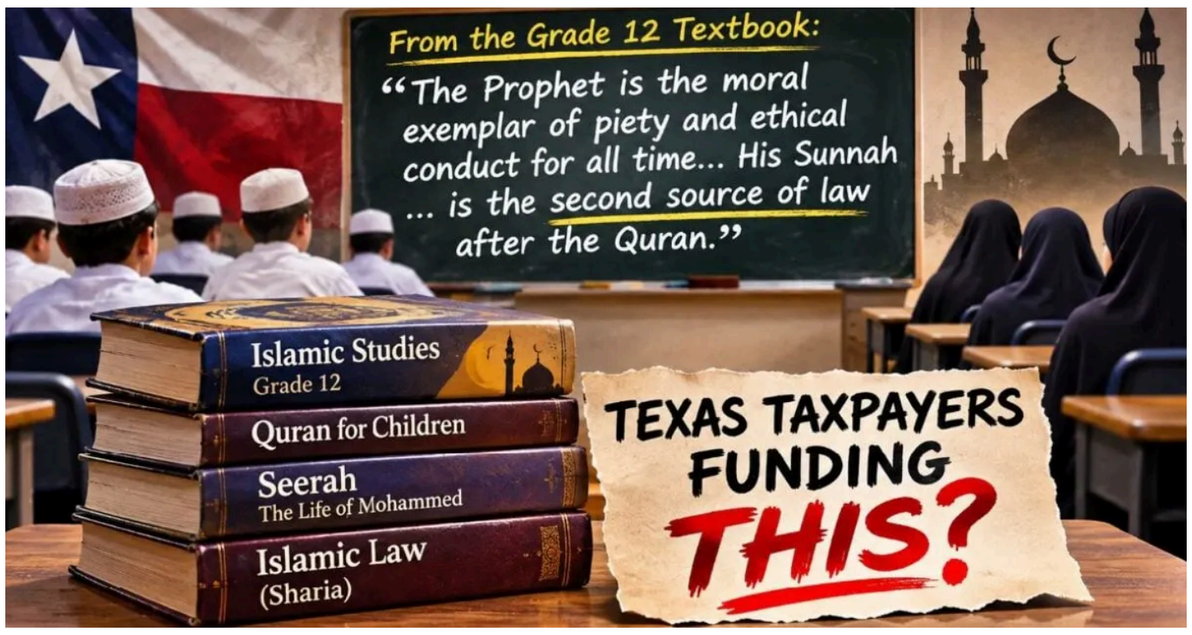
Texas Taxpayers Are Funding Islamic Schools. What Are They Paying for Children to Learn?

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The school voucher controversy exposes a deeper failure to understand that Islam is a complete civilizational entity with a system of law, authority, and governance extending far beyond worship.

By Elaine Ellinger

Following legal challenges to their exclusion, four Islamic schools – Brighter Horizons Academy, Bayaan Academy, Excellence Academy and Houston Quran Academy – were admitted to Texas's $1 billion Education Freedom Accounts programme in March 2026. More than 110,000 students are participating, with substantial public funds committed. Incoming state comptroller Sarah Eckhardt, currently a Texas state senator, has pledged to implement the law and ensure that eligible Islamic schools can continue to participate.

This is not a local funding decision. It is the decision to finance, with public money, a system of instruction that treats Sharia as superior to the constitutional order of the society that is paying for it.

Before celebrating this as a victory for religious freedom, perhaps someone should pay attention to what Islamic schools actually teach. Would Texas taxpayers knowingly fund schools teaching children that apostates may be executed, thieves may have their hands amputated, adulterers may be stoned, and non-Muslims will be subjected to unequal laws?

These are provisions found in the Quran, hadith and classical Sharia jurisprudence. They are part of the doctrinal system from which Islamic educational curricula draw their material.

The Hidden Curriculum of Islamic Schools: From Prayer to Sharia – A Child's Indoctrination examines twelve years of Islamic studies textbooks, together with supplementary educational materials. Its findings reveal how Muslim children are gradually introduced to obedience, communal identity, loyalty to the ummah, Islamic law, Mohammed's military campaigns, conquest and the establishment of Islamic authority, The harsher elements that conflict with the freedoms they experience in the West are withheld from them.

The lessons begin with memorization of Quranic verses and numerous Arabic supplications, accompanied by prescribed rituals and constant repetition. As students advance, they encounter an increasingly extensive system of rules and obligations, reinforced through the Quran, hadith and the example of Mohammed. This is sharia, not Western law, not Western values.

Above all, they are taught to love, obey and imitate Mohammed. He is presented as the finest human being who ever lived – the perfect father, husband, teacher, friend and leader. Children are instructed to imitate him down to the smallest detail – how he walked, sat, ate, greeted others, turned his entire body instead of twisting, and even how he laughed. They are taught that he forbade sleeping on one's stomach – that Allah doesn't like it. Nothing is too trivial to escape imitation. The message is unmistakable: correct behaviour means reproducing Mohammed's behaviour, rather than exercising independent judgment. The Quran reinforces this obligation: Mohammed is best example (33:21), and obedience to him is obedience to Allah (4:80).

From childhood, conformity to a prescribed model is cultivated as a virtue, leaving little room for independent moral reasoning (33:36).

Yet Mohammed was also a military leader who organized raids, led campaigns, took captives, distributed spoils of war and established Islamic political authority. As students advance through the grades, these activities become increasingly prominent. The battles of Badr, Uhud and the Trench, the campaigns against the Jewish tribes of Arabia, the conquest of Mecca and the subsequent expansion of Islam are presented through narratives emphasizing courage, sacrifice, brilliant leadership and divine approval. By Grade 10, Islamic military expansion is openly celebrated, with conquest portrayed as justified, defensive and divinely directed. The suffering and subjugation of those conquered receive no consideration.

The companions of Mohammed, the Sahabah, are likewise presented as exemplary figures. Their willingness to fight, sacrifice their possessions, abandon former loyalties and die for Islam becomes a model of devotion. Martyrdom is repeatedly associated with Paradise and extraordinary rewards. Children encounter accounts of early Muslims suffering persecution, torture and death, reinforcing the conviction that believers are righteous victims surrounded by hostile disbelievers. This narrative leaves out Mohammed's threats and curses against the Meccans, their idols, ancestors, and even his own aunt and uncle (Quran 111). Later military victories are then understood through this established moral framework: Islam is just, its opponents are contemptible in Allah's eyes, and its triumph represents the fulfilment of Allah's will.

This instruction includes deception in warfare. In Grade 9, the account of the Battle of the Trench describes how Nu'aym ibn Mas'ood concealed his conversion and spread false information among opposing forces to divide them. His actions are praised as a "wonderful trick," and students are taught the principle that "war is deception" (Bukhari 3030). Such episodes are presented as examples of successful Islamic leadership rather than as opportunities to examine competing moral obligations.

Throughout the curriculum, children are also taught to distinguish themselves from those who reject Islam. The Quran is presented as the only perfectly preserved revelation, while Jewish and Christian scriptures are described as corrupted. Believers are associated with guidance, purity and ultimate success; disbelievers with error, punishment and hostility toward Islam. Students encounter Quran 98:6, which describes disbelievers among the People of the Book and polytheists as the "worst of creatures," while 98:7 describes believers as the "best of creatures." Loyalty to the worldwide Islamic community, the ummah, is reinforced alongside the obligation to promote what Islam defines as right and oppose what it defines as wrong.

One of the supplementary texts, a children's Quran, presents Quran 5:38 as stating: "As for the thief, male or female, cut off the hand of both by way of payback, for this is a fitting (example of poetic justice) from Allah as a consequence for (the sin) they earned, and Allah is powerful and wise."

By the senior grades, students are explicitly introduced to the Sunnah of Mohammed as a source of law, the obligations of jihad, and the duty to enjoin good and forbid evil – behaviour that is consistent with sharia. The Grade 12 textbook makes this explicit: "For Muslims, the Prophet is the moral exemplar of piety and ethical conduct for all time and the best of mankind. His Sunnah represents the realization of the Quranic ideals and commands and is the second source of law after the Quran."

What does that example include? The taking of captives as slaves, child brides, deception and jihad. Not as a matter of history – but as a perpetual example of desirable conduct.

The curriculum describes jihad as the "summit or pinnacle" of Islam, explaining that "it is through jihaad that the religion is protected, defended and preserved." Yet Quran 8:39 commands fighting until the *deen* – not religion – is entirely for Allah, a concept extending beyond worship to encompass Islamic authority and obedience.

This closely echoes Bukhari's Book of Jihad, which gives fighting for Allah's cause the highest place and presents jihad as the means by which Islam is established and made superior. Mohammed himself declared:

- "My livelihood is under the shade of my spear and he who disobeys my orders will be humiliated by paying jizya." (Bukhari, Book 56, Chapter 88).

Martyrdom is glorified. Students are taught that the Arabic word shaheed means both witness and martyr, and that a martyr bears witness to his faith by dying in fulfilment of Islamic duty. They are told not to refer to the martyrs as dead, because they are

alive with Allah (Quran 2:154; 3:169), presenting death in the service of Islam as honourable and spiritually elevated rather than as loss.

Perhaps most revealing is what the textbooks leave unexplained. The legal implications of slavery, concubinage, punishments for apostasy, the unequal status of non-Muslims and other provisions of classical Sharia are frequently omitted, softened or introduced without their full doctrinal context. Students are repeatedly taught that Islam is just, merciful and superior, while the meaning of those concepts is established through obedience to Allah and Mohammed.

This is the cumulative effect of twelve years of instruction: devotion to Mohammed, admiration for the Islamic conquest, identification with and loyalty to the ummah, acceptance of Sharia as divine authority, and the expectation that Islamic doctrine should govern conduct throughout life. They are told: “all historians declare that the amazing success of Islam in dominating the world lay in the astounding coherence or sense of unity in the group.” That Islam is a deen, and that “Sharee’ah virtually is the ‘deen’, which is often inadequately translated as religion.”

This is the exact reverse of the Western secular order. In liberal democracies, society debates, votes, and evolves the law. In the Islamic framework, Sharia is divine law, binding upon every Muslim. It is not optional. Society itself is to be moulded and fashioned by Sharia. The individual does not shape the law; the law shapes the individual – and through millions of shaped individuals, the society.

The same curriculum teaches a legal order that conflicts with virtually every substantive article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – equality before the law, freedom of conscience and belief, the prohibition of slavery, and the equal rights of men and women. According to the Quran, those who do not judge by what Allah has revealed are disbelievers, wrongdoers, and rebellious (5:44, 5:45, 5:47). The US Constitution and all man-made law are therefore treated as subordinate to Allah’s law.

Texas officials must examine the actual curricula of schools receiving taxpayer funds against Western constitutional principles – individual rights, equality before the law, and freedom of conscience. That examination cannot be left to the doctrinal authorities who designed the instruction. Islamic legal standards and Western constitutional standards are not interchangeable. Treating them as if they were, without examining the difference, is a failure of public responsibility.

The consequences will not remain in the classroom. Children taught that divine law overrides human judgment will become adults who enter schools, universities, government, and the courts. Taxpayers will have financed generations instructed to treat fundamental constitutional freedoms as subordinate to Sharia. Large parts of the world already live under that arrangement, with the results visible in the treatment of women, non-Muslims, and dissenters. Texas is now deciding whether the state should help to finance that same instruction. Officials who do not examine the doctrine themselves, and who defer instead to those who adhere to it, must be ready to bear responsibility for the outcome.

Elaine Ellinger is the author of: *The Deen Fallacy: How the West Came to Misclassify Islam. Cause, Consequence, and Correction* (2026); *The Hidden Curriculum of Islamic Schools: From Prayer to Sharia – A Child’s Indoctrination* (2026); *A Civilizational Reckoning: Understanding the Threat, Reclaiming the Future* (2025).



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