tap the resources of the parents to come into the classes to make presentations on Eid. Over the years several schools have invited parents to speak on Islam and its holidays. The Group has provided the Stamford Board of Education with Teachers' Resource materials¹⁸ on the study and understanding of Islam. The Group has also been successful in networking with the Ferguson Public Library to bring the work of Islamic scholars to the community. The Group also runs a weekly Islamic media program¹⁹ on the Public Access Channel of Cable Television in the area, which is also seen by Norwalk residents. The Islamic Women's Group has taken delegations of Muslim women and students to meet with Congressman Christopher Shays during the Bosnian, Kashmiri, and Kosovan crises.

The Islamic Women's Group is also a sponsor of the An-Noor Club at Stamford High School, which works to present Islamic holidays at the school with displays and a poster presentation.²⁰ The An-Noor Society students have also helped in making Eid presentations in the local elementary schools. The Group has also worked with the Muslim Students Association (MSA) at the University of Connecticut, Stamford, to bring

such diverse speakers as Imam Siraj Wahhaj and Dr. Azizah al-Hibri to the community at large. The Group has made a cultural presentation before the Board of Education, in which speakers answered questions from educators and school administrators on Islam.

Because of these efforts to "educate the educators" through the use of parental involvement in the multicultural education curriculum, the city of Stamford Public School Multicultural Council awarded a special recognition to the Islamic Women's Group. The Stamford Public School's Diversity Administration/Multicultural Council has been working closely with all minority populations in the city with great success ever since its creation in 1995. Unfortunately its future is uncertain, as it has recently become a victim of a political campaign which critics believe is aimed at undermining multicultural education and diversity in the public schools.

The Islamic Women's Group's campaign to "educate the educators" has been covered in the Stamford press along with an increased coverage of Muslim holidays and community activities. The opening of the Stamford Islamic Center, the first mosque in Southwestern Connecticut (which includes the city of Norwalk), in 1998 has further increased coverage in the local newspaper. A study of the local newspaper, *The Advocate*, demonstrates that whereas coverage of the local Islamic community was sporadic earlier, it has been consistent and favorable since 1993. (Appendix A)

Stamford is also home to the Islamic Committee on Girl Scouting,²¹ which is affiliated with the Girl Scouts of the USA. (GSUSA) and World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGS). Activities of the Islamic Committee also encourages parental involvement in the school system, since organizations like the Girl Scouts have access to public school facilities, administrators, teachers and parents. At annual Girl Scout events, which are held on school property, the Girl Scout troops of the Islamic Faith play their part in learning and educating their friends about Islamic countries and cultures around the world.

Survey of Muslim Parents and Students

Both Norwalk and Stamford Public Schools' "minority" populations are, in statistical terms, the majority (Stamford: more than 53% [Fletcher, 1995]²² and Norwalk: 50.3% [Official Profile, 1998-1999]²³). There is a difference in the socio-economic status (SES) of the Muslims in Norwalk and Stamford. 28.68% of the Muslim residents of Stamford, both men and women, are professionals (accountants, engineers, lawyers, doctors,

architects, teachers, bankers, engineers, computer analysts, consultants, etc.); 59.83% are blue-collar workers, and 11.47% are business owners. In Norwalk, 32.35% are professionals, 57.84% are holding blue-collar positions while 9.80% own their own businesses. (See Demographics chart)

Whereas 22-22.5% of the total minority population in both Norwalk and Stamford do not speak English in their homes (Fletcher, 1995 and Norwalk Official profile 1998-1999), there is a significant group of Muslim mothers in Stamford (81%) and Norwalk (78%) who are fluent in English. The Stamford Muslim population has great diversity in its ranks. To take the Islamic Women's Group as an indicator of this diversity, we find that it comprises (or, has comprised) Muslim families from Albania, Bangladesh, Bosnia, Morocco, Iran, Algeria, India, Pakistan, Palestine, Honduras, Indonesia, Egypt, Lebanon, Ghana, and ethnic representation from Hispanic-American, Chinese-American, African American and Caucasian-American communities.

On the other hand, Norwalk has a less diverse population of Muslims (from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and ethnic representation of African-Americans.)

In the past three years, Stamford high school graduates have had at least two Muslim students who have won full four-year scholarships to the local university. Muslim students this summer (Summer 2000) have found internships in major corporations in the city. One Muslim student was among the seven Stamford students who achieved exemplary success in Advanced Placement examinations two years ago. Stamford students have been recognized with scholarships for their Islamic leadership and work in the Girl Scouts and other organizations and businesses. Two Muslim students from the public school system went on to become the Student Government Association (SGA) presidents at the University of Connecticut campus in Stamford. A Stamford Muslimah took the initiative to organize a chapter of the MSA (Muslim Students Association) on the same campus.

The data collected and its implications for the Muslim community

Why is it important for Muslim parents to be involved in their children's education? The answer to this question has many dimensions. An analysis of three main reasons why parents should be, and have been, involved in their children's schools will be made below. These important reasons are: higher achievement scores, neutralizing socio-economic status effects, and

the Multicultural Education curriculum and increased democratic empowerment for students and families.

Higher Test Scores/Higher Achievement Scores

Research has proven without a doubt that children whose parents spend time with them in educational activities, or who are involved in their school activities, achieve more in school regardless of their social economic status (SES). (Benson, Buckley and Medrich, 1980²⁴; Epstein, 1987²⁵; Gillum, 1977²⁶; Gordon, 1978²⁷; Herman, 1980²⁸; McDill, 1969²⁹; Revicki, 1981; Becher, 1984³⁰). Researchers have also found a correlation between "talented" or "gifted" students and the degree of parental involvement (Bloom, 1985³¹; Rankin, 1967³²).

All these studies highlight the indispensable role the family plays in the educational life of a student. Epstein's³³ study, for instance, points out that parental encouragement, activities, interest at home and their participation at school affect their children's achievement, even after the students' ability and family SES is taken into account. Gillum³⁴ further confirmed these results by studying three Michigan school districts' parental involvement programs and their effects on students' reading skills. The students in the district that had the most comprehensive parent involvement program scored significantly higher on two standardized reading tests than the other districts. The tests included an in-service training program for parents, who trained other parents on their children's educational programs, on cooperation in the school, and on reinforcing the child at home.

Gordon's³⁵ study has evaluated the different degrees of parental involvement and their effects on children's achievement. His study differentiated between three degrees or levels of parental involvement: the Parent Impact Model, that measures the influence of parents and the home on a child's learning patterns; the School Impact Model, that studies the direct involvement of parents in the school and their relationship to the child's achievement; and the Community Impact Model, that studies the effects of parental involvement on students' achievement. The study includes parents from teachers at home to active members of the local community. Gordon's research also confirmed the importance of parental involvement and higher achievement for the student.

In addition, his study emphasized that the more comprehensive and long-lasting the parents' involvement is, the more positive effects are seen on not only the children's achievements but also on the quality of the schools as community institutions. Gordon's study shows that children

whose parents are directly involved in the schools and the community, the Community Impact Model, beginning from preschool all the way up, score higher on achievement tests than other children.

Our study of the two neighboring cities of Norwalk and Stamford in Connecticut further substantiates the above research. The average grades of Muslim students in Stamford are higher than for Norwalk Muslim students. This is in part because of the increased parental involvement of Muslim families in the Stamford public schools. Stamford Muslim families have parental involvement in all three models of Gordon's study. There are Muslim parents who are involved in their children's home learning experience (The Parent Impact Model); parents are also involved directly in the schools, through volunteer work and service on governance councils (The School Impact Model); and, more importantly, there are a significant number of parents involved in what Gordon has called, "The Community Impact Model." In this model, parents are involved in all possible roles in the educational experience of the child, from teacher at home to active member of the local community. The "Eid Cake Program" can be viewed as an aspect of the Community Impact Model, because twice a year, the Muslim families in Stamford work together to bring Islamic awareness to the community at large (Appendix B).

IQ Testing and Muslim Children

The Stamford Survey shows that 33% of the Muslim families reported that their Middle and High schools children are in higher reading and math classes or in Honors/Advanced Placement courses. In Norwalk, only 18% families reported the higher placements for their children. In Stamford, parental investigation and involvement resulted in two deserving students being placed in higher groups. Muslim parents need to be aware of the controversies surrounding IQ testing in our schools so that they can also evaluate their children's educational progress. In an overview of the topic of intelligence testing and diversity in learning Shapiro, Sewell and DuCette (1995)³⁶ summarize Adams' (1990)³⁷ study in the following words:

"We have defined giftedness from the perspective of the white, middle-class culture. It should be expected, therefore, that minority students will not be recognized as gifted when such a definition is applied."³⁸

Some Muslim families in Stamford have taken the initiative to serve as

mentors and guides for others in the community who may not know their way around the bureaucracy maze surrounding, and within, the public school system. This community approach to education has helped in creating the conditions necessary for students to excel. (see *The Role of the teacher, MCE Counteracts "Silencing" and "Racelessness" and MCE Insists on Parent Teacher Partnership*)

The Ramos Gap Report

The Parent-Student Survey shows that many Norwalk parents are unaware, or do not acknowledge, issues that concern their children in the schools. The data shows that both Norwalk and Stamford parents are very interested in their children's schools but may have decided that schools in this country do not welcome parents, or that teaching is best left to the schools alone. According to the numbers quoted above, the majority of the Norwalk parents did not know where their children are placed in the classroom hierarchy. Is this placement fair and justified? What and how other groups teach?

Although the Gap Report³⁹ refers primarily to African-American and Hispanic-American minorities, Muslim parents, as members of the minority community at large, need to be informed about the educational institutions their children are attending. The Gap Report has pointed to many issues of vital concern to all minority parents. Let us look at some statements about students in schools (for the Gap Report addresses issues relevant to all schools in this country):

"Students are not always made to feel welcome in schools/classrooms (ex., some are sent out of class if they don't have a pencil --- some are overwhelmed with rules and regulations --- some are yelled at in class --- some are set up to fail, act out, or be embarrassed); there is a lack of fairness and opportunity --- "Why do we say no to kids?"; some students are afraid to ask for extra help."⁴⁰

"When the number of minorities in a class or school is low (and, perhaps low achieving) and the number of students represented by high pressure/challenging parents is significant or present, minority students tend to be ignored."⁴¹

"Expectations for some students are low --- some of us prejudge

children based on race, what side of town one is from, or what one's siblings may have been like; children give you what you expect.⁴²

Norwalk Muslim students have benefited from parental involvement in, what Gordon referred to as, the Parent Impact Model. All parents interviewed said that one of the parent, or an older sibling, was always ready to help in students' homework assignments. One Norwalk administrator said that there is some representation of Muslims in the higher groups/levels in his school but he also pointed out that parental involvement was minimal.⁴³ He also mentioned that he had seen some Muslim parents during Open House evenings. Despite the fact that most Muslim families are not very involved in the school system, "Muslim students are doing well compared to some minority groups because of the work ethics of the Islamic community." The administrator believes that the reason for this is that Muslim families "have not been seduced by the commercialism and the materialistic trappings of this society." He said that Norwalk Muslim families, mostly new immigrants to this country, are using education as a vehicle to move upwards socially.

Part of the observations of Norwalk educator's are confirmed by an extensive study of 300 teachers and 3500 parents conducted by Dornbusch (1986)⁴⁴. His study summarized that "The degree of parental participation in such school functions as Open School Nights, regardless of the parents' own educational attainment, is strongly linked to grades."⁴⁵ These appearances of the parents at school, in addition to the work ethics that the Norwalk High School Principal praised in Muslim families, has resulted in increasing grades and in giving greater confidence to the Norwalk students. The data also shows that the Community Impact Model practiced by the Stamford families can definitely benefit Norwalk.

Socioeconomic Status Effects Neutralized

The data on the high population of blue-collar workers in the two Muslim communities of Norwalk and Stamford raises the issue of socioeconomic status and its effects on higher educational performance of students. Charles Benson⁴⁶, presented a pessimistic picture of how children from high-income families tend to do well, regardless of the level of parental involvement, whereas children from low-income families tend to perform below average.⁴⁷ Earlier, Coleman's research had produced similar results.

But, in 1979 Irvine pointed out that parental involvement in special programs designed to help children in their verbal concepts and other skills significantly affected children's achievement regardless of the levels of family education and income⁴⁸. In another important study, Cochran and Henderson⁴⁹, presented their work after evaluating the success of a program which involved 160 low-income families. The research emphasized that a two-parent family, with "positive and realistic views of their capacities as parents, are likely to make use of available social supports and place high priority on activities with their children." This leads to higher achievements and a successful educational experience for their children, regardless of low-income. Other studies have also shown that negative effects of SES can be minimized through various programs and familial patterns. (Toomey, 1986⁵⁰; Schiamberg and Chun, 1986⁵¹; Scott and Davis, 1979⁵²; Dornbusch, 1986⁵³; Clark, 1983⁵⁴; Armor, et al., 1976⁵⁵)

Revicki's study demonstrated that SES may make a difference in math scores (the higher the SES, the higher the math scores), but in reading skills the relationship of SES was weaker. Revicki showed that the child's sense of self-acceptance was associated with reading achievement and active parent involvement had a positive effect on verbal stimulation of the student.⁵⁶

In both Norwalk and Stamford, these latter studies are supported by the data collected. Both towns have two-parent homes which Cochran and Henderson's study emphasized were necessary for higher achievement. Clark's⁵⁷ research, on the other hand, had demonstrated that the number of parents at home may not be as significant a factor affecting achievement as parenting style. Dornbusch's study also emphasized parenting styles as a key to student achievement, adding that income by itself is not a good predictor of grades; it is instead a good predictor of parent education, which in turn is a good predictor of grades. In both Norwalk and Stamford, Muslim families have made their children's education a high priority. Further studies are needed to demonstrate how many young Muslim men and women are now professionals whereas their parents were blue-collar workers or were self-employed.

The Role of the Teacher

No discussion on the effects of socioeconomic status and students' performance is complete without discussing the controversy surrounding the role of the teacher. In the 1960's, the trend in education studies was to

emphasize the socioeconomic structures of the family and its effects on the culture of the student. It was believed that any "cultural deficit" causes behavioral patterns that result in poor academic performance. In the 1970's and 1980's, there was a major shift in the focus of the research to determine why some students were failing. Instead of looking solely at the family and socioeconomic status, studies now emphasized the process of schooling and the role of the teacher. These latter writers criticized the role of the teacher as an instrument of "social reproduction." The theorists argued that given the inequality of the system, if the mainly white, middle-class administration of the schools continue to ignore or neglect those who are non-white, or in low socioeconomic groups, society will have used the schools to generate and reproduce the social injustices.⁵⁸ These theorists argued in favor of a role for the teacher, which they referred to, as "reconstructionist". This role calls for more minority teachers and administrators and urges upon teachers to be sensitive to the non-white cultures around so that teachers can reconstruct a just and equitable society. For the purpose of this study on Muslim parents, it is important to realize that all schools of thought on the role of the teacher mentioned above agree that the "verbal and nonverbal" interactions between the teacher and the student results in different learning experiences, and therefore, different achievements. (See also the section on "MCE Insists on Parent-Teacher Partnership" in this paper).

Many writers have presented a picture of the school system that has raised deep concerns for future generations. Shapiro, Sewell and DuCette, in their "Reframing Diversity in Education"⁵⁹ write about the process called "tracking" through which schools are used to reproduce society's social classes inside the classrooms. The danger of this is that if parents are not vigilant some schools may use a child's social class to determine what, and how much, education that child should be 'allowed' to receive. Our data shows that the majority of the Muslim parents from Norwalk and a considerable number of Stamford parents did not know whether their children were in lower reading or math groups or higher. This means that a significant number of students may become victims of any tracking going on in the school systems.

In another significant study, Gordon⁶⁰ has pointed out that "the normal function of schooling is to produce labor-power according to the demands of capital by making differentiated school knowledge available to advantaged and disadvantaged groups. This in turn reproduces hierarchy,

exclusion, and inequality between social class and ethnic groups." The process through which this takes place in the school system has been called "the Hidden Curriculum" by writers like Anyon (1987), Apple (1982), Giroux (1983), McLaren (1989), Purpel (1989)⁶¹ and many others. Many writers, like most minority parents, know of the inequities in the public school system, but they are optimistic about the role of the school in fighting poverty and crime (Sarason, 1985⁶²; Hodgkinson, 1992⁶³). For this optimism to take hold in reality, parental involvement in a parent-teacher partnership is indispensable.

MCE/Diversity Curriculum & Democracy

Multicultural Program in Norwalk

Minority parental involvement and the implementation of the Multicultural Education and Diversity Curriculum have a significantly different history in Norwalk and Stamford. Politically, Norwalk is a city whose Republican mayor has been reelected for multiple terms. (This year is his fourteenth year in office). The town's Board of Education has been rocked recently with controversy concerning political issues, including racism and the diversity curriculum. The Superintendent came under fire because of his "diversity agenda" and his recommendation to promote a minority high school principal to the influential post of Curriculum Director. The high school principal has made a mark in Norwalk's academic history by studying and publishing a report on the gap in educational achievement between the minority and the white students in the city.

The Gap Report⁶⁴, as it is called, has caused a public discussion on the desperate issue of lower minority test scores and the near absence of minority students in Advanced Placement (AP) classes in Norwalk. One of the recommendations of the Gap Report is the encouragement of parental involvement in the school system and a mentoring program including a parent, grandparent or other "caring adult who has great expectations for the child". The Gap Report prompted the district's Congressman to hold public hearings on the school system beginning last fall (1999). The author of the Gap Report himself was recognized for his excellent work by the post-apartheid South African Government that hired him as a consultant in the Summer of 1999 to help facilitate the merger of white and black school districts in that country. While the report was appreciated locally and abroad, the intensity of the local political climate forced Norwalk's Superintendent of the Board of

Education to step down without bringing about the changes that he had advocated. No concrete action has followed the Gap Report as yet, and the important office of the Curriculum Director is still unfilled.

Many supporters of the status quo in Norwalk point to data that claims that the city is one of 10 school districts in Connecticut cited for achieving the greatest gains in a federal reading test in 1999. Norwalk is also one of the first few districts in the state to train Early Reading Facilitators (ERF)⁶⁵. These facilitators have already reported success by moving the reading level of many students to at, or above, grade level.

For their part, the supporters of MCE/Diversity curriculum are pleased with the start of "Community Conversations"⁶⁶ in the city which are providing a forum for minority parents to voice their opinions. These "community conversations", it is hoped, will increase parental participation in the schools in the city so that parents can play their part in upgrading their children's educational standards.

Multicultural Program in Stamford

In the neighboring city of Stamford, work on the MCE/Diversity curriculum has been moving at a pace described by a local minority leader as "a process of one step forward with two steps back". The political climate of Stamford is dynamic compared to Norwalk in terms of the election of the mayor. The city of Stamford, in its last mayoral elections in 1995, voted in a Democrat mayor after a Republican one..

In 1995, the MCE/Diversity curriculum was infused with enthusiasm and commitment with the establishment of a separate, and effective, MCE/Diversity department in the Board of Education. This change took place when the city realized that its minority students were now a majority with almost 53% of the total student population.⁶⁷ A later change in the directorship of the program did not affect its dedication to the implementation of the Diversity curriculum. Stamford, like Norwalk, is deeply concerned with its own low minority test results and the low minority parental involvement in its schools. Stamford has a program for parent training so that the low parental involvement can be turned around, but many minorities, including Muslims, have not yet taken advantage of this initiative.

In terms of the general test scores, the city of Stamford reading scores are lower than the scores of the city of Norwalk. Both Norwalk and Stamford may not be in a hurry to change any policy drastically because Connecticut,

according to a study,⁶⁸ has the highest reading achievement of any state in the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress test. Because Connecticut students are also on top of the list of "the most improved scores" in the country, there is less pressure on the state's educators to change anything. According to Baron, even though there is a significant gap in reading skills between the rich and the poor of Connecticut's school districts, white, black, and Hispanic students in the state perform better than their counterparts in other states.

MCE Curriculum Empowers Minority Students & Their Families

How can MCE/Diversity curriculum change things for the minorities? And why and how does MCE/Diversity curriculum affect Muslim communities in Connecticut and around the country? The answer to these questions lie in understanding the MCE/Diversity curriculum and its proposed aims and objectives. The following quote by Nieto is fairly representative of a general definition of the MCE curriculum:

"Multicultural education is a process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for all students. It challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society, and accepts and affirms the pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic, and gender, among others) that students, their communities and teachers represent. Multicultural education permeates the curriculum and instructional strategies used in schools, as well as interactions among teachers, students and parents, and the very way that schools conceptualize the nature of teaching and learning. Because it uses critical pedagogy as its underlying philosophy and focuses on knowledge, reflection and action (praxis) as the bases for social change, multicultural education furthers the democratic principles of social justice."⁶⁹

Whereas "parental involvement" theories place a greater emphasis on the parents and how their involvement in the schools affects children's achievements, self-confidence, etc., multicultural education insists that a more equitable and democratic school system is only possible by working on a special "partnership" approach involving teachers, administrators and

parents that will benefit all students. (Greenspan, Niemeyer, and Seeley, 1991⁷⁰; Cummins, 1989⁷¹). The MCE curriculum, thus, insists that minority children and their parents be incorporated into the educational system, not to politically co-opt them and force them into "the melting pot" but to teach and learn from them. Henry Giroux⁷² has called on educators to draw on the resources of a culturally diverse population to educate all children.

The MCE has become, for some school districts, a serious political issue because, like Nieto states, multicultural education "furtheres the democratic principles of social justice". In other words, multicultural education demands sharing of power with minority groups that had hitherto been disenfranchised. Giroux has boldly said that "knowledge and power are inseparable" in terms of our public educational system and its educators, who they are educating, and what and how they are teaching.

MCE Counteracts "Silencing" and "Racelessness"

In Stamford, the process of multicultural education has moved ahead with the cooperative activities of the city's Board of Education Multicultural Council and groups like the Islamic Women's Group (IWG). The IWG had begun its "Eid Cake Program" before the Multicultural Council came into existence. The Islamic Women's Group has worked at giving a voice to the Muslim minority students in the city. Giroux has aptly remarked, as quoted in Sudia Paloma McCaleb's *Building Communities of Learners*,⁷³ "Teaching practices that include only one group's knowledge might serve to silence rather than empower the students who are located in cultural worlds that exist at the margins of the dominant culture. While these silenced students can still learn, (Giroux) cautions that unfortunately they also learn that they don't count."

M. Fine⁷⁴, in "Silencing and Nurturing Voice in an Improbable Context: Urban Adolescents in Public School", has also dealt with the issue of "silencing" of the minorities. Fine brought to the front how school administrators were "controlling knowledge" and "censoring" the sharing of students' experiences and ideas.

In Norwalk, the lack of parental involvement in a more comprehensive, consistent and united way may not have minimized the effect of any "silencing" going on in classrooms. Only 11% of parents had given voice in schools to their children's life at home, their holidays, culture or religion by making or helping make class presentations. In Stamford, 27% of the parents helped with the presentations either by speaking themselves or by

arranging for speakers to come to the classrooms or schools. This number is low as there are many opportunities, like "International Day" or "Multicultural/Diversity Day", to enable parents to contribute to their children's feeling of pride in their cultural heritage. Taking advantage of these opportunities encourage students to feel that their schools is an extension of their family life.

On the other hand, sixty percent of Norwalk Muslim students said that in the last four years they had made presentations or written about their holidays, culture or religion. In Stamford, 91% have made presentations, or have written about, their holidays, culture or religion. All the students, in both Norwalk and Stamford, said that their friends enjoyed their presentations. While the issue of "silencing" cannot be adequately addressed by one presentation or one written report in four years, Muslim parents need to be aware of the marginalization their children are facing in their schools.

Another important research that *minority parents, and especially Muslim families, need to be aware of is what Fordham⁷⁵ has termed "racelessness".* According to her research, many minority students who have managed to succeed in school have done so at the expense of their own home culture. Fordham has criticized the educational system for forcing the minority students to cling to an imposed and largely false American dream, thereby achieving individualistic rewards without regard for the communities to which the students belong. Fordham, an African-American, asks, "Are we willing to have our children defined as successful even though they display very little commitment to the Black community? Or are we more committed to the integrity of the existing cultural system in the Black community and, therefore, willing to sublimate our individual goals for the collective advancement of our people?"

Muslim American parents will have to consider these issues as they weigh the pros and cons of getting involved in a multicultural educational system. By being involved, parents can make sure that their home culture is not something that the child learns to disregard. As Sleeter and Grant⁷⁶ have pointed out, students from different ethnic groups can only feel pride in their culture if the accomplishments of the "people of color" are also incorporated in the school curriculum. In this regard, multicultural education can be a great starting point to correct the misinformation concerning Islamic contributions to the sciences that is routinely taught all over the Western world. Dr. K. Ajram, in his book,

The Miracle of Islamic Sciences,⁷⁷ writes against this "wholesale (inexcusable) omission of the contribution of Islam" to the Sciences. After a comprehensive evaluation of Islamic contributions to what we call science today, Ajram writes:

"Thus, the obvious impression is that the eyes of humankind were opened to the unknown worlds solely by European pioneers. The contributions made by explorers or religions other than the white Anglo-Saxon or Christian are entirely omitted."

MCE Insists on Parent-Teacher Partnership

MCE will also help to bring about the process of "connected knowing" that Belenky et al., and Murrell⁷⁸ have emphasized. Through this process a connection can be established between the culture of the home and the culture of the school. This "connected knowing" results in a "partnership" between parents and teachers, and provides ways of addressing the concerns of writers like Meier⁷⁹ who write that:

"The heart of the democratic dilemma is how to make the formal culture accessible to all without requiring renunciation of a student's own culture."

The "dilemma" that Meier talks about is caused by the "striking discontinuity between teacher and student diversity."⁸⁰ "Culturally responsive education"⁸¹ may seem threatening to some teachers, majority of whom are "white, female, and from the upwardly mobile working class." The majority of the school administrators are also white, male, and from the middle class, although there are a growing number of white, female, middle class candidates preparing for these jobs.⁸²

The role of the teacher and administrator is crucial to a child's education and future, because of it affects the extent and effectiveness of parental involvement and multicultural education. Giroux has called teachers "Transformative Intellectuals" who can learn about the community they teach and then "create a classroom in which students can understand and appreciate linguistic differences."⁸³ Thus, the educating of the educators is the first priority of minority groups within the dominant culture. The city of Stamford's "Islamic Women's Group" has been providing this service by its cake program, district-wide presentations, providing teachers resource materials, and by participating in other diversity related activities.

Parents Who Visit Schools Are Favored By Teachers

For MCE to succeed, Muslim parents need to "go to school" with their children. This means that parents need to be at school as often as possible with the intention and resolve of being constructive and helpful, which also includes looking at the classroom and its activities critically. According to Derek Toomey's⁸⁴ study of Australian schools, parents who are willing to come to school and who come to school are often favored by the teachers. With 33% of Muslim parents of Stamford visiting their children's classrooms once a year, and another 12% visiting once a month, teachers are not likely to 'favor' those parents or the children. In Norwalk, 46% of the Muslim parents are seen by the teacher once a year, whereas 28% said they visit the classroom once a month. Once again the numbers are not encouraging. The parents who come to school gain more confidence and get more involved. Anne Henderson⁸⁵, commenting on this study, writes: "A cycle of positive reinforcement leads to gains for those children whose parents come to school and shuts out families who are more comfortable at home." This tendency of teachers and staff to shut out parents also affects relationships between the parents who are already coming to the schools and those who are "newcomers", especially if they are minorities. This study explains why 70% of Norwalk Muslim parents felt uncomfortable going into the schools and 50% of Stamford parents feel un-welcomed. This survey also confirms Lareau's⁸⁶ findings that although working-class parents want their children to do well, they prefer to leave their child's education entirely up to the teacher. It is easier for middle-class parents to work as partners with their children's teachers because most are professionals and have more confidence. But, as Lareau emphasized, it would be unfair for educators to assume that because a parent belongs to the "working class", he/she does not want to see their child succeed.

Parental Absence From Schools Destructive to the Family

While some schools – that is, the principals and teachers – do not agree with the parent-teacher partnership paradigm⁸⁷, there are many others who believe that parent involvement is fundamental to a healthy system of public education. As Henderson⁸⁸ puts it, "It is central to our democracy that parents and citizens participate in the governing of public institutions. It is also destructive to the family to shut parents out of their children's experience in school."

The parent-teacher partnership is crucial and is at the heart of

multicultural education. But it is only within the last few years that teachers' training programs have begun to pay sufficient attention to the issues of diversity. Teachers, and their biases, give every class curriculum its special character. What a teacher knows, or has been taught, about a subject is then transmitted to hundreds more. How a teacher is trained and to what she is exposed to decides many social, political and economic issues. "A teacher's own self-awareness regarding matters of culture, ethnicity, educational purpose and societal injustice are all part of the sociocultural context knowledge that should be included in the knowledge base of teaching."⁸⁹ Other writers realize that the way that teachers guide classroom discourse, may serve either to reinforce prevailing attitudes and practices that are working against minority families and students, or can help maintain a truly democratic dialogue by explaining and celebrating diversity and interdependence.⁹⁰

Democracy at Work; Open Debate Opens Minds

When they learn to speak about their religion Muslim students begin to participate in the democratic process in this country. As Sleeter and Grant wrote:

"Practicing democracy also means learning to articulate one's interests, openly debate issues with one's peers, organize and work collectively with others, acquire power, exercise power, and so forth."⁹¹

The survey shows that Norwalk and Stamford Muslim students are already developing "a sense of political efficacy" and are "practicing social action strategies which teaches them how to get power without violence" (Sleeter and Grant). The only difference between the two cities is the level of parental involvement and the level of multiculturalism in the curriculum. Whereas Norwalk students said that 60% of their parents were not involved in their schools, Stamford students said that 36% of parents were not involved in their schools. The survey shows that whereas both Norwalk and Stamford students have faced "anti-Islamic" remarks from their classmates (40% in Norwalk and 45% in Stamford), none of the Norwalk parents were aware of that, whereas 32% of the parents in Stamford were aware of the negative experiences. With all the parental involvement in Stamford, there were still at least 23% of the parents who did not know what is happening in their children's schools, and in Norwalk, at least 45% of the parents did not know what their children are facing in their educational institutions.

Whereas the data does show that the schools are a more challenging experience for the Stamford Muslim students than for Muslim students in Norwalk, (see Student responses on what the School means to them), the difference can be understood when we examine other research studies that have been done in multicultural education and parental involvement. Muslim students are facing a majority culture each day of their school experience, which can become so overpowering that it can result in the "silencing" which Fine⁹² and Giroux⁹³ have discussed in their works. In addition Revicki, in his 1981 study⁹⁴, confirmed that parental involvement will result in factors associated with student achievement, which include a higher degree of self-acceptance and higher educational and occupational expectations. The data of Stamford Student survey demonstrates that these children are facing a challenge that is crucial in making them active and self-assured members of a pluralistic society. Because of the community/parental support, students can choose between remaining silent or being "silenced" by the overwhelming nature of any majority culture.

Conclusion

While private Islamic schools may be the best option for Muslim students in the United States who are trying to preserve their religious, cultural and ethnic characteristics, many communities have no option but to send their children to public schools. This paper has studied the success of one community of Muslim activists who have combined Multicultural education (MCE) and parental involvement in their public school system to help nurture a diverse, united, and caring Islamic community. The Muslim community of the city of Stamford, Connecticut, today is home to four week-end Islamic schools, serving not only Stamford residents, but also "out-of-towners" who have also found Stamford more open and welcoming to Muslims. The Muslim community of the city of Norwalk has done well too, in spite of low parental involvement in schools. The data suggest that higher achievement scores or recognition of one or two Muslim students will only continue generating benefits if the community gets involved in united, consistent efforts for the benefit of all the children.

Stamford's Example

The Islamic Women's Group has worked at the grassroots level, bringing diverse Muslim peoples together for action. The Islamic Women's Group has also involved the parents and students in other projects around the city, like a monthly program of feeding the hungry in a homeless shelter. This

"Feeding the Homeless" by the Islamic Women's Group will celebrate the beginning of its eleventh year in October 2000. The Group, keeping their own children in mind, are working with the Ferguson Public Library to present an annual program on Islamic holidays and commemorations. Last year, the library hosted a public program on "The Hajj" for which many books, videos and CDs were ordered by the Ferguson. The Islamic Women's Group has been providing different Islamic media catalogues for this purchasing program.

For over a decade, Muslim parents of the city of Stamford have worked tirelessly in the public school systems to bring their children's Islamic culture and holidays into a multicultural education setting. Like other minorities in the city, and similar to the experiences of many Muslim parents in Norwalk, Muslim families of Stamford have also faced administrators, teachers and other parents who do not believe in working together in a partnership. At such times, it is important for parents to realize that the students they leave every day in the care of teachers and administrators are their children. The public schools are there because of the taxes everyone pays. To be vigilant and cautious about their children's education and care is part of what parenting is all about. Both Stamford and Norwalk need to find ways in which to foster teacher-parent partnerships to help their children in schools.

Recommendations

1. Masjids and Islamic Centers need to work on educational issues. They need to provide ESL (English as a Second Language) facilities in the center. Homework Clubs need to be set up to help those students whose parents may not be able to assist them. Students in public schools need to have special forums to address their concerns. (See suggestions by Students below) They need to be encouraged to publicly speak on different topics in these forums.
2. Young Muslim men and women need to be encouraged to seek teaching positions. Not only is there a dire need for teachers in Islamic schools throughout the country, but Muslim teachers need to be in public schools as well. If teachers are "Transformative Intellectuals" and are the "major actors in the process of cultural and social reproduction" (Goodlad, 1990)⁹⁵, then we need to work to bring talented and bright Muslim teachers into the schools.
3. Teachers Resource materials must be provided by every Islamic Center

or Parent group to the public schools in their area. An excellent source for this information is the Council on Islamic Education, Fountain Valley, California⁹⁶. Teachers will not refuse parents who want to come to share their child's holidays with his/her friends. When parents go for such presentations, they should bring along a friend who can help or go as a family. Use age appropriate material for the presentation. Sharing of "Eid" clothes, food, cards, posters, prayer rug, etc. make the presentation "student friendly". Additional information on presentations in the classrooms can be obtained from the Islamic Women's Group in Stamford, Connecticut.⁹⁷

4. Parents need to go to their children's classrooms more frequently and consistently. Many parents who go to their children's classrooms in elementary schools stop going in the schools in middle and high schools. Parent-teacher partnership is crucial at every stage, specially at the middle school level, when children are reaching adolescence.

5. For a "total-immersion cultural experience" (a geography multicultural program at Hillside School in Needham, MA.)⁹⁸, the Islamic Centers can host students from the local schools to educate them about Islam and its holidays. Remember that because of the "separation of church and state", most religious programs and celebrations (like those on Christmas and Hanukah) are brought into the classrooms as "cultural" experiences, or "ethnic" holidays.

6. Colleges and universities in the area need to have courses offered by Muslim teachers on Islam and the Islamic way of life. Once again, high school students can spend a day at the college or university to attend a special program focusing on Islam.

7. To open the public schools to the Muslim families, the Islamic Centers or their leaders can work to use school space for community events. Studies by Armor⁹⁹ and Wagenaar¹⁰⁰ show that the higher these kind of "community involvement and support" programs, along with direct parental involvement in the classrooms, the higher the level of achievement of the student. Stamford has twice held its masjid fundraisers in a public school. Girl Scouts of the Islamic Faith have also attended many scouting functions in local schools. This helps to make students feel confident and empowered.

8. Parental involvement in a partnership with the teacher and the school makes learning and teaching both easier. Students' self-identity and self-esteem is strengthened by parent-teacher partnership. Parents who have not been in their children's schools for many years may find that students may

not feel comfortable with their presence in a 'territory' they know to be worlds apart from their home lives. Children may be quite different in schools and may have learned ways to socialize by either adopting "silencing" as a practice or may have decided to pretend to be "raceless." Whatever mode of behavior a child may have adjusted to, a parent's sudden interest in coming to school will not be a pleasant experience for both. But it is important to keep in mind that children's appreciation and respect for their parents (and vice versa) grows with parent-teacher partnerships.¹⁰¹

9. For successful Islamic Schools, the same parent-teacher partnership must be emphasized.

10. Muslims need to form committees of parents to meet with the Board of Education and other minority groups to keep all doors of communication open. The inherent, natural and necessary diversity that Islam insists on is the strength of the Muslim community. All committees need to be examples of Islamic diversity and multiculturalism.

Students Have The Last Word

Norwalk students made these suggestions for parents to help make it easier for them to be Muslims in their schools:

"We have to make Islamic experiences positive. In our gatherings, people have to teach in a positive, interesting way. Once we learn about our religion, we will be able to talk to our friends about it."

"People associate the Middle East with Islam and everything that is going wrong there is blamed on the Muslims. We have to explain to them that just like there is the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Israel, so too, there are groups of Muslims who will do everything ---right or wrong--- to get what they want."

"We don't have a mosque and that is sad. If we had a mosque maybe our schools could come and see and learn about us."

"Major holidays and events need to be better represented in schools (Hajj, Ramadhan, both Eid celebrations)."

"It should be brought to the attention of the Board of Education that Islam is the fastest growing religion. I think we can accomplish more if we go right to the top."

"We need to make the principals and teachers aware of the restrictions

(food, clothing, behavior) that apply to an Islamic life. This way the awareness about the children will trickle down to the teachers Muslim children to feel more comfortable in the schools."

"It would be great if we could plan and organize teacher-parent-child activities during major Islamic holidays."

"We have to emphasize that Islam is not a cult. It is one of the three major monotheistic religions of the world, with over one billion followers. If someone asks me about Islam and terrorism, I tell them that I know many Muslims all over the place but I have never seen or met a fanatic or terrorist."

Stamford students had these suggestions for parents to help make it easier for them to be Muslims in their schools:

"Our Islamic community should have activities involving students and the schools."

"By being active we can change the negative media effects into positive realities. We should voice our opinions. 'Their' parents are always in the school. 'They' are involved in everything."

"In some of my classes I am the only non-white. It is not easy to speak up in class. But going to a week-end Islamic school that discusses issues and encourages us to take part in discussions, makes it easier for me to talk to my friends and present my point of view."

"We need to have more Islamic books in the libraries --- the public one and the one in schools. We need to have speakers in the schools and our Islamic centers who will teach us how to present our point of view."

"When parents or others make classroom presentations, they should bring visual aides, like pictures, videos, or tapes. Students should help to do various tasks that will generate interest. Presentations should have longer "Question & Answer" session so that students can clear things they are confused about."

"Parents need to tell the teachers more about Islam so that they can educate others. We have to become more knowledgeable so that we

can clear up misconceptions about Islam."

"I am glad that we have community activities for the youth, like the week-end sports club. We need to do more things together as a community. Maybe we can bring our schools friends to these games."

"We need to tell our school friends about Islam in general and about our holidays --- the fun we have, our traditions, our culture."

"If we are trained to talk in front of people, we will have confidence in schools. We have to believe in ourselves."

"A soldier of the Israeli Army came to our school to speak to us about the 'just war' Israel is waging on the Muslims. He talked about my country in such a wrong way, but I could not speak up. We should have a soldier from our country to tell them our point of view."

"I heard the Israeli soldier, too. A boy in our school, his mother brought him to speak to us. Can she do that?"

"We need to learn how to publicly speak on issues like Islamic laws concerning the dress code, alcohol, dating, food. These are the questions Muslim students at school are asked about."

"We visited friends in New Jersey. Islam is big in New Jersey. We need to throw light on Islam so that we get rid of the stereotypes people have about women being degraded, terrorism and our daily living laws. We do not degrade women, we are not terrorists, we are only working for a better life."

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Appendix A

The Stamford Advocate Coverage of Islam and local Muslims:

Headline	Date	Page	Subject	Subject
Final days of Ramadan	1/19/99	A3	Community Services	
Muslims reach out to quake victims [Stamford Islamic Center, 975-2642]	8/21/99	A3	Community Services	
Groups rush to aid Turks [The Stamford Islamic Center] [earthquake]	8/19/99	A1+	Community Services	
Muslims begin holiday with prayers for Iraq	12/19/98	A1+	Holidays and & Festivals	Ramadan
Views of area Muslims mirror religion's diversity	8/22/98	A1+	Muslims	
Learning to live together: the message of Islam For Muslim women, holy month also time to educate others [Islamic Women's Group]	3/23/98 1/4/98	A3 A1+	Muslims Holidays & Festivals	Ramadan
Ramadan's fast reminds Muslims of the spiritual Islamic community savors unity; area Muslims observe holy month of Ramadan [see also Holidays and Festivals]	12/31/97 2/3/97	A3+ A3+	Muslims Muslims	

Muslims around the world begin month of spiritual discipline	1/10/97	A1+	Holidays & Festivals	Ramadan
Area Muslims celebrate Islamic holy days [ill.]	3/4/95	A1+	Churches	Annunciation
Building identity and a place to worship [Islamic Community of Fairfield County] [ill.]	1/6/94	A6	Muslims	Religion
Spotlight on scholarship in Stamford [IS] [ed]	5/28/93	A24	Scholarship	
Stamford High Muslim student is Presidential Scholar	5/25/93	A3	Local People	
Islamic Women's Group nourishes good will at schools during holidays [ill.]	3/23/93	A3	Holidays and Festivals	
Springdale pupils learn meaning of Ramadan. Children share a special day	4/27/90	A3	Local News	
Cultural faceoff: Muslims at UConn talk about Rushdie threats [ill.]	3/1/89	A3+	Books and Authors	

Coverage on Islam in all Norwalk Newspapers

Headline	Date	Page	Subject	Subject
Oklahoma city bombing and student's reactions	4/24/95	P1		
10,000 may join Islamic convention	3/4/96	1+	Islam Convention	
Norwalk Moslems Celebrate Ramadan, and Their Faith	1/30/98	B1	Living	Social, Arts & Entertainment

Appendix B

Parents' Survey	Stamford	Norwalk
Attended PTA conferences twice a year	81%	71%
Went to the child's classroom once a week	32%	14%
Saw the teacher once a month	12%	28%
Went to the child's classroom once a year	33%	46%
Went to the classroom once a day	23%	12%
Feels welcome in the child's school	50%	30%
Parents who know that their children have made a presentation at school which explains their own holidays, their religion	64%	30%

Parents who have talked about their Muslim holiday, culture or religion in their child's class (Elementary, Middle and/or High School)	27%	11%
Parents that have spoken to the teacher about the Muslim holiday	27%	15%
Have made no contribution in explaining Islam in the school	9%	44%
Are pleased with their children's report card	100%	100%
Are not aware whether their children belong to the higher reading and math groups or in Honors/Advanced Placement classes	40%	72%
Students who reported being in the higher educational groups	37%	20%
Believes that their children have never experienced any negative comments about their religion	68%	100%
Parents who listed "ethical and moral behavior" as one of their major concerns	56%	100%
Parents who listed "anti-Islamic incidences" as one of their major concerns	29%	0%
Parents who listed "safety" as one of their major concerns	100%	100%
Parents who listed "grades" as their major concern	11%	0%
Believes that the City and School is "friendly to Muslims/Islam"	56%	57%

Believes that the City and School is "hostile to Muslims/Islam"	0%	0%
Blames the "TV/media" for false representation of Muslims/Islam	100%	100%
Feels that the local media is improving coverage about Islamic activities in their cities	74%	29%
The local media covers Islamic events fairly	58%	28%
Parents who are pleased with the Islamic coverage by the local media	74%	13%
Feels the need for an Islamic School in the area	77%	15%
Both parents work outside the house	51%	59%
Average number of children in the public school system	2	3
Families that speak English fluently or sufficiently to communicate with their children's teachers	78%	72%

Children's Survey**Stamford****Norwalk**

Parent "Involved" but only attending bi-yearly Parent-teacher conferences or once-in-a-while meeting with the teacher	36%	40%
Parents "Very Involved" in the school	28%	0%
Parents are "Not At All" involved in school	36%	60%
Students who Want "more" parental involvement	55%	40%

Students who prefer "no" parental involvement	18%	20%
Those who answered "Don't Care" to parental involvement	27%	40%
Students who feel "Great" in their school	46%	42%
Students who feel "Good" in school	36%	30%
Students who feel "Fine" in school	0%	28%
Students who feel "Not So Good" in school	18%	0%
Students who feel "Bad" in school	0%	0%
Students who identify with school as "My School"	70%	42%
Students who feel their school is "Just a school" as opposed to "My School"	30%	58%
Students who feel "I hate school"	0%	0%
Those who feel comfortable talking about their religion and culture	82%	62%
Those who feel uncomfortable talking about Islam	18%	38%
Have faced negative remarks about Islam from classmates	45%	44%
Have faced negative remarks about Islam in a humorous or "joking" manner	18%	18%
Experienced no negative remarks about Muslims or Islam	37%	38%

Those who feel their town is "Not very biased against Islam"	73%	59%
Those who feel their town is "Very biased"	0%	19%
"Not sure" about their town	0%	22%
Town is "friendly to the Muslims and Islam"	27%	0%
Feel that their friends "Have Positive Feelings for Islam"	72%	43%
Feel that their friends "Don't like Muslims and Islam"	9%	0%
Feel that their friends "Don't Really Care"	19%	57%
Those who chose "Media" is to be blamed for the negative perception about Islam as their first choice	64%	80%
Those who chose "Action of some Muslims around the world" as being also responsible for the negative image of Islam as their second choice	9%	58%
Any parent or community person presented a talk about an Islamic holiday, etc. in their middle or high school	28%	0%
Students who made a presentation on Islam in their classrooms	91%	62%
Those who feel that the presentation had a positive reaction on classmates	100%	100%

Those who thought that more class presentations on Islam by "someone" would help classmates understand their religion and culture	100%	100%
Parent or Siblings provide help in homework assignments	78%	72%