From the Desk of the Principal, Ms. Ismail

The blessings of the month of Ramadan are now upon us and I am truly blessed and grateful for the successful completion of our 28th school year. I look back at the 2013-2014 school year with pride at the many accomplishments and hard work of our students, staff and parents, as a team we are achieving great things. I want to thank every parent for your support and partnership in our journey to educate your children and for helping to instill a love of learning and a love of the Allah in our students. As a team we are fulfilling our mission of seeing every student excel academically and grow socially and spiritually.

The theme of the year was, Purifying Our Hearts, Putting Faith into Action. This theme was evident in the many school events, service projects and daily interactions of the students and staff. Whether we were donating winter coats for Syrian refugees, collecting money for sick children through the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, performing Spoken Word pieces about our faith or recreating the pillar of Hajj in a theatrical performance, students, teachers, staff and parents were Putting their Faith into real and meaningful actions.

Also, together we made some great strides in technology. Thanks to your generous donations, Aqsa School now has three Promethean Interactive White Boards, a number of new computers and new projectors. Inshallah this summer the Mother’s Club will put their fundraising efforts to great use by further updating our technology in the computer lab and throughout the building.

Finally, as I reflect on the hard work and tremendous efforts of the staff, students, parents and volunteers, I am full of pride at the significant achievements and advances we have made and continue to strive for. Whether it is continually enhancing curriculum, implementation of new reading and math programs or addition of new advisory study skills courses, Aqsa staff and students strive for excellence in all that they do. I am truly grateful for the collective efforts and ask that Allah reward you all greatly for your efforts, time and dedication.

Let us reflect on just a few of our many accomplishments this year:

**Accomplishments of the 2013-2014 School Year**

For the 3rd Year in a ROW, Aqsa Student takes home top $20,000 scholarship prize! For the 3rd year in row an Aqsa school senior has won the top national scholarship offered by Junior Achievement, the Henry Crown $20,000 scholarship. This year’s recipient, Jenna Baker was chosen because she possessed the qualities exemplified by this scholarship, scholastic promise, motivation, moral character, leadership and good citizenship. Previous Aqsa School recipients were Layalee ElZahdan ’13 and Bana Zayyad ’12.

**AQSA in the NEWS: Chicago Tribune articles, National Public Radio interviews and Radio Islam.** It has been a year filled with great accomplishments and the public took note. Hear Salma Demir and Eman Elkossie recite their spoken word pieces on NPR and celebrate the success of senior Jenna Baker as she is recognized for her $20,000 top prize win for the Junior Achievement Scholarship in the Chicago Tribune!
Ms. Ismail continued

Check out these wonderful articles and interviews today.
National Public Radio, WBEZ 91.5FM, Afternoon Shift Program:
https://storify.com/WBEZ/afternoon-shift-louder-than-a-bomb

AQSA Students take ACADEMIC COMPETITIONS by storm: Throughout the year Aqsa Students have competed in regional, state and national competitions. We are so proud of their accomplishments and here is a list of just some the successes this year.

SCIENCE
You Be the Chemist: Our junior high team did an excellent job and 7th grader Amatullah Mir placed 2nd and advanced to STATE!

STATE SCIENCE FAIR: Aqsa School Sent 19 Team to Science Fair REGIONAL’S where there are over 500 participants and we had 11 OUTSTANDING with 9 of them moving on to STATE, and we had 8 receive 1st.

At STATE, with over 1500 participants, we sent 9 projects and we received 5 GOLD’S, one of them being Best in Category, and 3 SILVER’S.

WYSE- Worldwide Youth in Science and Engineering Congratulations to our team and our two finalists, Noor Jaber, 12th and Amal Syed 11th who will both advanced in the category of Computer Science.

MATH
3M Math Challenge: Our 3 M, Math competition team outscored thousands of entries to be in the final top 50!

MATHCOUNTS: On Feb 15th 4 Aqsa Junior High students competed at the MATHCOUNTS competition held at Rasmussen College. Our school was awarded a year subscription to OPLET, an online math problem library and math work creation tool.

ENGLISH
Regional Spelling Bee: Amatullah Mir, 7th grade, proudly represented Aqsa School at the Scripps Regional Spelling Bee on February 11,2014 and WON! She continued on to make us proud at the State competition.

National Islamic School Essay Competition: Three High school students were named finalists in the national Islamic school essay contest.

Letter About Literature Essay Contest: Aqsa School had 15 semi finalists and 1 finalist in the Letters about literature essay competition.

Spoken Word Competition: Louder Than A Bomb: A poetry team represented Aqsa School for the first time this year and advanced to the finals!
100% of graduates college bound for the 12th year in a row!

As a college prep school we truly emphasis the importance of higher education and pursuing learning all of our lives. Once again we have fulfilled that goal with 100% of our seniors heading off to colleges and universities this fall. We are proud of the class of 2014 and pray that Allah bless you with the best of success in this life and the next.

Over $800,000 in merit and service scholarships earned by class of 2014!

The true sign of our academic success is how we compare with students nationwide. The graduating class of 2014 was so impressive academically and in their service efforts that it earned them merit and service based scholarships totaling over $800,000! Mashallah, those numbers speak volumes to the talent and intelligence of our young scholars. We look forward to hearing about their college academic pursuits soon.

NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS WON by AQSA GRADUATES

In addition to winning the top national prize of $20,000 for the 3rd year in a row from the Junior Achievement organization, Aqsa students have been the proud recipients of a number of other National scholarships and merit recognitions. Here are some of the others earned this year:

COMCAST NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP for Leadership and Academics

NATIONAL HONORS SOCIETY SCHOLARSHIP for Leadership, Service, Scholarship and Character

MUSLIM WOMEN’s ALLIANCE SCHOLARSHIP for Academics and Leadership

ISLAMIC SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP for Academics and Leadership

JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP for Service, Academics and Leadership

LIFESOURCE SCHOLARSHIP for Service

And a multitude of UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIPS for Merit and Leadership
Dear Aqsa Families,

Assalamu’alaikum. Insha’Allah this newsletter reaches you in the best of health and iman. Alhamdullilah we have completed another successful school year and have begun planning for the upcoming school year.

One concern that faces many students during the summer is a loss of information from the school year due to the students not working on academic concepts over the summer. To avoid the “Summer Slide” as it is commonly called, students should be reading daily, looking over notes from this past year, doing sample math problems or enrolling in an academic class over the summer. Many of the area park districts, Moraine Valley Community College or other local schools and colleges offer courses for pre-k through 12th grade students to help them retain this information or strengthen their skills. These courses range in duration from one week to classes that meet all summer. It is highly recommended that you enroll your child in a summer course or insure that he/she spends some time each day reading and completing academically enriched work.

As we begin preparation for the new school year, it is important that families begin preparing for the beginning of the school year as well. Please make sure that you order your child’s school uniform early so that it is available by the first day of school. Students in pre-k and kindergarten are not required to wear a uniform. Students in grades 1-5 wear the uniform which consists of the dark blue pants and the Aqsa School green shirt for boys and the Aqsa School jumper and green Aqsa School shirt for the girls. Students in grades 6-12 must have the Aqsa School skirt, Aqsa School green shirt with school emblem, black, dark blue or forest green leggings for underneath the skirt, socks that are at least ankle high (black, white, navy blue or forest green), flat, plain dress shoes (black, dark brown, navy blue) and the Aqsa School blue or white scarf (available at Diana’s Fashions). For gym, all students must purchase the blue sweatpants and long-sleeved Aqsa School gray shirt. Students in the elementary grades may also wear the short-sleeved gym shirt. These items may be purchased at SchoolBelles in Bridgeview, IL on Harlem Ave. Grades 6-12 also have the option of wearing a jilbab all year which can be purchased at Diana’s Fashions. A student deciding to wear jilbab must do so for the entire year and must wear the Aqsa School scarf with it daily. For days when the weather is a bit cooler, students may purchase the Aqsa School pull-over sweater or the cardigan also available at SchoolBelles. No other sweaters will be permitted. Students out of uniform will receive a detention so it is imperative that families make sure that all uniform items are purchased and that your child comes in complete uniform each day.

As always, thank you for the opportunity to educate your child(ren). Please feel free to contact me with any questions, comments, or concerns you may have. I wish everyone a safe, healthy, and blessed Ramadan and look forward to seeing you when school begins.

Sincerely,

Ms. Mersch-Zenki

Assistant Principal/Dean of Students
Dear Parents,

This has been an amazing year. It has gone by with the blink of an eye. I would like to start off by thanking you for allowing me the joy of teaching your child. This class has been a special bunch to me. Not only have they grown academically but in maturity as well. They came to me with dolls and toys and are leaving me still with dolls and toys. The only difference being that they now know that there is a time to play and a time to learn. I love their funny stories, their eagerness to learn, and willingness to do new exciting things. It has been a pleasure working with you and I enjoyed teaching each and every one of your children. May Allah bless and watch you and your children this summer and always.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Huda Mohamed

Kindergarten News

Reading
Students grew so much this year in reading! This year I worked on motivating students to read. Students were introduced to many types of authors from our author studies. Students filled in their reading logs, read with flashlights, and silently read during nap time. The Daily 5 centers improved their writing, word work, and reading! Students can read over 100 sight words!

Phonics
Students learned vowel diagraphs, short vowels and long vowels this year. This helped them with their reading and comprehension!

Science
We learned about seasons, weather, plants, how things move, lifecycles, landforms, heat and light! We grew bean plants, and we set our butterflies free, and created a science experiment to observe how water moves through a plant.

Social Studies
We learned about heroes, families, how people lived long ago, and the world around us.

Summer!
Please make sure you complete the summer packet that is in their portfolios.

More elementary News on page 4
1st Grade Memories

This year the first grade class was especially enthusiastic and eager to learn. Their unbridled curiosity helped them develop by leaps and bounds. I hope you will be able to cherish and reminisce upon this school year as you turn the pages of the portfolio we have compiled. It should give you a glimpse of how the first graders tried to compose their thoughts into sentences. Their development is especially evident through the various samples documented from all the subject areas from writing to science and social studies.

Reading: We completed our Reading Street Series (30 story selections). We covered skills like compare and contrast, identifying plot and story structure. Every week we reviewed sight words and vocabulary that greatly improved and developed reading fluency. One of the highlights was the class play Where Are My Animal Friends?.

Math: We strengthened our adding and subtracting skills and strategies. We regularly practiced with addition/subtraction flashcards and became comfortable with solving word problems. The use of manipulatives enabled the students to think critically while learning these concepts. The number line and place value was covered regularly and culminated with the Hundred Days of School celebration. We also covered patterns, geometric shapes, fraction, probability, graphs and time.

Writing and Grammar: By the end of first grade the students have greatly developed their writing skills by always beginning a sentence with capitals and ending with appropriate end marks. They are able to write at least 3-5 sentences on a particular topic, while paying careful attention to detail and grammar. We are also able to identify a noun, pronoun, verb and adjective in a sentence. We regularly wrote in our journals and were able to edit, proofread and publish our writing in our quarterly writing workshops.

Science: We covered units on plants, animals, habitats, states of matter, heat, light and sound. We explored and experimented extensively with magnets, which was also the topic of our Science Fair project.

Social Studies: We covered communities from cities to suburbs. We learned about community helpers and different jobs (services vs. goods). We identified various landforms and practiced map reading and drawing. We also compared and contrasted life in the present and the past in relation to technology, education and transportation. The units we covered were: People Everywhere, Where We Live, World of Work, and Everything Changes.

Arabic: The First Graders have learned so much this year. They learned letter families, the un-connecting letters and connecting letters. We have developed our reading skills using the syllables. Students also learned to differentiate between the short and long vowel sounds, as well as soft and heavy sounds in comparison to English sounds. They also learned high frequency words, and sentence structure.

Islamic Studies: Students learned more suras from the 30th juz and the stories related to them. They enjoyed the projects we made that reflect the meaning of the suras such as "Azalzalah, Ad-Duha and Ash-Shams". Students also practiced hadith, Ibadat, Aqeedah (principles of the prophets of Allah and the books of Allah), as well as the seerah of Prophet Muhammad (SAAW).

2nd Grade

This year was full of excitement and intense learning. The second graders have worked very hard in each subject. They created wonderful "Sport Reports" as well as labeling body parts in the digestive system. The DAILY 5 has excelled their eagerness to read and write, and explore new ways to comprehend what they’re reading. The 2nd graders are ready for 3rd grade! It was my honor and a true blessing to have had these delightful intellectuals in my classroom.

Ms. Abed
3rd Grade news
Asslamu Alyakum,

Third grade has had a great quarter. This quarter we finished our novel study on *Charlotte’s Web*. We actually had the opportunity to watch a play at The Museum of Science and Industry in downtown Chicago. In math, we have been working on fractions and two digit multiplications. At first the students were intimated by this new subject matter, but alhamdullah the students have all come around and now have embraced this new subject matter. You can find the students always creating pizza fraction parties in the classroom. In science, we have ended the year explaining how healthy living helps our body stay strong. Lastly, the students have been learning about producers and consumers in our society. Inshallah, all the skills that we have worked on this year will help them become successful Muslim learners, and I know that they will all succeed in years to come.

Salam,
Mrs. Ahmad

4th Grade News

The fourth graders visited the Museum of Science & Industry. They visited exhibits that related to their science curriculum. They learned about the brain, bones, and healthy eating. Students also created and assessed the effects of tornadoes and tsunamis on the earth. The fourth graders discussed other natural disasters and the necessary precautions that must be taken in order to protect themselves. This class also completed a novel study on *Tiger Rising*, a book by Kate DiCamillo.

5th Grade News

We have lived, loved, laughed, played, studied, learned, and enriched our lives these past 9 months. It is amazing to watch my students grow. As I looked through the pictures of the learning that took place this year, I realize how much we have accomplished. We have completed four novel studies with strong themes. Ask any one of my students and they will be quick to answer which was their favorite. *Walk Two Moons* is certainly my favorite. The novel leaves you with a sense of appreciating everything you have in your life and never take anything for granted. We covered many new math concepts, our primary focus was fractions. Manipulatives were the key to understanding this often confusing concept. I am truly proud to have been a part of your learning experience.
This past fourth quarter, the English Department participated in the Book Buddy Program. Students wrote poems or short stories that were compiled into a book for all elementary students to treasure and keep. This program is a wonderful opportunity for all involved. Junior High and High School students get an opportunity to develop their writing skills and bond with elementary students. In addition, elementary students get to feel a sense of love and belonging through the interaction with an older student. They also experience the importance of reading when they receive their own book personally written for them!

Below is an example of one of the short stories written for a book entitled *The Time Traveler*:

"A Whole New World"  By Manar Salama

It was a very foggy afternoon. Nothing to do. Nothing to watch. Absolutely nothing. I made my way across the empty living room, and I reached for any random book. *Shiloh* the title read. I turned the blue paper back cover page and started reading. "The day Shiloh come, we’re having us a big Sunday dinner. Dara Lynn’s dipping bread in her glass of cold tea, the way she likes, and Becky pushes her beans up over the edge of her plate in her rush to get ‘em down." (Naylor 1) Suddenly, the fog outside seemed to have been clearing up. I sank into the big couch I was sitting on, and I let my mind wander for a bit.

"A rabbit goes lickety-split in front of me, then disappears. I went out hunting with Dad once, and he said that when you first scare up a rabbit, it hops a short way, then stops and looks back. That’s when you got to freeze. Can’t move nothing but your eyeballs, Dad says. What you have to look for is that shiny black dot—the rabbit’s eye. If you look for the whole rabbit, you almost never see him because he blends into the scenery." (Naylor, 45)

My heart was beating to every word I read off the page. I can see the sweat dripping off the boy’s neck. The pressure built up inside him is huge. I could tell by the way his heart hovers up and down. He stood there steadily not knowing what to do. He was confused. Seeing him so confused made me, myself worry. I hoped that all would turn out well for the kid even though I’m scared out of my mind.

About an hour later, I finished the book. I’ve come to the fact that I was in the same room when I started reading. The same environment. Yet, it felt like I was being transported into a whole other universe. Reading is like time travel. So if someone tells you time travel is impossible, tell them they’re wrong, because you can pick up a book—a book about the past—and you’ll feel like you’re there. Same applies to the present and the future. A book is a time-traveling machine, and the only way to transport, is to start reading the book!

In Freshman Writing, we ended the year with our Fictional Stories Unit. Students focused on character development, integrating symbolism and descriptive writing. The stories were laced with showing statements, unique characters and drama infused plot lines. Students also had an opportunity to experiment with Fan fiction and publish their stories online.
In order to improve our students’ reading levels, the English Department is requiring summer reading for all students enrolling in the 2014-2015 school year. All students will be assessed on the books they read over the summer, during the first full week of school. The assessment will be worth 100 points for each book that students are required to read.

If you feel like you will forget everything you read before the start of the school year, and you would like to take your test or tests earlier to ensure a better grade, you can come to Aqsa in the month of July from 11am-1pm and take your test. Please phone the school first to tell them you are coming.

Honors students must read three books on the list for their specified grade. Regular students must read two books. (If you do not know whether or not you are an Honors or Regular student, speak to the Dean.) Only read the books assigned to your grade level. If you have already read a book on this list, you must consult your English teacher for an alternate book.

In addition to the summer reading, you must also complete the informational text and essay assignment that is attached to this packet. (Please, obtain packet from front office or your English Teacher.)

6th Grade List
The Trumpet of the Swan by E. B. White
Mockingbird by Kathryn Erskine
Lemonade Wars by Jacqueline Davies
Rules by Cynthia Lord

7th Grade List
Because of Anya by Margaret Peterson Haddix
Touchblue by Cynthia Lord
Where I’d Like to Be by Frances O’Roark Dowell
Define Normal by Julie Ann Peters

8th Grade List
Under the Same Sky by Cynthia Defelice
Every Soul a Star by Wendy Mass
The House of the Scorpion by Nancy Farmer
The Maze Runner by James Dashner

9th Grade List
Juvie Three by Gordon Korman
Cheaper by the Dozen by Ernestine Gilberth Carey and Frank Gilberth Jr.
La Linea by Ann Jaramillo
Uglies by Scott Westerfeld

10th Grade List
The Wave by Todd Strasser
Trash by Andy Mulligan
Farewell to Manzanar by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston
For One More Day by Mitch Albom

11/12th Grade List
A Walk to Remember by Nicholas Sparks
Chew on This by Eric Schlosser and Charles Wilson
Emma by Jane Austen
Rebecca by Daphne du Maurier
The Hero Project: How We Met Our Greatest Heroes and What We Learned From Them by Robert and William Hatch
Autobiography of Malcolm X by himself
As the end of the year begins approaching, the junior high and high school math classes began reviewing and preparing for their final exams, which included about five chapters for each class on average. From review games to working with partners, the junior high and high school math students shined. As the 6th graders began learning how to add, subtract, multiply, and divide integers, they ended off the year playing review games enforcing this new concept. Our 7th graders succeeding in creating line graphs, line plots, histograms, and other charts to organize data. The Pre-Algebra students ended off the year by learning how to graph and solve linear equations and linear inequalities, which will help prepare them for Algebra 1 next school year. Meanwhile, we had our Algebra 1 students work on using and memorizing the quadratic formula to solve all types of quadratic equations, including non-factorable equations. Last, the Algebra 2 students were introduced to logarithms; they were

Salaam Alaikum,

Alhamdilillah we finished a successful year. This year, I pushed students to take responsibility for their learning and success. I am happy to say that I was able to integrate technology a lot in my classroom through the use of my tablet computer, graphing calculators, computer geometry programs, etc.

In Statistics, we took a day each week to learn about other aspects of math. These included the Fibonacci Sequence, Monty Hall Problem, etc. The reason for this was to instill a sense of appreciation for mathematics in my students. I wanted my students to see that math is more than formulas and equations.

Inshallah everyone has a great summer and we’ll see the students back again in the fall.

Ms. Asna Qureshi
Salam,
As the school year comes to an end. I wanted to share the wonderful things we have done to finish off the year in our Science classes!
In 6th Grade, the girls finished off their plate tectonics unit by looking at the effect of plate tectonics on the rock cycle! We also had the chance to look at how the earth, moon, and sun effect the different moon phases.
In 7th Grade, we completed the unit on Evolution and they created their own Natural Selection simulations. We then took a stroll through Ecology by observing species interactions, different factors that effect population growth and different methods of estimating population. They were able to use one of the methods of mark-capture and recapture in a lab activity the performed.
In Biology, students finished off the year looking at evolution and the evolution of populations. We discussed things such as gene flow, allele frequencies, and genetic drift and the effect it has on traits.
In AP Biology, students were busy preparing for their AP test which they took on May 23rd. Please may Duaa that our girls score well.
Alhamduliliah, I believe it has been a successful year and InshAllah our students will continue to apply what they learn. Have a great summer!
Ms. Lara Hamdan

Mothers' Club News

Goal 2013/14: Mothers’ Club Goal is Enhancing Technology and Teaching Methods. MC sponsored one of the 3 smart boards that were bought. Also, we are working with Ms. Omaima & Mr. Daoud Yehya to upgrade the computer lab which is used by all grades. We sponsored the JH & HI Quran competition. More requests are on our table to be filled. We will keep you updated. All were discussed in details & voted upon at our meetings.

International Food Fest and Bazar: Alhamdulillah, MC raised $2441.66 and received many compliments and words of encouragement about the food fest. MC would like to THANK Aqsa moms for their generous donations and their time, to all of Aqsa staff and teachers for their support and donations, may Allah (SWT) bless you all for your generosity. We would also like to THANK our student volunteers, you are outstanding and always make us proud. A special THANKS to our sponsors for supplying food, raffle prizes, and game prizes to our event. A small token gift will be sent out to all of the businesses that have supported us throughout the school year.

Thank you Thank you Thank you: Jazakum Allahu Khairan to our MOMS, STUDENTS, TEACHERS & STAFF, PARENTS, OUR COMMUNITY for the help, support and generous donations. With Allah (SWT) blessings, Mothers Club had a great and successful year Alhamdulillah. See you all again next school year Insha’Allah. All students were awarded with ice-cream as thank you from mothers club.

New MC 2014-15 officers: Lina Elzahdan (President), Mona Judeh (Vice President), Nada Salameh (Treasurer), Amanda Ramadan (Secretary).
Aqsa School wishes you and your family a Ramadan Mubarak!

♦ The school will be closed from July 28th-August 1st for Eid
♦ August 14th Junior High and High school orientation
♦ Visit our site for updated supply list
♦ Young Chicago Authors Summer Writing Program dates: July 21st-27th
♦ * Register at www.youngchicagoauthor.org

**Elementary Students:**
♦ Work on the summer packets that were in your portfolio
♦ Journal daily
♦ Keep working on your Ramadan chain and chart
♦ Complete your three book reports so that you can receive a small prize when you return to school
♦ Work on your Scholastic Reading Challenge

**Junior High and High School Students:**
♦ Make sure you are reading the books required for Summer reading
♦ Work on the summer packets given to you by your teachers