



**NEW HORIZON**

AN INDEPENDENT ISLAMIC SCHOOL  
IRVINE / CALIFORNIA

# Position Statement Head of School Search New Horizon School

Irvine, California  
Start Date: July 1, 2024



**RG 175**

Change as Opportunity





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## INTRODUCTION

New Horizon, Irvine is a progressive, coeducational, Islamic independent school enrolling approximately 400 students in preschool through 8th grade on two campuses in Orange County, CA. Its mission and ethos focus on fostering a positive American Muslim identity and providing an exceptional educational environment for students and their families.

New Horizon is well-regarded for its dynamic educational program, outstanding head of school, personalized attention to students, highly qualified faculty, dedicated board of trustees, and engaged parent community. Despite competing with award-winning public schools in the Irvine area, New Horizon maintains a strong enrollment, offers an impressive financial assistance program, and has a personalized admission process. While all New Horizon students are Muslim, the school takes pride in its progressive approach to religion and welcomes students from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The administration, faculty, and staff are racially, ethnically, and religiously diverse, with approximately half being of the Islamic faith and the other half representing other faith traditions.



## MISSION & VISION

The school is authentic and intentional in design and practice. Its mission is clear:

“New Horizon offers exemplary academics and community programs in a progressive Islamic environment and fosters a positive American Muslim identity by preparing students with the knowledge to succeed, confidence to lead, and compassion to serve in an ever-changing world.”

The school’s Vision offers clarity and aspiration for its present and future:

“New Horizon will be recognized nationally as the model independent Islamic school integrating Quranic principles with cutting-edge technology and creativity to make meaningful contributions to the broader community.”

To provide a unique educational experience, the school emphasizes small class sizes, a sense of community, and a child-centered approach to education in addition to its religious curriculum. New Horizon operates with a one-school, two-campus model, where the Head of School has overall responsibility for the entire operation, supported by directors overseeing each campus and department. What sets New Horizon apart from mosque-based Islamic schools is its ability to attract families who may have reservations about academic rigor and degree of religiosity. New Horizon offers "the best of both worlds" by hiring highly qualified and talented teachers and promoting an inclusive and progressive approach to religion. Additionally, New Horizon takes pride in its commitment to diversity, with a faculty and staff that reflect a range of racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds.



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## HISTORY

New Horizon was established by the Islamic Center of Southern California (ICSC). The first New Horizon opened in Pasadena, followed by campuses in Los Angeles, West Los Angeles, and Irvine. Each campus has grown through grassroots efforts from its respective local community. In September 2001, New Horizon inaugurated its 1.7-acre Lower School Campus. In 2018, the school expanded with the opening of its 4-acre Upper School Campus, which serves students in grades 3-8. The Lower School Campus continues to cater to preschool through 2nd-grade students.

In 2011, New Horizon embarked on an ambitious strategic planning process that included paying off a \$2 million construction debt, building the new Upper School Campus to include 7th and 8th grades, establishing a \$4.5 million endowment fund, enhancing the educational program, solidifying its position as an independent Islamic school, and forming a visionary and strategic governing board.

Through strong leadership and community collaboration, New Horizon continues to achieve remarkable milestones:

- Raised \$22 million in donations, pledges, and gifts toward a \$27 million campaign
- Fully paid off the 4-acre land site for the Upper School Campus at 10 Marconi, Irvine
- Successfully built and opened the Upper School Campus
- Established and secured a \$6M endowment
- Experienced enrollment growth that continues post-Covid
- Developed a new Strategic Plan to be unveiled in the upcoming academic year

## PROGRAM

New Horizon is a mission-driven school that integrates curricular and co-curricular programs to provide a comprehensive and well-designed education that prepares students for success. It offers a rich and balanced preschool, elementary, and middle school experience that is grounded in its unique and purposeful American Muslim identity, practices, and protocols. The entire academic program is enriched by a dedicated focus on Islamic studies in both the Lower and Upper School. Additionally, students at New Horizon are guided by the principles of Generosity, Justice, Compassion, and Gratitude.

The Preschool program follows a developmentally appropriate curriculum that serves as a foundation for the elementary program and beyond. It incorporates religious studies, an introduction to Arabic, the Leader in Me program, and the Positive Discipline approach. The faculty and staff are well-versed in early childhood practices, creating a nurturing and caring environment throughout the classrooms, play areas, and instructional spaces.



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In the Elementary program, high standards are set and core competencies in Reading and Writing, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science and Engineering, Arabic, Performing Arts, Visual Arts, and Physical Education are emphasized. The program is founded on the belief that children must have meaningful experiences to learn deeply, taking into account students' developmental stages and individual learning paces. Instruction is differentiated whenever possible, and lessons incorporate multiple modalities, social-emotional learning, and themes of social justice and equity. The program is supported by skilled and competent teachers and staff.

The Middle School program is characterized by fostering friendships, encouraging creativity, and supporting students' quest to establish independence and identity. Students delve into integrated Reading and Writing, Social Studies (Humanities), Mathematics, and Science and Engineering classes. They also have the opportunity to study foreign languages such as Arabic, Spanish, or French, and choose from a wide variety of electives. The program provides social-emotional learning experiences through supportive advisory groups and class meetings. This energetic and socially important period for students recognizes the significance of relationships and acknowledges that emotions drive learning and motivation for "tween and teen" students. Classroom, studio, laboratory, stage, community outreach, and field experiences cultivate intellectual curiosity, inventiveness, empathy, individuality, imagination, perseverance, self-reliance, and self-confidence.

The school's emphasis on leadership is evident through the Leader in Me Program. As a Lighthouse School, New Horizon serves as a model for other schools. It is the only Islamic School to receive this honor and is involved in piloting innovations to the program.

The Positive Discipline Program cultivates responsible, respectful, and collaborative student behavior. The

school provides ample opportunities for students to build confidence, such as daily prayer led by a student, rotating student greeters in each class, and the Student Leadership Club. The focus of the school is to create a community of learners and leaders who contribute to the larger community through projects like canned food drives, sock or blanket drives to provide warm clothing to those in need, and even planting "kindness rocks" in kindergarten. These efforts align with the school's mission and vision to develop lifelong contributors and provide a voice to the leaders of tomorrow.

New Horizon places importance on physical activity and physical education, offering classes both indoors and outdoors. Students participate in competitive interscholastic athletics, including Flag Football, Volleyball, Basketball, and Soccer.

For a more detailed description of the instructional and co-curricular program from preschool through grade 8, interested individuals can review the school's website at <https://newhorizonirvine.org>.







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## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The school is led by a diverse, dedicated, and competent 14-member volunteer Board of Trustees. The board maintains standing committees (Executive, Development, Finance, and Facilities) as well as ad hoc committees (Strategic Planning, Head of School Search). They follow best practices, including an annual self-evaluation survey, and engage in ongoing Board education through the school's accreditation association and other opportunities. The Board represents a blend of parents, alumni parents, and community stakeholders, and works closely with the school's leadership to ensure a successful relationship. New Horizon is set to launch its new Strategic Plan with exciting initiatives, such as the expansion of the upper campus, advancement of co-curricular programs, and enhancement of outreach and alumni relations to further grow the school's reputation.

## ADMINISTRATION

The administration at New Horizon is lean yet effective. It comprises dedicated leaders, including the head of school, pedagogical directors at the Preschool, Elementary, and Middle School levels, a Business Officer, a Director of Student Affairs, Directors of Development and Advancement, a Marketing & Communications Specialist, and a Director of Admissions.

## FACULTY & STAFF

New Horizon teachers truly know their students. With small class sizes, an integrated and aligned curriculum, strong support and respect from administration, and a collaborative culture, the school offers an outstanding child-focused,



creative, social-emotional and academic program for PK-8 students. About 36% of the faculty and staff hold a master's degree or higher, and 40% of the teachers at the school are faculty of color.

New Horizon's teachers are clearly committed to the school's mission and philosophy and to meeting the needs of each student. During the hiring process, the school ensures that candidates are receptive to working in a diverse, faith-based environment. Faculty members receive extensive onboarding, professional development specific to the school's programs, and a course on Islam 101. They are supported by their directors and seen as professionals. The school recently implemented the Teacher Coaching Model (TCM) to facilitate individual teacher goal setting and growth. Additionally, the school provides a robust program of on-site professional development and supports Professional Learning Communities for targeted professional development. Collaboration among teachers is highly valued and was enhanced during the pandemic.



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## STUDENTS & FAMILIES

New Horizon fosters a strong, warm, and welcoming community that unifies families from diverse heritages and cultures through their shared commitment to the Islamic faith. There is a joyful spirit among students and a noticeable sense of appreciation, connection, and generosity that permeates throughout the campuses. Students experience a unique sense of belonging, safety, happiness and confidence.

Parents possess a positive sense of ownership and a genuine commitment to the school's well-being. Embodying the distinctive New Horizon ethos, there is a strong collaborative bond between parents and teachers. The New Horizon Parents' Association (NHPA) is a vibrant and active group that supports the school with special programs, fosters connections among families, and hosts community events. Families are engaged and cherish the long-held and joyful New Horizon traditions, including Hajj simulation, Jog-a-Thon, Islam Around the World/ Islam in America, Movie Nights, nightly Ramadan Taraweeh prayer, and Monday morning assemblies.

## FINANCES

The school operates on a tight but balanced annual budget of \$6M. Enrollment costs range from \$10,160 for part-time preschool to \$21,580 for middle school, positioning tuition below the median for independent schools in California. The school is committed to improving teacher and staff salaries and is renowned for its robust need-based tuition assistance program, serving approximately 46% of school families and constituting around 33% of school revenue.

## THE FUTURE

This is an exciting time for New Horizon as it reflects on its successes and growth while preparing for a new leader on July 1, 2024.







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## STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

New Horizon is a progressive Islamic independent school with numerous formidable strengths and exceptional vitality. It leverages its extraordinary history, encompassing a clear and compelling mission and vision, an impressive growth trajectory, national recognition as a Blue Ribbon school, and prestigious accreditations and honors. The school takes great pride in the success of its graduates, who consistently thrive in their academic pursuits, professional careers, and personal lives. It demonstrates an unparalleled commitment to Muslim students and families in Orange County and has recently enhanced its infrastructure, utilizing extensive indoor and outdoor instructional, meeting, and recreational areas. New Horizon radiates familial warmth and is often described as "more than a school" and a "second home" by students, parents, alumni, and the broader community it serves.

The school has been led by a dynamic and forward-thinking head of school for over twenty years. The

current head has propelled the educational program and garnered national recognition, distinctive accreditations, and accolades for the school throughout her tenure.

New Horizon faces challenges that are common among high-performing and well-recognized PK-8 schools today: embracing and maintaining a safe, welcoming, child-friendly, and effective student environment; ensuring complete program alignment to drive and sustain strong educational metrics and successful high school placements; addressing evolving demographics; and managing rising costs and fiscal challenges.

Opportunities abound for a savvy, energetic, and distinguished Muslim school leader. The next leader will aptly recognize and acknowledge the rapid changes occurring in Orange County, neighboring locales, the California economy, and their impact on the school. Mission adherence, leadership competence, community outreach, and social justice will be critical to the school's future sustainability, viability, and growth.





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## QUALIFICATIONS AND QUALITIES OF THE NEXT HEAD OF SCHOOL

- Experience with and passion for the best in progressive Islamic school programming for preschool, elementary, and middle school environments, including comprehensive and up-to-date knowledge of PK-8 pedagogy, curriculum, the latest educational research, and best practices.
- Energetic and compelling communication skills, with the unique ability to captivate others with the school's history, story, and mission, and proficiency in becoming the chief marketer of the school.
- Eagerness to embrace the socioeconomic, cultural, and religious diversity of the community, as well as the multicultural and multigenerational composition of the school staff.
- A proven track record of inclusively attracting, motivating, evaluating, supporting, and retaining a competent faculty and staff.
- Visionary leader with on-the-ground engagement and experience in classroom teaching.
- Authentic, emotionally intelligent "people" person who can manage complex relationships among faculty, parents, students, and other stakeholders, including community leaders and friends of the school.
- Ability to lead the school constituents in dialogue and transactions while valuing and working with differences of opinion and positions.
- Ability to lead the school through strategic planning and accreditation visits.



- Ability to strike the right balance between a warm, compassionate, approachable demeanor and clear, honest, firm, and decisive judgments and actions.
- Astute and trusted Muslim leader with a proven record of fiscal management, friendraising skills, and development success, including multi-million dollar capital campaigns and endowment fundraising.
- Long term commitment to ensuring the realization of collaborative and successful planning, improved fundraising, selection and retention of effective faculty/staff, and continued enhancement of strong academic, extracurricular, and supplementary offerings.
- Familiarity with and willingness to be an active and present leader in all development/ advancement/enrollment/public relations programming at the school.
- Visibility, accessibility, approachable presence, and active involvement in all school programming and community relationships.
- A sense of humor coupled with the energy, dedication, and optimism necessary to find joy in the leadership of an exceptional PK-8 educational community.





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## TO APPLY

New Horizon has engaged the services of Doreen S. Oleson, Ed.D., from Resource Group 175, to lead the search. Interested candidates are required to apply online at <https://rg175.com/candidate/signup> and submit application materials, including a cover letter, current resume, personal statement, and five references.

Annual Salary Range: \$175,000 - \$225,000

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2023**

### **Accreditations and Distinctions:**

New Horizon holds accreditation from the California Association of Schools and Colleges and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. It is recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence by the United States Department of Education (one of 50 private schools in 2015 and the only Islamic School to receive this honor). Additionally, it has achieved certification as a Leader in Me Lighthouse School (one of 673 schools worldwide and the only Islamic school with this distinction).