

This book can be used as a tool to guide our learning and teaching, and to revisit our orientation and infuse it with the Qur'ānic worldview. It can serve as a springboard of teaching ideas, a resource book to direct the process of planning the learning experience, and as a route to ponder reflective questions about our experience as facilitators of learning.



What is the purpose of this book?

- provide an Islamic approach to learning
- focus on learning that is transformative in nature
- encourage those who teach and learn to reflect and reassess the 'what', 'why', and 'how' questions of education

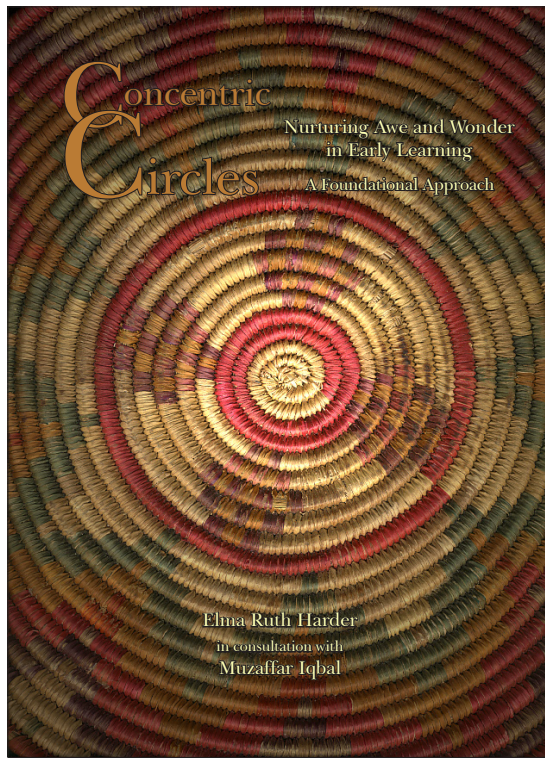
In what ways will this book help us?

- re-affirm our Qur'ānic worldview
- clarify our orientation and be committed to it
- decide what to learn
- decide how to learn
- develop integrated thematic units
- discover creative ideas for helping others learn
- become flexible in adopting, adapting, and extending ideas
- reflectively assess what we teach and learn
- reflectively assess how we teach and learn
- be filled with wonder and awe

What do we need?

- a desire to be rooted in the Qur'ānic worldview
- the belief that we are each on a journey of lifelong learning

THE APPROACH



This is a book for believers. This is a book that has arisen from the belief that we are here in this world for a purpose and together we can learn and understand and live, with intention and meaning. It is a book about the kind of learning that is transformative in nature, which touches the young learner and not-so-young learner at all levels.

This book addresses the parent and teacher, for this is where transformation begins. This book maintains that a facilitator caught up in the wonder of understanding things as they truly are is gripped with the fervent urgency to live on the Straight Path and that, when things are taken to heart, there is no doubt that passionate conviction leads to compelling action, and that this is the realm of learning.

It means we live what we believe.

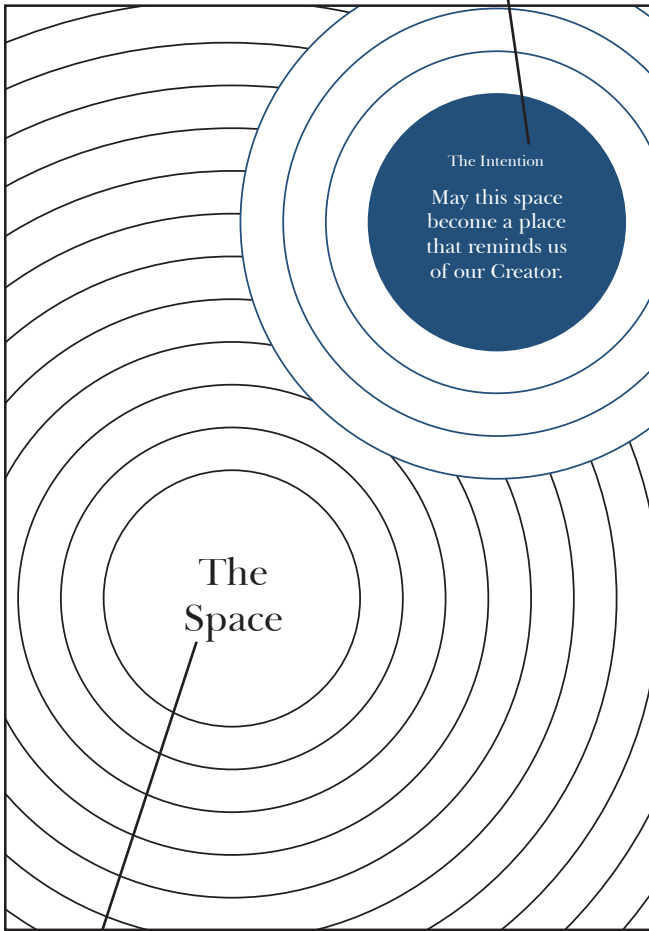
Transliteration Key

Arabic words are found throughout the text to encourage us to become more familiar and fluent with their meaning and application. Limited definitions are provided in the side panel of the page the first time a word appears, and can also be found in the index.

| | | | | |
|------|------|------|-----|---|
| ء | د d | ض ḍ | ك k | Arabic words are written in transliteration using these English letter equivalents. short: <u>ا</u> a; <u>ي</u> i; <u>و</u> u. long: <u>آ</u> ā <u>أ</u> a <u>إ</u> i <u>ي</u> iy diphthongs: <u>أو</u> aw <u>أى</u> ay |
| ب b | ذ dh | ط ṭ | ل l | |
| ت t | ر r | ظ ḏ | م m | |
| ث th | ز z | ع ʿ | ن n | |
| ج j | س s | غ gh | ه h | |
| ح ḥ | ش sh | ف f | و w | |
| خ kh | ص ṣ | ق q | ي y | |

About This Book

Each chapter begins with a consciously articulated intention. We can keep referring to this intention to reinforce our commitment and ensure that we do not lose sight of the real focus of our learning.

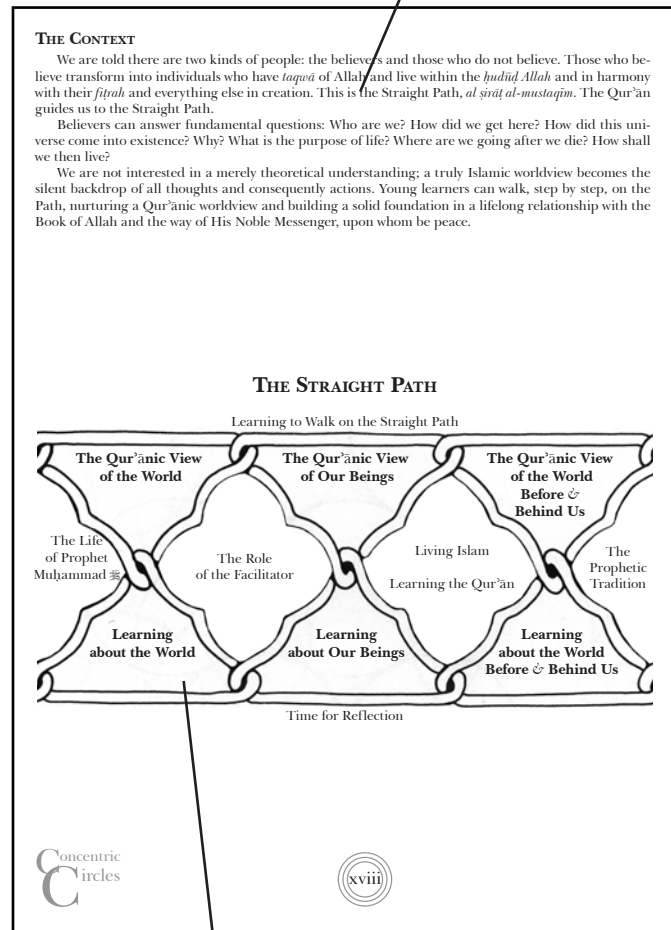


Each chapter focuses on an integral and constituent aspect of learning. There are seven chapters:

- The Two Learners
- The Space
- Time
- The Languages
- The Straight Path
- Threads and Themes
- The Tools

Each of these topics, as depicted by the visual, has layers of meaning which make an impact on everything else in concentric ways.

“The Context” introduces the general topic of each chapter by stepping back and viewing the wider horizon. It builds on the articulated intention of the chapter before encountering the more detailed content.



A “Graphic of Contents” arranges the main topics of a chapter in a visual form in order to show some of the relationships of the topics. Overall, the many parts make up the whole and everything is connected in multiple ways. The graphic differs for each chapter. Most are chosen from patterns in traditional Islamic art.

The initial portion of each chapter and topic is generally devoted to establishing a Qur'anic foundation and orientation with which we can approach the topic. This material is to help the not-so-young learner be rooted in the Qur'anic worldview.

Learning about the World We Can See

The most obvious things in the physical world are the earth, the seas, the sky, and all they contain. Everything that exists has functions, rights, and duties towards other creation as well as toward the Creator to Whom it submits, either willingly or unknowingly.

All things that exist have a *tasbeeh*, their own way of extolling and glorifying the Creator. The birds in the sky and the fish in the oceans, the mountains that stand firmly on earth and the planets that revolve in their fixed orbits—all glorify Allah, may He be Exalted. And among the human beings created by Allah, there have been those whose glorification was joined by the mountains and the birds and there have been a few chosen human beings whom Allah honour in special ways: Mūsa to whom He spoke; Ibrahim whom He made His *Khalīl*.

Our learning about the physical world in which nothing is superfluous can only be anchored in the Qur'an if we explore and discover the physical world in order to gain an understanding of realities beyond the physical world.

See phenomena in context. Consider how the sky, the oceans, the mountain ranges, the global icecaps, and other geographical features all come together as parts of Allah's creation. Use Qur'anic examples and stories related to oceans, mountains, and topographical features in lessons and familiarize young learners with the Qur'anic landscape that allows them to understand that what we see with our own eyes has inner dimensions as well.

Use the local regional topography to understand more about such geography. For instance, if you live in a mountainous area, highlight the Qur'anic references to mountains.

Help children develop an understanding and appreciation of the cosmic rhythm: the order of the night and the day, the rising and setting of the sun and moon, and the seasons and phenomena associated with them such as planetary motion, the growing of crops, migration of birds, movement of ocean currents, and seasonal winds. Emphasize how everything glorifies Allah. Make observations, keep records, and make charts to compile information, graph the data, and discuss the rhythms of the cosmos.

Study cycles to explore the relationships and interdependence of all aspects of the created world. See how the water cycle, the growth and regeneration of flora and fauna, the food chains, and the ecosystems are all part of one vast and diverse world, sustained by the One Who created it all.

Explore various systems in the body and see how they grow, coordinate, and change. Use examples of how healing occurs to demonstrate the marvels of the human body.

Whatever there is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Allah, and He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.
al-Hodid: 1
Khalīl
 friend

Indeed, We disposed the mountains to glorify [Allah]... at evening and fall dawn, and the birds [as well], in their flocks.
Sud: 18

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The
Straight
Path

A kaleidoscope of learning activities follows the more theoretical content. Here you will find kernels of ideas, which can translate into innumerable learning activities, especially as the concentric circles of concepts keep spreading and making more connections and relationships. Clarify the goals of learning, then choose activities that can help achieve these goals. First determine “what”, then “how”. Remember, these many ideas are just suggestions, and the optimum way to learn something will likely be a further adaptation of the idea.



“Time for Reflection” is the last section of each chapter. Here a list of questions encourages us to personally reflect on our own response to the ideas presented in the chapter. Such pages are designed to encourage the reader's participation with space for written response. Take time to look inward. Consider reflection an integral part of the learning process.

It may be helpful to collate photocopies of these sections, along with other personal notes, in a learning journal. Revisit the questions occasionally to see inner changes in focus and direction.

TIME FOR REFLECTION

Do I take time to reflect?

Do I think of my time as a **commodity**?
 How did I use my time?
 Did I lose any time today? How could I possibly lose it?
 Did I waste any time? Is wasting time the same as losing it?
 What about being short on time? When have I been short on time?
 Do I think I need more time? How can I make more time? Can I possibly buy time?
 Am I feeling stressed about the time in my life?

Do I think of my time as a **test**?
 Do I see the easy times as opportunities?
 Do I see the hard times as opportunities?
 If I am held accountable for how I have spent my minutes today, am I happy with my day?
 If the worthwhile moments were collected onto one side of a balance scale, and the unwhorthwhile moments were placed on the other, which side of the balance would be heavier?

Do I think of my time as a **gift**?
 Do I consider my moments special, because they have been given to me?
 Do I begin the day with a sense of celebration—this is a time for gratitude and joyous expression?
 What does it mean when people say they are having 'the time of their life'?
 Do I think about one day as better or worse than the next?
 Am I thankful for each new day?

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The
Time

The name of the chapter is generally found in the footer of the right-hand page. It keeps reminding us about the topic of the chapter.

Throughout the book, the text is supported by references to the Qurʾān which appear in the side panels. The English translation is given in italics, followed by the reference. The name of the *sūrah* is followed by the number of the *āyah*. The name of the *sūrah* is given, rather than its number, to encourage us to learn and use the names of the *sūrahs*.

The text is also supported by the traditions of the *sunnah*, drawn mainly from the collections of Bukhārī, Muslim, and Tirmidhi. References for *aḥādīth* are given at the end of the book in the reference section.

ASSESSMENT FOR THE NOT-SO-YOUNG LEARNER

O you who have faith! Be maintainers of justice and witnesses for the sake of Allah, even if it should be against yourselves or [your] parents and near relatives, and whether it be [someone] rich or poor, for Allah has a greater right over them. So do not follow [your] desires, lest you should be unfair, and if you distort [the testimony] or disregard [it], Allah is indeed well aware of what you do.

al-Nisāʾ: 135

O you who have faith! Be maintainers, as witnesses for the sake of Allah, of justice, and ill feeling for a people should never lead you to be unfair. Be fair; that is nearer to taqwā, and have taqwā of Allah. Allah is indeed well aware of what you do.

al-Māʾidah: 8

First as learners, then as facilitators of learning, we are here to lend expertise to the children in our care. How we do this is a dynamic and ever expanding endeavor. As educators, we are committed to reflection about our own teaching and learning. When I, as an individual who has chosen to help others to learn, reflect on my facility to do so, it is clear that I need to have an understanding of myself, an understanding of the young learner in my care, know the purpose of teaching, and be conscious of my accountability for what and how we learn. Self-assessment for the facilitator has to do with the full gamut of the learning process.

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, “Acquire knowledge. It enables its possessor to distinguish right from wrong; it lights the way to Heaven; it is our friend in the desert, our society in solitude, our companion when friendless; it guides us to happiness; it sustains us in misery; it is an ornament among friends, and an armour against enemies.”

Have I acquired knowledge? Does it help me distinguish right from wrong? Does it light the way to *jannah*? Is it my friend when I am alone? Does it bring happiness? Does it comfort me in misery? Does it enhance my interactions with friends? Does it protect me from enemies?

| SELF ASSESSMENT FOR THE FACILITATOR | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Name: Date: | Overall mark | Communication and Thinking | Preparation for Teaching | Atmosphere and Delivery | Personal / Professional Qualities | Personal Narrative |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| Communication and Thinking | | | | | | |
| Relating to learners | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Ability to express thoughts | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Connecting ideas and concepts | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Bilingual proficiency | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Critical thinking skills | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Preparation for Teaching | | | | | | |
| Knowledge of topic | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Internalized Qurʾānic worldview | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Background in primary sources | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Organized long-term planning | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Daily preparation | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Atmosphere and Delivery | | | | | | |
| Motivating young learners | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Meaningful routines | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Focused and involved learning | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Ongoing reflective assessment | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Keeping order conducive to learning | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Personal / Professional Qualities | | | | | | |
| Life-long approach towards learning | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Reliability | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Responsiveness | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Responsive to suggestions and critique | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Moderate and neat appearance | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| TOTAL | | | | | | 100 |

Based on the above assessment, what are my obvious strengths and weaknesses as a facilitator? In what areas can I strive to improve? How can I do this? Am I participating in transformative learning? How can I become a better facilitator of transformative learning?

Simple definitions of Qurʾānic terms are given in the side panel on the page where the term first appears. All these terms are also in the Glossary of Arabic Words at the end of the book. They can be used to review Qurʾānic concepts.

A facilitator is cognizant of the fact that every child comes into this world with a unique *jism*, joined to an equally unique *ruh*, both especially created for him or her. Ennobled at the time of conception through the pre-eternal *mīhāq* established with Adam ﷺ and all his progeny, a child's inner resources are the purest at the time of birth: the heart is uncontaminated by diseases of the heart such as jealousy, greed, and enmity; the intellect is free of the secondary ideas that often corrupt it; and the senses are ready to receive new data.

ruh
spirit
mīhāq
covenant

Every child is born upon *fitrah*; it is his parents who make him Jew, Christian, or Magian.

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 2: 440

These little people who come into my classroom each have their own story. I can read part of it on their faces, part of it in their speech, and part of it in their behavior with me and with each other. So much is still being written. I tremble to think that my presence in their lives might be something that will stay with them for a long time. How will they remember me? I can vividly recall my kindergarten teacher...her eyes, the way her dress smelled and the way her nose would flare slightly when one of us got excited. Thinking of the tremendous responsibility of impacting these children, I almost want to repeat the words of Abu Bakr—may Allah be pleased with him—when he exclaimed, “I wish I were just a rock, or a blade of grass instead.” What I need most is something to remind me of the *fitrah* upon which Allah has created each child. I try to gaze into their eyes when I am speaking to them; somehow I can feel the inner light despite the outer chaos. The most wonderful moment is when I connect to this and I realize that I am not here to instill something inside them; it is already there. Not only is it there, but it is much more integrated in the personality of the child than it is in me. I have separated myself into many people whereas a child is who he is; a child is who she is.

All the charts in this book are provided as blank reproducible master copies in the last chapter of the book, “The Tools”. The charts are helpful as organizers, planners, and record keepers. Use them as they are or adapt them to your specific needs.

Anecdotal comments and real-life narratives from the personal journals of several educators help to contextualize the theory and relate ideas to actual learning experiences.

The chapter “Threads and Themes” shows how to develop a topic into a thematic learning unit.

Following a ten-step framework, each unit plan is developed with conscious effort to explore the topic in the different ways we learn, to integrate the topic in all subject areas, and to draw on the three realms which the Qurʾān presents for our understanding (the cosmos, the human story, and the *nafs*).

Plan to engage in reflective assessment throughout the whole learning process. Because the learning is being done in a thematic way, there will be many interdisciplinary connections; the extensions in learning reach out in concentric circles. The last step in the process is the reflection which leads, in essence, to the first step of the next thematic unit of study.

The Framework of Conceptual Teaching

1. The Topic
2. The Rationale
3. The Goals
4. The Conceptual Web
5. The Learning Concepts
6. The Learning Experience
7. The Learning Plan
8. The Assessment
9. The Extensions
10. The Reflection

Topic 1 Who is at Home in the Garden?

The Concept
A garden is a home for many living things.

The Goal
Recognize a garden is a home for plants and animals.

The Resources
A clipboard with paper and pencil for each child

The Activity
Learn the poem *Show Me the Way*.
Visit a garden. “What is in a garden?” Discuss and list all the living things that might be found in the garden (a variety of plants, birds, insects, spiders, rodents, earthworms). Have children sit in pairs in different places of the garden to record what they see. Encourage them to draw as many different kinds of things as they can. Later they will use this record to report to the rest of the group.

The Follow-up
Back in the classroom, draw a large map of the garden just visited. Use a large paper on the wall or on the floor. Ask the children to guide the drawing of the map, remembering the layout of the garden and locate landmarks they saw. Give each child two small squares of paper to draw and colour a plant and an animal that they saw. Locate where they saw these things and glue them on the map.

Variations
Alternatively, the class can visit a local park or other green area, or explore a picture book about a garden. Compare the observations of each place for commonalities and differences.

Show Me the Way

Show me the Way to the Garden.
Show me the Path I should take.
Show me the Way very clearly.
I don't want to make a mistake.

A lesson plan clearly outlines what will be learned and suggests how to learn it. These plans can serve as models for more new ideas for focused learning activities.

When goals are articulated from the outset, learning outcomes will follow.

Chants, poems, and stories accompany many lesson plans. Read them to support and reinforce the learning concepts and use them often in different ways. Make small booklets and have the children illustrate the pages.

Each of these three topics has been developed into a two-week learning plan. Adapt it for home schooling and classroom use as needed. These units can be used as models for developing thematic units on other topics. Conceptual webs for twenty themes are provided, which can be expanded into learning units.

