

# ZAKKIYYA WITHERSPOON

Andover, MA | (857) 526-3499 | z5witherspoon@gmail.com

*Ed.D., Leadership in Schooling | Graduate Programs Advisor, UMass Lowell School of Education*

## PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

---

Dedicated and versatile education professional with over 16 years of experience spanning K–12 teaching, higher education administration, and family liaison roles. Proven track record in student guidance, curriculum development, and administrative leadership. Skilled in fostering inclusive and identity-affirming learning environments, managing academic programs, and facilitating communication between educational institutions and families. Doctoral researcher specializing in culturally grounded interventions to reduce marginalization among Black adolescent girls in predominantly white institutions.

## EDUCATION

---

### **Ed.D., Leadership in Schooling**

University of Massachusetts Lowell | Conferred May 2026

**Dissertation:** *When We Play Our Way: A Culturally Grounded Intervention to Build Social Efficacy and Counteract Marginalization Among Black High School Girls*

### **MBA, Business Management**

University of Phoenix | 2008

### **IDI Qualified Administrator (Intercultural Development Inventory)**

Certificate of Licensure | University of Massachusetts Lowell | September 2025

## WORK HISTORY

---

**Graduate Programs Advisor** | University of Massachusetts Lowell — School of Education | *March 2023 – Present*

- Advise prospective and current students across Ph.D., Ed.D., M.Ed., and certificate programs.
- Answer student inquiries and resolve problems related to curriculum and course prerequisites.
- Ensure students meet all DESE licensure and program requirements.
- Assist students in setting up field placements for practicum.
- Support program coordinators across all graduate programs.
- Deliver professional development for public schools, bringing the Clap Club model — a culturally grounded intervention using traditional African American hand-clapping games — to students across districts.
- Partner with Mansfield's Muslim community to redesign school spaces that are inclusive and affirming for Muslim students.

**Adjunct Professor** | University of Massachusetts Lowell — School of Education | *Fall 2026*

- Instructor for Foundations for Practitioner Scholars.

**Family Liaison** | Cambridge Public Schools | *June 2020 – July 2023*

- Managed annual and special projects, including scheduling meetings and liaising with school partners.
- Supported professional development sessions with district and school administrators.
- Collaborated with teachers and administrators to foster regular, culturally proficient two-way communication.
- Co-founded MCCPS (Muslim Community of Cambridge Public Schools), a school affinity group supporting Muslim staff and students; led efforts to establish sacred prayer spaces recognized by NBC10 Boston and WBZ CBS News Boston.
- Provided parent and student advocacy.

**Confidential Assistant** | Cambridge Public Schools — Academics & Schools Dept. | *July 2022 – March 2023*

- Managed financial activities and monitored office budgets.

- Processed requisitions, purchase orders, and reimbursements in coordination with budget, purchasing, and payroll.
- Supported Assistant Superintendents and Chief of Academics with administrative duties including calendars and travel.
- Supported school improvement planning and progress tracking.

**5th Grade Lead Teacher** | Islamic Academy, Methuen, MA | *January 2008 – June 2020*

- Delivered daily instruction and implemented curriculum for 12+ years.
- Developed weekly lesson plans and managed classroom behavior.
- Maintained academic and behavioral records and reported student progress.
- Built positive relationships with families to support student success.

**Founder & Director** | TIA Daycare, Methuen, MA | *July 2014 – June 2016*

- Recruited, hired, and trained qualified staff.
- Coordinated continuous professional development.
- Monitored each student's educational progress with individualized records.

## RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP

---

### Dissertation

Witherspoon, Z. (2026). *When We Play Our Way: A Culturally Grounded Intervention to Build Social Efficacy and Counteract Marginalization Among Black High School Girls*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts Lowell, School of Education. Ed.D. in Leadership in Schooling.

### Publication

Witherspoon, Z. (2025). *The Legacy Journal: For Black Girls Who Clap, Create & Conquer*. Self-published. Available on Amazon.

## PROFESSIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

---

- UML River Hawk Scholars Academy Mentor, 2024–2025
- Atrium School Board of Trustees — Member, 2023–2024
- Co-Founder, Muslim Community of Cambridge Public Schools (MCCPS), 2020–2025
- Cambridge Families of Color Coalition, 2020–2023
- Braided Streams: Women of Faith Speak — Featured Panelist, 2024 & 2025

## MEDIA COVERAGE

---

- "Cambridge Schools Create 'Sacred Spaces' for Safe Prayer," *NBC10 Boston*
- "Cambridge Public Schools Establish Sacred Spaces for Students and Staff," *WBZ CBS News Boston*