



CORE CURRICULUM
FOR
SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

Spiritual Parenting

COURSE ONE

Facilitator Guide

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**National Bahá'í
Education Task Force**

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Spiritual Parenting

COURSE ONE

Elements of a Successful Parenting Course

This course attracts the hearts of parents from many different backgrounds. In addition it may serve as an introduction to the Bahá'í Faith and the principles and practices of parenting as explained in the Bahá'í writings. This course is open to all.

Well prepared, spiritually-focused facilitators provide the key to the success of all Core Curriculum courses. Please consider the following elements for success:

Humility and Love

The role of the facilitator is to encourage the participants to deepen their engagement with the Word of God and the application of spiritual principles to their own circumstances. Love and humility are keys to this service. You may contact the Education and Schools Office at the Bahá'í National Center with questions about the use of course materials: (847) 733-3492 or SCHOOLS@usbnc.org.

Knowledge Through Service

Ongoing engagement with parents in genuine friendship and collaborative service is critical to your success as a facilitator of Core Curriculum Spiritual Parenting courses. Staying closely involved in the community will enhance your ability to meet the needs of the parents you serve.

Planning and Implementation Procedures

All these gifts and bounties depend upon love for the Beauty of the All-Glorious, and on the blessings in the teachings of the Most High, and the spiritual instructions of the Supreme Concourse, and on ecstasy and ardor and diligent pursuit of whatsoever will redound to the eternal honor of the community of man.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ. *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, REV. ED. 1999, NO. 61

As a Spiritual Parenting Facilitator, you may collaborate with Bahá'í institutions according to your circumstances to offer Spiritual Parenting courses.

- The Education and Schools Office at the Bahá'í National Center maintains a list of individuals known to have completed training to offer this course. Interested institutions and individuals may contact the Education and Schools Office to learn the names of such individuals in their area: (847) 733-3492, SCHOOLS@usbnc.org.
- Individuals trained to offer any of the Core Curriculum courses may offer collaboration, logistical support, and encouragement.
- Current information, regular updates, and new materials are posted on the Core Curriculum website, www.core-curriculum.org.
- At the conclusion of the course, please complete and return the Feedback Form to the National Bahá'í Education Task Force. The Feedback Form is provided on pages 37–38 of this Facilitator Guide.

A Joyous Learning Environment

Create an atmosphere of love, joy, cooperation, and discovery throughout your course. Experience suggests that a range of participants (i.e., 8–16) enables close interaction among the group members, while allowing for a full demonstration of varied methods of group interaction.

Creating an Environment for Spiritual Education

Prepare and maintain a reverential, dignified, and attractive environment throughout the course. Some possibilities for enhancing the environment are:

- Arrangements of fresh or dried flowers in vases.
- Photographs of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.
- Bowls of potpourri or drops of rose oil.
- Candles, if permitted by hosting facility.
- Soft instrumental music from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Sharing devotions in a separate location from the work area.
- Photographs of great teachers, heroines, and heroes.

The setting need not be elaborate or expensive but it does need to be clean and orderly and have some elements of beauty. Please clean the space if it isn't already clean.

Remember that beauty doesn't require a big budget. This can be done by setting an example of simplicity while at the same time expressing the principle of beauty, a reflection of the Most Great Beauty. Inexpensive or cost-free expressions of beauty include an interesting arrangement of rocks, a bouquet of leaves or wildflowers, simple cloth pieces under a vase or a nicely shaped branch, etc. Please spend some time considering how to add beauty according to your circumstances. It is also nice to refresh the environment daily so that each session has a fresh and clean beginning.

Possible Devotional Activities

Consider a variety of reverential and inspirational ways to share the sacred writings and prayers together. Some possibilities are:

- Share prayers in different languages.
- Listen to prayers and sacred writings recited with music playing in the background.
- Encourage chanting, singing, and melodious recitation of prayers.
- Share recordings of prayers or passages that have been set to music.
- Encourage incorporating movement, dance, or sign language into the recital of prayers.
- Prepare, in an attractive manner, pre-selected devotional readings for distribution.
- Prepare pre-selected passages on small slips of paper, rolled up and tied with a ribbon; present these on a tray as “special treats.”

Emphasis on the Sacred Texts

Naught but the celestial potency of the Word of God which ruleth and transcendeth the realities of all things is capable of harmonizing the divergent thoughts, sentiments, ideas and convictions of the children of men.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *TABLETS OF THE DIVINE PLAN*, REV. ED. 1993, P. 103

The Bahá’í writings are the foundation, the standard and the inspiration of all Core Curriculum programs. Therefore, the study of the sacred texts, the writings of the Guardian, and those of the Universal House of Justice is the most essential element of the Core Curriculum Spiritual Parenting Courses. Any content of the program beyond the actual writings represents the efforts of the National Bahá’í Education Task Force to apply the principles and characteristics of Bahá’í education to the dynamic practice of parenting in light of the experiences of friends from all around the world.

Modeling and the Principle of Example

Guidance hath ever been given by words, and now it is given by deeds.

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *THE HIDDEN WORDS*, PERSIAN NO. 76

Your conduct in the Spiritual Parenting courses should mirror for participants the distinctive qualities of a Bahá’í educational process. This will be reflected in the set-up of the physical environment, in your loving attitude toward the friends, and in your appreciation and honoring of the diversity of your participants. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s example and presence should be a constant, conscious, and primary reference throughout.

Team Facilitators

Experience shows that teams of two Spiritual Parenting Facilitators provide the most effective learning experience. In addition, a diverse team of facilitators provides an ideal learning and teaching model for the parents you serve.

Scheduling Considerations

The activity times suggested on the following pages are offered as an aid in maintaining a schedule for each session. Of course you may choose to make modifications to fit the needs of your group. For example, a large group of 16–20 parents might require more time for sharing working groups' insights. Another group might wish to spend more time with Parents Helping Parents. Some groups might enjoy 20 minutes instead of the allotted 15 to create an art project. These times merely provide suggestions, and you and your group are free to make the choices that best serve the needs of the friends.

You may involve participants in consultation about the schedule by asking such questions as: Are we allowing ourselves enough time for the activities so that we consider the questions carefully and also have a good sense of forward movement? Do we need to be sure to begin and end our sessions punctually so that we can plan for our children's care during these sessions?

Participants should feel confident that this program is well planned, and that there is enough time to accomplish their task. The following suggestions are helpful to many facilitators:

- Use of music, a bell, a raised hand or other simple signal often serves well to call groups back to a new focus when time frames are nearing completion, rather than constantly announcing, "You have two minutes," or, "Your time is up."
- Tell participants the length of time allotted and when they should return as part of directions, especially when groups may disperse.
- Let the time "flow." For example, if it is 2:16 and the activity takes "15 minutes," request a return by 2:30.
- Give groups gentle signals, such as, "Do you think three minutes will be sufficient or would you like more time?"
- Provide a more generalized schedule for participants, so that they are not burdened with the small details of the schedule. The detailed time management is a service the facilitator can offer the group. Make it feel easy!
- Plan grouping strategies in advance, perhaps placing stickers or colored hearts at participants' places during a previous activity, so that grouping is both fun and fast.
- Cut strips of masking tape in advance to hang artwork or flipchart lists.
- Write activity directions and focus questions for journaling and discussions on the board or flipchart in advance.
- Other ideas that you know or develop and will share with the rest of us!

Double-Checking Your Preparation

1. Make sure you have all your materials and are well prepared.
2. If a public place can't be found, you can use someone's home. You may also consider hosting the Spiritual Parenting course in your home. Many communities have great success in offering Spiritual Parenting courses at the same time and place as their local Bahá'í classes.
3. You may consider inviting a sponsoring Local Spiritual Assembly to assist with refreshments if desired. Study circles in the area may also provide this service.
4. Assess if there is a need for transportation or childcare and if so, invite a sponsoring institution to assist with the arrangements. Study circles may also provide this service. Ask for the help you need. Individuals are often happy to assist.
5. The participant fee for the Spiritual Parenting classes should cover all expenses. The sponsoring institution may also consider underwriting all or part of the cost. When the course is offered under the auspices of a Regional Training Institute or Bahá'í School, those institutions may have regular policies for managing costs of materials, etc.

Potential costs for each participant might include:

Participant course book	\$ 8.75
Small copies of Bahá'í Prayers and The Hidden Words	\$ 3.00
Art supplies, candles, assorted items	\$ 2.00
Miscellaneous photocopies	\$ 1.00
<i>These Heavenly Children</i> DVD (optional)	\$ 0.00
Total	\$14.75

NOTE: Requesting participants to bring their own scissors, markers, or other art supplies may be a useful cost-saving technique.

Please also consider the cost of any snacks, meals, facility rental, and transportation, if facilitators travel to a non-local community.

Program Success Factors Checklist

- _____ My co-facilitator and I met with the sponsoring institutions (if applicable) and received their guidance and support for our plan.
- _____ We consulted with our Core Curriculum mentor (if applicable).
- _____ We have personally invited prospective participants (both Bahá'ís and others) and encouraged them to invite their friends to participate in the course. This course attracts the hearts of parents from many different backgrounds and may serve as an introduction to the Bahá'í Faith as well as to the principles and practices of parenting as explained in the Bahá'í writings. This course is open to all.
- _____ Letters of invitation have been sent to surrounding Bahá'í communities, including teachers, education committee members, Local Spiritual Assembly members, and those who plan deepenings and community events. This course may be advertised as part of an outreach initiative.
- _____ Follow-up phone calls were made to be sure that friends in the area know about the course and schedule.
- _____ Books were ordered for each participant (participants' course book; small copies of Bahá'í Prayers and The Hidden Words; *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*, if desired).
- _____ We visited the site for the course (home or other) and made plans to assure that it is clean, pleasantly fragrant, comfortable, and attractive for the course.
- _____ Appropriate arrangements were made for transportation to and from the programs.
- _____ Appropriate arrangements were made for children during the programs.
- _____ Arrangements were made for refreshments to be served.
- _____ We reviewed carefully each session to be offered, noted the schedule and materials needed, and decided who will lead each activity.
- _____ Supplemental materials were gathered or prepared for each participant.
- _____ We arranged for music, art supplies, and audio-visuals to create a beautiful atmosphere for presentation of the course.
- _____ We arranged to make Bahá'í prayer books and other holy books available during the workshops.
- _____ We sought divine assistance for our work with participants.
- _____ We reported our service to our sponsoring institution and shared our feedback about the training materials with the National Bahá'í Education Task Force, using the form on pages 37–38.

General Supplies & Equipment

The following is a list of suggested supplies and materials to have on hand for use in the course. Share this list with the sponsoring institution to determine what is available and what needs to be purchased or collected.

Materials to be ordered from the Bahá'í Distribution Service: (800) 999-9019, www.bahaibookstore.com; or from the Louhelen Bahá'í School bookstore (800) 894-9716, Louhelen@usbnc.org

- ___ *Spiritual Parenting*, Course One, course books
- ___ Small copies of Bahá'í Prayers and The Hidden Words*
- ___ *Foundations for a Spiritual Education: Research of the Bahá'í Writings* (optional)
- ___ *These Heavenly Children* DVD (optional)

*Available from Special Ideas: www.special-ideas.com or (800) 326-1197

For the Facilitators

- ___ White board & pens or chalkboard & chalk
- ___ Pad of large chart paper, easel, markers
- ___ CD/cassette player
- ___ Small bell or chime (optional)

For the Environment

- ___ Recorded music: instrumental, prayers, cultural
- ___ Photograph of 'Abdu'l-Bahá
- ___ Throw pillows, floor mats
- ___ Boxes of tissue
- ___ Potpourri, candles, tablecloth
- ___ TV and VCR, if you plan to show part of a Bahá'í video during your devotions
- ___ TV or computer and DVD player, if available, for viewing *These Heavenly Children*

For the Participants

- ___ Name tags or cardstock for name boards
- ___ Pens, pencils, pencil sharpener
- ___ Gift quotations for participants
- ___ Felt markers and crayons
- ___ Paints, paint brushes (if available)
- ___ Tape: transparent & masking
- ___ Ribbon, glitter, beads, feathers (if available)
- ___ Glue, glue sticks
- ___ Musical instruments (if available)
- ___ Scissors
- ___ Construction paper, tissue paper, wrapping paper, writing paper; lined or unlined
- ___ Containers to hold and display art material

Books

- ___ The Kitáb-i-Aqdas
- ___ Prayer books
- ___ The Hidden Words
- ___ Dictionaries
- ___ *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*

Materials to Photocopy, If Desired:

- ___ Participant roster
- ___ Agendas
- ___ Maps (to restaurants, parking, or overnight facilities)
- ___ Handouts selected after reviewing the course materials

SPECIFIC ACTIVITY NOTES FOR FACILITATORS

Introductory Session *The Station of Parents*

Activities and Suggested Times		Materials Needed
Opening Devotions: Honoring the Station of Parents; Welcoming Tea	30 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Photograph of 'Abdu'l-Bahá• Decorative floor covering, if available• Individual flowers or attar of roses, table flowers• Beautiful recorded music• Tea service, including tea napkins and tablecloth• Specially prepared cakes or cookies• Tea table, chairs• Small, inexpensive gifts for parents (e.g., a beautiful quote from sacred texts in a scroll tied with gold ribbon)• Pictures of a variety of fruits• Tray or basket with assorted fruits• Blank cards, envelopes• Fruit stickers, stamps, and other decorative items• Name tags or name boards for participants
Overview of the Parenting Program	5 min.	
Historical Overview of the Development of the Core Curriculum	5 min.	
Introductory Session Themes and Objectives	5 min.	
The Core Curriculum Learning Model	15 min.	
Exploring the Core Curriculum Learning Model	45 min.	
Concluding the Introductory Session	10 min.	

Opening Devotions and Welcoming Tea: The Station of Parents

pp. 16–17

1. Create an attractive environment with a lovely carpet and some flowers. Consider arranging chairs in a circle around a tea table. Consider using a light fragrance such as attar of roses in the room.
2. Invite participants to enter, and serve them tea and cakes or cookies out of lovely dishes.
3. With your co-facilitator, alternate reading aloud the opening devotions on the Station of Parents, pages 16–17 of the participant course book.
4. Welcome participants on behalf of yourselves and the sponsoring institution.
5. Explain the layout of the facility, location of restrooms, and any other housekeeping announcements that are necessary.
6. Invite participants to each share their name, the ages of their children, and one brief parenting success story. Encourage them to remember a specific occasion in which they felt successful as parents and to briefly share that example in the whole group.
7. Use music (sing a song in unison that participants know or use recorded music) to celebrate the importance of parenting and this glorious station.
8. Present each parent with a simple gift. Possibly have the quotations “Station of Parents” reproduced on nice paper or a single quotation beautifully written on a nice card. This gift could also be presented as the parents enter the gathering.

Historical Overview of the Development of the Core Curriculum

pp. 20–21

Please assist participants to understand that the Core Curriculum is a comprehensive curriculum with three main components:

1. A systematic and formal nine-year curriculum for children and junior youth, with pre-school materials to be published in 2007. These materials are being used in many countries around the world. Visit www.core-curriculum.org for exciting news and updates on the Curriculum.
2. A range of courses on topics that build strong families and communities and empower children and youth. The Spiritual Parenting course is one of these courses for community development. There are no prerequisites to these courses as they are designed to assist both Bahá'ís and others to apply spiritual principles to daily life, and for outreach to the community at large.
3. The Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses for youth and adults that addresses some of the most fundamental teachings of the Bahá'í Faith.

Exploring the Core Curriculum Learning Model

pp. 24–25

Materials Needed:

- Pictures of a variety of fruits, ideally colored pictures from magazines, books, or online sources, or you may use the images on p. 12 of this Facilitator Guide
 - Tray or basket of assorted fruits, perhaps with some whole fruits and some cut into serving-size pieces
 - Blank cards, envelopes, pens and/or markers
 - Fruit stickers, stamps, and other decorative items
1. Ask the participants to close their course books as you suggest: “Let’s begin this course with a gift—a gift of fruit. But imagine for a moment that you do not speak the English language and you do not know the word ‘fruit.’ Let’s begin at the beginning and explore the concept of fruit together.”
 2. “Let’s check the dictionary definition of fruit and read it aloud:
Noun: a usually edible and sweet reproductive body of a seed plant.
(*Merriam-Webster’s Desk Dictionary*)
Based on this definition alone, what do we now **know** about our gift of fruit?”
 3. Examine some pictures of fruit. Ask: “What do these pictures add to our **knowledge**?”
 4. Bring out a tray or basket of real fruit and take a moment to observe their beauty and variety.
 5. Pass the tray or basket of fruit around the room—encourage participants to take one, feel and smell the fruit, but do not eat yet. Ask: “How has your **understanding** increased?”
 6. Invite the participants to taste and eat their fruit. Ask: “What further **understanding** is gained?”

7. “So far we have explored some of the **physical** aspects of fruit, but we can also explore something of their **spiritual** potential.”
8. Play soft music in the background and invite participants to open their course books to the page of quotations “Fruits of the Tree of Life,” page 25 in their course books. Invite the participants to read the quotations aloud.
9. Discuss: “How is the image of fruit used in the writings of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá? What concepts are illustrated? What spiritual qualities are brought to light?”
10. Consider one of the sweetest fruits of the tree of our lives—our children. Please continue your discussion by inviting each person to reflect silently and then to share their reflections on the questions:
 - What are our hopes for our children?
 - What are our hopes for ourselves in this Spiritual Parenting course?
11. Then, invite the participants to think of a person—perhaps a child or another parent, or a relative, friend, or acquaintance—who will benefit from the fulfillment of these precious hopes. Using the blank cards, fruit stickers, and fruit pictures provided, invite them to write a loving note to that person, decorate it as they like, and perhaps include all or part of one of the quotations. You may offer to mail the cards for the participants if they are sealed and addressed.

Exploring the Core Curriculum Learning Model



Session One

Standards of Parenthood

Activities and Suggested Times		Materials Needed
Opening Devotions	10 min.	
Session One Theme and Objectives	5 min.	
Reflections on Introductory Session	5 min.	
Standards of Parenthood: Love in the Family of Bahá'u'lláh	20 min.	
The Power of Example	45 min.	
Read/study	20	
Prepare	10	
Share/plan	15	
Concluding Session One	10 min.	

Standards of Parenthood: Love in the Family of Bahá'u'lláh

pp. 29–32

Assist any seekers among you to see the beauty of these stories and their applicability to all people. Some participants may enjoy noticing that these stories illustrate the importance of grandparents in the family of Bahá'u'lláh.

Session Two

The Spiritual Development of Parents

Activities and Suggested Times		Materials Needed
Opening Devotions	10 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music that celebrates the promise of divine assistance • Very inexpensive prayer books or other collections of Bahá'í writings, as participant gifts
Session Two Themes and Objectives	2 min.	
Opening Activity: Discuss Results	3 min.	
The Promise of Divine Assistance	30 min.	
Read/study	20	
Share	10	
Spiritual Growth Plan	20 min.	
Read/discuss	10	
Reflect/plan	10	
Parents Helping Parents	15 min.	
Concluding Session Two	10 min.	

The Promise of Divine Assistance

pp. 41–43

Consider introducing the topic of divine assistance with sung or recorded music. Recorded music could include prayers such as “God Sufficeth” on the first *Black Men’s Gathering* CD, or on *Songs of the Ancient Beauty*, Vol. One, or other music that celebrates the promise of Divine assistance.

Spiritual Growth Plan

pp. 44–48

Note that the development of parents will evolve as their family life changes and evolves. For example, parents of a three-year-old may focus on patience while parents of a seventeen-year-old may focus on detachment. Experienced parents may have greater skill establishing prayer routines with their third child than with their first.

Consider serving fresh or dried fruit sections during this activity as a reminder of the Core Curriculum learning model.

Concluding Session Two

p. 50

Offer prepared music and devotions that reflect the aid and assistance that is surely ours as we pray, meditate and rely upon God.

Present the gift of a very inexpensive prayer book, such as *A Gift of Prayers*, available for \$1.00 from Special Ideas: (800) 326-1197 or www.special-ideas.com; or other selections from the Bahá'í Distribution Service: (800) 999-9019 or www.bahai bookstore.com.

Session Three

The Spiritual Reality of the Child

Activities and Suggested Times		Materials Needed
Opening Devotions	10 min.	• Clay, play-dough, or similar material with polished stones or “gems” hidden inside
Session Three Themes and Objectives	2 min.	
Session Two Reflections	3 min.	
Recognizing the Spiritual Reality of the Child	25 min.	
Small groups read/discuss	15	
Whole group shares/molds clay	5	
Discuss	5	
A Perspective on Human Development	45 min.	
Share quotations and cautions	5	
First groups study stages	10	
Second groups share/create activity	20	
Share in whole group	5	
Process	5	
Parents Helping Parents	10 min.	
Concluding Activity	5 min.	

Recognizing the Spiritual Reality of the Child

pp. 54–56

After participant teams share their insights into The Hidden Words (step 2 of the activity), give each participant a piece of clay, Play-Doh[®], or Crayola[®] Model Magic[®] with a gem (a small polished rock or bead) hidden inside. Ask them to manipulate or mold the clay, so that the gem surfaces unexpectedly, representing one of the gems within their children made manifest. Remember:

- Each clay/child is different, requiring slightly different parenting.
- As children develop they need to be parented according to their level of development.
- Children, unlike clay, interact with their parent so the interaction and relationship is a two-way street.

After discussing the questions about the role of parents in assisting children to identify and develop their talents and capacities, invite all participants to briefly acknowledge the spiritual reality of the child as demonstrated by their work with clay.

A Perspective on Human Development: Understanding Stages of Maturity

pp. 57–66

To prepare for this activity, see “Organizing a Jigsaw,” page 29 of this Facilitator Guide. It is ideal if there are at least eight participants so that this jigsaw activity has two or more participants for each of the four study groups in “step one” and “step two” of the process. If your group is smaller, decide whether to study only two or three of the stages of maturity, or whether your small teams could possibly each study two of the stages.

Please note that quotation 4 on page 58 of the course book (also quotation 1 on page 63) does not imply that spiritual education is not possible for youth and adults. It simply states that spiritual education is easier and more effective when begun at an early age. For those of us who are youth and adults, we must exert our own volition in the spiritual education process rather than rely on the efforts of our parents, and we must be aware that if we “let a few days pass” without effort we may find ourselves sliding back to our “accustomed ways.”

Session Four

Fostering the Spiritual Development of Children

Activities and Suggested Times		Materials Needed
Opening Devotions	10 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pictures cut from magazines, representing the power of encouragement• Inexpensive copies of <i>The Hidden Words</i>, as participant gifts• <i>These Heavenly Children</i> DVD (optional)
Session Four Themes and Objectives	2 min.	
Session Three Reflections	3 min.	
The Power of Love	15 min.	
The Power of Encouragement	15 min.	
Guiding Children Using the Bahá'í Writings	45 min.	
Share examples	5	
Offer gift	3	
Groups read/identify	15	
Prepare skits	7	
Share skits	10	
Process	5	
<i>These Heavenly Children</i> Video and Discussion	30 min.	
Parents Helping Parents	10 min.	
Closing Activity: A Visit from 'Abdu'l-Bahá	10 min.	

The Power of Encouragement

pp. 74–75

Consider having pictures cut from magazines available to represent the power of encouragement if participants choose to use images for their journaling at the end of the activity.

Guiding Children Using the Bahá'í Writings

p. 75

After the opening discussion in this activity and at the beginning of step 4 of the activity, praise participants for their commitment to parenting and their use of the Creative Word of God. Share the following statement from Bahá'u'lláh:

O Son of Being! Thou art My lamp and My light is in thee. Get thou from it thy radiance and seek none other than Me. For I have created thee rich and have bountifully shed My favor upon thee.

THE HIDDEN WORDS, ARABIC NO. 11

Then, present each participant with an inexpensive copy of *The Hidden Words*, perhaps tied with gift ribbon, available from Special Ideas: (800) 326-1197 or www.special-ideas.com; or the Bahá'í Distribution Service: (800) 999-9019 or www.bahaibookstore.com.

Closing Activity: A Visit from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

p. 77

Invite participants to relax and get comfortable.

Then, in a story-telling mode, read or paraphrase the following dialogue, reading slowly and clearly, pausing often to allow participants time to form the images in their minds.

After a period of silence, invite participants to reflect on this experience in their journals.

Ask them to make particular note of the transformative effects of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s presence, and the impact they hope it will have on their families.

A Visit from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (Visualization)

Imagine you and your family on a typical day in your home. Everyone is home today, although they may be scattered around the house in different rooms, each busy with their own tasks.

Picture what each one of you is doing. Now imagine that there is a knock at the door. One of your children goes to the door to open it. This child opens the door to find a Man standing in the doorway, in a long, flowing robe. The child looks up at this Visitor, at His white hair and beard, and into the Man’s penetrating blue eyes. From where you are standing, you can see your child and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá looking into each other’s eyes, for what seems like a long time. Finally your child reaches up and takes the hand of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and ushers Him into the house. Your entire family is present. No one speaks. Slowly, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá moves from person to person, focusing His entire attention on the person with Him. Without a word spoken, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá acknowledges, cherishes and loves each person in their turn. Finally He comes to you. You look into His eyes, and you are filled with tremendous love and devotion. In His gaze you feel embraced, nurtured, and cradled. Slowly, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá begins to speak these words:

(Read one of more favorite passages of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, such as the following:)

“Know ye the value of these children for they are all my children.”

“I give you my advice, and it is this: Train these children with divine exhortations. From their childhood instill in their hearts the love of God so they may manifest in their lives the fear of God and have confidence in the bestowals of God. Teach them to free themselves from human imperfections and to acquire the divine perfections latent in the heart of man.”

“What a power is love! It is the most wonderful, the greatest of all living powers.”

You don’t remember Him leaving, because He is always present. But you wonder, as you look at your loved ones gathered around you, how your family might respond to this visit from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Session Five

Family Roles, Rights, and Responsibilities

Activities and Suggested Times		Materials Needed
Opening Devotions	10 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dictionaries• Reference copy of <i>Foundations for a Spiritual Education</i>• TinkerToys®, K'NEX®, clay, pipe cleaners, or other materials to create models
Session Five Themes and Objectives	2 min.	
Session Four Reflections	3 min.	
Appreciating Roles, Rights, and Responsibilities in the Family	40 min.	
Read/discuss	20	
Build models	10	
Share models and process	10	
Reciprocal Love and Responsibility in the Family	30 min.	
Read/discuss	10	
Compile lists	10	
Process	10	
Parents Helping Parents	10 min.	
Closing Activity	5 min.	

Session Four Reflections

p. 81

Note issues that arise so that they may be addressed in Parents Helping Parents or in a later session of this course.

Appreciating Roles and Relationships in the Family

pp. 82–84

Materials needed:

- Dictionaries
- *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*, pp. 178–87, for reference
- TinkerToys®, K'NEX®, clay, pipe cleaners, or other materials to create models

Refer to the book *Foundations for a Spiritual Education* and explain that additional quotations on this topic are included on pages 178–87. Remind participants that while we will be using this book more extensively in the second course of the Spiritual Parenting program, they may enjoy reading it at this time.

Reciprocal Love and Responsibility in the Family

pp. 85–87

Please note that quotation 7 on page 87 was written by the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, but the principles elicited may also apply to family relationships.

Session Six

Fostering Family Relationships

Activities and Suggested Times		Materials Needed
Opening Devotions	10 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poster paper • Variety of magazines with diverse pictures of home and family • Any materials needed for chosen memorization method
Session Six Themes and Objectives	2 min.	
Reflections on Session Five	3 min.	
Families with a Purpose	30 min.	
Reflect/share	5	
Read/discuss	15	
Create poses/share	10	
Working Together	20 min.	
Read/discuss	5	
Listen/discuss	15	
Demonstrate/share training steps	5	
Planning Service as a Family	20 min.	
Parents Helping Parents	10 min.	
Closing Activity: The Honor of All	10 min.	

Planning Service as a Family

pp. 95–96

Please provide poster paper and old magazines with diverse pictures of home and family for this activity. Depending on the ages of participants' children and the needs and hopes of your participants, you may choose to partially prepare these posters while gathered in your parenting group.

Closing Activity: The Honor of All

p. 98

One simple way to memorize quotations is to write the passage on a chalkboard or chart paper: Recite the quotation in unison three or four times. Erase every fourth word after each recitation. Recite two or three times before the first erasing. Continue reciting and gradually erasing words until no words remain.

If you are using chart paper, consider covering the words with sticky notes or other small pieces of paper. Alternatively, you may simply write the words on index cards, one word per card, lay the cards on a low table, and remove them one by one as the group memorizes the quotation.

Session Seven

Nurturing a Spiritual Environment

Activities and Suggested Times		Materials Needed
Opening Devotions	10 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family consultation posters from previous session Thick piece of string or yarn, about 18" long Slips of blank paper and a basket to hold them Paper or note cards for invitations <i>The Laughter of Angels</i> CD, or Paul Parrish's, <i>Selections from the Bahá'í Writings</i>, vol. 2 (optional). You can hear one melody on the Core Curriculum website.
Session Seven Themes and Objectives	2 min.	
Session Six Reflections	8 min.	
Nurturing a Spiritual Environment in the Home	20 min.	
Read quotations	5	
Reflect/mark words	15	
Share	5	
Engaging Volition	15 min.	
Creating Habits and Routines: Daily Deeds of Constructive Spiritual Living	35 min.	
Write challenges and collect	5	
Role-play/share	10	
Process	5	
Read/discuss	5	
Role-play/share again	10	
Parents Helping Parents (optional)	(10 min.)	
Closing Activity: A Home of Joy and Delight	10 min.	

Session Six Reflections

p. 101

While the participants work in teams of two, create a simple display of any family consultation posters that participants brought to share. After listening to the teams share their insights gleaned from the other person's experience, call attention to the posters and point out one specific positive element of each poster.

Make a note of any questions or unresolved issues that arise during this brief sharing period.

Engaging Volition

p. 104–05

Materials needed:

- A piece of thick string, or yarn, about 18" long.

Definition of Volition: the act of the power of making a choice or decision.
(Merriam Webster's Desk Dictionary)

In preparation, lay the string on a table or the floor. Invite one of the participants to help you introduce the activity by pushing the string across the table or floor. Then, ask the

participant to pull the string. Ask the group, “How does this demonstration illustrate the role of volition, or the power of one’s choices, in character education?”

After reading and discussing the four quotations, ask for two volunteers to play the roles of parent and child. Instruct the “parent” to make the “child” walk across the room. After 30 seconds, ask: What was each person feeling? What was each person deciding?

Then instruct the “parent” to engage the volition of the “child” in walking across the room. Allow 60 seconds, then ask: What was each person feeling? What was each person deciding?

Creating Habits and Routines: Daily Deeds of Constructive Spiritual Living

pp. 106–07

When discussing the importance of establishing routines, offer the following suggestions if needed.

To set routines, try using some of the following strategies:

- Ask the children for their ideas.
- Consult together.
- Try encouragement.
- Take time to teach skills.
- Try using actions, not words.
- Offer limited choices.
- Make a reasonable request.
- Share your own thoughts and feelings.

Closing Activity: A Home of Joy and Delight

p. 109

Materials needed:

- Attractive, decorative note paper or cards to create invitations.

The passage to be studied is set to music by Red Grammer on the CD *The Laughter of Angels*, and by Paul Parrish on the audiotape *Selections from the Babá’i Writings*, vol. 2. You may hear a sample melody for this quotation at www.core-curriculum.org/songs.html, or invite a member of your group to create a simple melody or rhythm for helping the group to memorize the quotation.

Session Eight

Character Training

Activities and Suggested Times	Materials Needed
Opening Devotions	10 min.
Session Eight Themes and Objectives	2 min.
Session Seven Reflections	3 min.
“I Wish to Train You”	10 min.
The Purpose and Process of Character Training: An Exploration of the Writings	40 min.
Read/record insights	10
Create poster	10
Share	5
Design training process	10
Share	5
The Necessity for Character Training: Laws of Nature, Family Rules, and Obedience to Divine Law	15 min.
Setting Family Rules and Consequences	15 min.
Parents Helping Parents	10 min.
Closing Activity	5 min.

The Purpose and Process of Character Education: An Exploration of the Writings

pp. 114–16

Facilitators please note that quotations 10 and 11 on page 116 from the Universal House of Justice are directed to a National Spiritual Assembly, but the principles elicited may equally apply to matters of parenting.

The Necessity for Character Training: Laws of Nature, Family Rules, and Obedience to Divine Law

p. 117

Begin the activity by introducing a simple game with a unique quality: Blow up a single balloon (a beach ball, or Koosh[®] ball, or a balled sock will also work). Invite all the friends to join you in a relatively open area of the room. Tell them that we are going to play a game and the unique quality of this game is that there are no rules.

If your space is very limited, you could also introduce this activity with a deck of cards.

Toss the balloon into the circle and stand back to observe what happens. After enough time elapses to experience chaos (usually less than 60 seconds), stop the game.

Ask: Is this a fun game? What would make it more fun?

Make the observation that sometimes rules are necessary.

Ask the participants to reflect a moment and then share an example of a law of nature.

Allow several friends to share. Examples are gravity, magnetism, etc.

Setting Family Rules and Consequences

p. 118

Examples of some rules that may be helpful in families might include rules for safety, rules to avoid power struggles, rules to promote justice, rules for consultation, rules to set standards in the family.

Offer some of the following examples of appropriate logical consequences for breaking family rules, if necessary:

Consequences are relevant to the misdeed and reinforce or provide education about the spiritual principle involved; for example: “If you intentionally run into someone with a tricycle, you lose the right to ride it until you can ride safely.”

Consequences reflect the age of the child; the duration or complexity of a consequence is less for younger children and never extends beyond educative value; for example: A six-year-old and a fifteen-year-old each say something rude to a neighbor. Their apologies differ, but the principles of acknowledging the feelings of others and seeking to restore unity are the same.

Consequences have meaning to the child; for example: Ask the child to state what he or she will do differently in similar circumstances. Encourage the desired virtue, lovingly asking, “Are you ready to ride safely on your tricycle?” Maybe ask for a demonstration of safe riding.

Please note that children, junior youth, and youth can often participate in planning their own consequences that will assist them to learn self-discipline.

Session Nine

Loving Discipline

Activities and Suggested Times	Materials Needed
Opening Devotions	10 min.
Session Nine Themes and Objectives	2 min.
Session Eight Reflections	5 min.
Loving and Effective Discipline	20 min.
The Power of Utterance	40 min.
Read/study Bahá'í writings	10
Share one word	2
Story	2
Reflect	2
Share with partner	4
Record characteristics of encouragement	5
Teams write verbal chastisement example	5
Share/process	10
Parents Helping Parents	10 min.
Closing Activity	8 min.

Loving and Effective Discipline

pp. 123–26

Frequently, parents struggle with the concept of physical discipline and are looking for clear definitions and specific guidance on acceptable forms, etc. Remind the participants of the importance of discerning the spiritual principles involved in any action or decision, and that effective discipline must be fair and just, and appropriate to the circumstances. Perhaps quote Bahá'u'lláh in *The Hidden Words*: “The best-beloved of all things in My sight is Justice.”

Session Ten

Family Consultation

Activities and Suggested Times		Materials Needed
Opening Devotions	10 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prepare a small gift, such as a short quotation beautifully presented, to give to each participant to acknowledge participation in this Core Curriculum Spiritual Parenting course• Evaluation forms
Session Ten Themes and Objectives	2 min.	
Session Nine Reflections	5 min.	
Consultation	30 min.	
The Power of Listening	20 min.	
Parents Helping Parents	10 min.	
Concluding Activity: The Transformation Process	10 min.	
Evaluations and Closing Devotions	10 min.	

The Power of Listening

p. 137

Processing the Activity: Please allow sufficient time for this last journaling activity in Course One of the Core Curriculum Spiritual Parenting program.

Concluding Activity: The Transformation Process

p. 139

Offer encouragement: the process of transformation is certainly gradual, but using the metaphor of the tree (as in this story), together we can prune and water the tree as we grow, stretching our branches toward the sun, until it bears fruit.

Evaluations and Closing Devotions

pp. 140–41

Kindly collect and return course evaluations to the National Bahá'í Education Task Force, along with a participant list and your training feedback form on pages 40–41 of this Facilitator Guide. These forms are available online at www.core-curriculum.org/downloads if you prefer to download them.

Your participation in this simple process of feedback and evaluation allows the National Bahá'í Education Task Force to carry out its function of systematically learning from your experiences and sharing this learning with others.

Please also use the standard reporting process put in place by your Regional Training Institute, if they have adopted the Spiritual Parenting program as a branch course.

Carefully plan a beautiful and uplifting closing devotional program for your participants.

Present a small gift to each participant as a lasting remembrance of this Spiritual Parenting program. Consider discussing with participants about when to begin Course Two of Spiritual Parenting.

SOME GUIDELINES FOR CORE CURRICULUM PARENTING FACILITATORS

Distinctive Characteristics of Bahá'í Education

Among the Bahá'í principles and characteristics that are integral to this course are:

- Reliance upon God through prayer and a spiritual attitude.
- Use of the Creative Word as a foundation for learning.
- Significance of meditation and reflection in the learning process.
- Use of memorization.
- Use of consultation to develop true understanding.
- The importance of diversity to the growth of the individual, to creativity, and to the unity of the group (ethnicity, gender, personality, learning style, capacity, experience, knowledge).
- Teaching the Faith in word and deed as the ultimate outcome of spiritual education.
- Service to humanity as a primary purpose of education.
- Respect for each person's unique contribution to the learning process.
- Excellence in all things as a standard for all Bahá'í activity.
- Genuine love and recognition of each person's spiritual reality.
- Recognition of parents as primary educators of the children.
- Use of the arts to deepen spiritual perception and richness of the learning experience.

The Learning Experience

The course has been designed so that the participants actively engage in their own learning. Consultation and interactive learning activities form an integral part of the learning experience. As a course facilitator, you will be modeling and utilizing a variety of learning tools and instructional methods as described in the Bahá'í writings, as well as considering a wide array of different learning modalities. Among these are direct use of the Bahá'í sacred writings, including memorization of the writings, experiential learning activities, creative expression, and use of music. The arts are fully incorporated into the learning process as a means to deepen understanding and apply knowledge.

Conscious Knowledge

Throughout the course the facilitators engage the participants in processing activities to assist them to identify the spiritual and educational principles and practices being modeled and taught. This conscious knowledge enables participants to consider how they can apply these same principles and practices in their child-rearing.

Journal Work

The journal provides a powerful tool to assist participants in directing their spiritual development process. It offers:

- Time to reflect and process the events, new concepts, and activities in the course.
- A place to record ideas, insights, questions, and concerns.
- A place to recognize understanding, consider past events, and engage in self-evaluation.
- A place to describe aspirations and future action steps.

Participants in the course are encouraged to use the journal to record their thoughts, feelings, visions, hopes, questions, themes, patterns, memories, mood, personal goals, and progress. The journal is most effective when it is used on a regular basis. Questions or prompts for journal reflections are suggested throughout the course book.

Resources for Spiritual Education

Making use of available resources is an important part of Core Curriculum programs. While participants will be introduced in Course Two of the Spiritual Parenting Program to selected Core Curriculum Lesson Planning Guides and Storybooks as resources for the spiritual education of children, it is useful to have as many resources as possible on hand for the participants to see. It is also helpful to be familiar with online resources such as the Core Curriculum website (www.core-curriculum.org), the national Bahá'í education website (www.education.usbnc.org), the Bahá'í Parenting newsletter (www.bahaiparent.com), and *Brilliant Star* magazine, to encourage parents to develop their own resources and activities.

Instructional Methods

A variety of instructional methods are suggested throughout the course. Facilitators may adapt these to fit their own style and to meet the styles of their participants. At the same time, we suggest that you maintain a diversity of methodologies as a model for the parents in their own work with their children. Listed below are a number of ways to diversify the activities in your course and add some fun to the process.

Methods for Creating Working Groups

- Table Groups. Those people already sitting together may form a group.
- Counting Off. Decide how many groups you need, and ask participants to count off (1, 2, 3 . . . or A, B, C . . .).
- Thematic. Invite participants to gather in designated spots in the room according to themes, such as “everyone whose favorite color is red,” or, “. . . who has visited another continent.” Let those who fit more than one category fill in where needed for group size.
- Seat Markers. During a break, place small objects (such as paper clips, pennies, rocks) at each place. When it is time to divide into groups draw attention to the object and form groups accordingly.

- **Sounding Off.** Pass out or leave small pictures or names of animals at each seat. At a signal, all participants begin making the noise of and/or acting out their animal, trying to locate their group members.
- **Scavenger Hunt.** Give out slips of paper with instructions like, “Find three people with the same color shoes as you,” or, “Find one person who first heard Bahá’u’lláh’s Name before you did and one person who first heard Bahá’u’lláh’s Name after you first heard it,” and form groups with the results.

Group Sharing

Once the groups have been formed and been given their tasks, you will be asking them to share the results of their consultations and/or work with the whole group at a designated time. There are a number of ways to achieve this. Use a variety in your course. Examples include:

- **Verbal Reporting.** One or more speakers or all members of the group simply tell the large group their results. Major points may be listed on chart paper by one of the facilitators (hint: alternate colors of pen for each statement).
- **Visual Arts.** Invite all groups to create a visual art piece (drawing, painting, diagram, sculpture, construction, etc.) that expresses their findings. They may verbally explain their creation.
- **Performing Art.** Ask that all groups express their findings through dance, drama, role-play, music, song, or other performance. Some verbal explanation may accompany the piece.

Group Learning: “Jigsaw” as a Group Learning Method

Jigsaw works best when there are at least eight participants in the course and there is a large body of material to be read and understood by the group. Jigsaw is a cooperative learning strategy. It is a relatively simple technique designed to increase group interdependence and to increase students’ sense of responsibility for their learning. The idea is for each member of a leading team to become an expert on one part of the material. Once the “experts” have grasped the material they teach it to those from other teams.

Organizing a Jigsaw

Before the Course Session:

- Once you know how many will be attending the course, divide the material to be studied into 3–6 parts.
- Assign the participants into heterogeneous teams, i.e., insure a balance of gender, experience, and ethnicity. For example, with 20 participants, you may decide to have five teams, each comprising four participants (potential “experts”).
- Decide how you will assess the success of the learning (i.e. evaluate the learning through quizzes, games, or presentations).

At the Course Session:

Step 1: Assign teams.

Step 2: Invite teams to choose a name for their group.

Step 3: Plan a short inclusion activity to create a sense of interdependence—prayers, a get acquainted activity, or team-building game—depending on the time you have.

Step 4: Assign each team member a number according to the number of sections into which you have divided the material. If you have divided it into four parts, then number the members of each team 1–4.

Step 5: Give section 1 of the divided material to “expert” 1, section 2 to “expert” 2, and so on. No person in each team has all the material; each person has part of it.

Step 6: Team members then leave their teams and form “expert groups.” The task of the “expert” group is to read the material, grasp its content, consult on its meaning, and decide on clever ways to teach it to other team members.

Step 7: All “experts” (now greater experts than before!) return to their respective teams and teach the material in their section to the rest of their team.

Step 8: Assess the team learning. Combine the scores to give a group score. You may, or may not, choose to reward the teams that demonstrate successful learning.

PREPARE! PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Site Considerations

Core Curriculum Spiritual Parenting courses have been held in places as diverse as homes, Bahá’í centers, colleges, hotels, rustic conference centers, and pre-schools. There are a number of factors to consider, in consultation with the sponsoring institution. Please note that the size of the group will be an important factor to keep in mind as you plan your Spiritual Parenting course.

Space: Avoid being cramped! You’ll need adequate room for:

- Tables and chairs arranged to facilitate consultation and note-taking.
- Room for small group break-out work, for presentations, for stretching and movement activities, and for fellowship and visiting.
- Comfortable reception and registration area.
- Meditation, prayer, or quiet study area.
- Space for doing messy crafts (including appropriate floor space and covering).
- Storage area for teaching supplies, coats, and luggage.
- Outdoor area with convenient access to yard, park, garden, or woods for the nature walk in Module Two as well as for fresh air and sunshine anytime!
- Childcare classrooms if children will be attending.
- A place for snacks or even a dining area if you will be including meals as part of your program.

All of the above can be creatively arranged in a large hall, by dividing areas with furniture or rugs.

Aesthetics: If the facility doesn't readily lend itself to a reverential, inspirational atmosphere, choose another or work to make it so!

Acoustics: To facilitate both presentations and group consultation, acoustics need to be good. Also check for excessive noise from traffic, heat and air systems, or other groups of people. Use consultation to address any difficulties and come up with the best solution for your circumstances.

Food: Check into the facility's policies pertaining to food service. Ideally you will have beverages such as water, tea, coffee, and juice available and easily accessible. If you are conducting an extended day-long intensive session, meals can be on-site in a separate area from the course classroom. If meals are off-site, adjust the agenda to allow extra time. Some options for meals are an outdoor picnic (bring your own or sponsor provided), nearby restaurants, on-site kitchen with volunteer staff, or catered meals by the local community.

Setting Up Arts, Crafts, and Music Resources

Identify a special area in your course facility for arts, crafts, and musical supplies. These materials should be available throughout the course for the friends to express themselves and their ideas. Encourage the friends to make creative use of these supplies.

Please make use of a variety of inexpensive, readily available materials for art. Is it not necessary to spend a lot of money to inspire creativity. Materials from nature such as sticks, pinecones, pressed flowers, string, pretty rocks, etc., make excellent supplies for art activities. You may also invite participants to bring scissors, markers, crayons, etc., from home to use during the training.

Spiritual Parenting Facilitators are encouraged to draw on the resources of the community to assure that sufficient materials are available for the course.

Visual Aids

You may choose to use some visual aids during your course. Some suggestions are:

- Make posters from enlargements. Some copy centers are equipped to make poster size enlargements from an 8 1/2" x 11" original. You may also wish to protect posters you've made by having them laminated or covering them with clear contact paper yourself.
- Make your own attractive posters using calligraphy and color!
- Create graphic slides using a personal computer.

Personnel

Community members can assist by serving in the following capacities:

- Receptionist(s), hosts, guides, or servers.
- Treasurer or designated assistant for payments and receipts.
- People to help cook, set up, run errands, clean up.

Involve everyone in your community—encourage children to participate! Involvement brings participants.

Childcare

Participants in your Spiritual Parenting course will need to have appropriate care for their children to be able to effectively participate in this program. In some communities parents make their own arrangements; in others they may choose to jointly hire high quality childcare (on-site or off-site). Sometimes parenting sessions are offered at the same time as Bahá'í children's classes. Sometimes participants in study circles are eager to offer service with small groups of children. Please consult with the parents and your sponsoring institution to assure that children's needs are met.

Other Considerations

Provide if possible:

- Photographer for candid and group pictures.
- Transportation to and from site for those using public conveyances (arrange for shuttling to secondary sites as needed, e.g., nature walk).

Scheduling Considerations

Flexibility has been purposely built into the course implementation to allow communities to adapt the schedule to their unique situations. Ideally, participants will have sufficient time between sessions to practice new skills and to reflect on the writings they have studied. Scheduling of each course session will be determined through consultation with participants and the sponsoring institution.

Breaks, Time for Reflection, Fellowship, and Devotions

- In your advance planning, schedule breaks as they seem appropriate according to your needs.
- Plan to open and close all sessions with devotions and to set an example by encouraging the use of memorized devotions and music.
- Provide sufficient time also for fellowship and consultation. Part of the joy and excitement of the course is the opportunity to share with others the challenges and bounties of parenting. Consultation within the parenting group can also effectively resolve many questions related to schedule and other matters.

Inviting Parents to Participate

The key to building the participation of parents is your own enthusiasm and the enthusiasm of others. Parents need to feel confident that this course will address their needs, hopes, and interests and that the course will be enjoyable and productive. Enthusiastic parents will bring others.

A personal approach works best. Announcements, flyers, and general letters can be useful parts of an outreach plan but cannot replace personal contacts (phone calls, conversations, and e-mail) with others. Sending a sweet, handwritten invitation by mail can also offer a personal touch.

Your introductory session can help parents experience a sample of the sorts of experiences they will have in the course and may be especially effective when you're reaching out to parents in the community at large.

CULTURAL APPRECIATION

The learning environment is created through physical surroundings and material preparations that reflect love and appreciation for the individual participants' capacities, capabilities, and cultural diversity.

The following examples illustrate strategies to bridge cultural differences:

- Ask: Perhaps one of the best ways to learn about the needs, hopes, and interests of the people we're with is simply to ask them what they think and listen carefully to their responses. It is also important to observe participant responses and invite their questions and comments as the course unfolds.
- Working in pairs: If close interaction with the opposite sex is culturally inappropriate and the activity suggests working in pairs, direct friends to choose male-male and female-female partners or arrange pairs in advance to quietly accommodate this need.
- Language use: Some individuals enjoy reading quotations in English, while others do not. During the first part of the training invite volunteers to read rather than assigning readers. Please carefully observe the group you are serving. Routinely invite individuals to "pass" if they prefer not to read; if possible, organize working groups so that at least one able reader is in each group. Alternatively you may memorize the first quotation for an activity and focus the activity on deep exploration of that one quotation.
- Time: Please be mindful that different groups require more or less time for study depending on such factors as group size, reading ease, familiarity with the Faith, and possibly cultural factors. Consult with the group and adjust the schedule if necessary so that:
 - Participants engage thoroughly with the Word of God with both mind and heart.
 - There is a feeling of dynamic energetic movement in the training without rushing or feeling stressed.
- Recognition of individuals: For those who find public recognition of individual attributes immodest, try setting the stage by sharing that every attribute is a gift from God. Avoid directing praise to selected individuals: "Praise without distinction." Note that God's gifts allow His attributes to shine forth within the community.
- Any activity that uses posters or two-dimensional art expression: Some friends come from backgrounds that seldom use two-dimensional, paper art for expression. Clarify that visual artwork may be three-dimensional, using a wide range of materials for creation.
- Avoiding materialism: The Core Curriculum *is not* about equipment or supplies, although it strives to use them well. Core Curriculum *is* about the interaction of the Word of God with the human spirit in a way that engages the mind and heart to mobilize participation to transform the world. Please assess the local environment and make creative use of the materials that will be available to the participants in this course.
- Music throughout the training: Diverse music—and lots of music—enhances any environment. Some favorites include:
 - *Amame* by Leonor Dély y Millero Congo.
 - Any of the many *Black Men's Gathering* albums.
 - "Dastam Begir" (any version, such as Music of the World Congress) when considering the Example of the Master.

- *Esengo Na Mboka Haija* by Congo Youth Choir.
- *Keepers of the Dream* by Kevin Locke.
- *Louhelen: Fruits of the Spirit* compilation album.
- *Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh* by Zheng Fei Hong.
- *The Santour* by Kiu Haghghi.
- *Sounds of the World*, music from the World Center Terrace Dedications.
- *We Have come to Sing Praises*, “In this Day Bahá'u'lláh” by the Bahá'í Gospel Choir at the conclusion of a session.

There are many choices to explore!

SITUATIONS BEYOND THE SCOPE OF THE CORE CURRICULUM PROGRAM

While the role of the Spiritual Parenting Facilitators is one of profound service to families, Bahá'í institutions, and the community, sometimes situations can arise that are beyond the scope of the Core Curriculum Spiritual Parenting program. Based on what you already know, consider situations that might be beyond the scope of this program. Some examples include abuse, deeply emotional issues, custody and other legal matters, etc.

What can you do should such a situation arise? How could you prepare for such situations?

For example, if a participant is emotionally overcome by a particularly moving activity, one facilitator could assist by stepping out of the room with the participant to listen and show love, while the other continues the course.

In some instances, be prepared to refer the situation to a Bahá'í institution such as the Local Spiritual Assembly, an Auxiliary Board Member or an Assistant.

Consider the following story as analogy:

There once was a village hospital which every day saw a consistent stream of bloodied, battered people coming with the same injuries. The doctors and nurses were so busy patching people up they had no time to investigate the cause. Finally a youthful, inquisitive soul investigated and found that a commonly used footpath passed a dangerous cliff, and many people were falling off this cliff. The village people then built a fence, and the problem was solved.

As Spiritual Parenting Facilitators, we know there are lots of injured people among us; there are others trained to treat the injured. We are the youthful, inquisitive souls, uniting our communities to work for change.

ACADEMIC CREDIT FOR CORE CURRICULUM SERVICE

University credit at the graduate or undergraduate level may be earned for your participation in online Character Education and Community Development courses, which are based on the Core Curriculum framework, and for your service in your local community as a Spiritual Parenting Facilitator. Draw on professional resources for teachers to enhance your effectiveness at the local level through a combination of face-to-face learning and internet resources. Visit www.louhelen.org/cecd or contact Dr. Rick Johnson at Louhelen Bahá'í School (Louhelen@usbnc.org, (810) 653-5033) for more information about this exciting opportunity.

Sample Course Invitation Letter from the Sponsoring Institution to Parents, Grandparents, and Communities

Date _____

To _____

Dear Friends,

We are happy to announce that our [*Local Spiritual Assembly or other institution*] has scheduled a Spiritual Parenting Course on [*date and time*] at [*place*]. This program is designed to foster loving, unified, spiritually vibrant families.

Our [*Local Spiritual Assembly or other institution*] encourages all parents from all Faiths and backgrounds in your community to participate in the course. Additionally, grandparents and community members who care for children may cherish this learning opportunity. We humbly request your support for this program.

The course to be offered is the first of two courses in the Spiritual Parenting program. Through a variety of learning activities we will:

- Explore the Bahá'í writings as a strong foundation of guidance and inspiration for our role as parents.
- Learn practical ways to implement the guidance in the Bahá'í writings.
- Establish our own parent network to provide support and strength for families.
- Realize that parents, teachers, and community members collaborate to support growth and development of children.

Among the topics covered in this course are:

- Standards of Parenthood.
- The Spiritual Development of Parents.
- The Spiritual Reality of the Child.
- Fostering Spiritual Development.
- Family Roles, Rights, and Responsibilities.
- Fostering Family Relationships.
- Nurturing a Spiritual Environment.
- Character Training.
- Loving Discipline.
- Family Consultation.

The cost for all sessions, including the Spiritual Parenting course book, is \$_____.

We encourage all participants to plan to attend all sessions of the course to achieve maximum benefit. We anticipate that this will be a very rich experience for all. Should you have any questions regarding the course, please contact [*facilitators' names and phone numbers*] who will be happy to answer your questions. You may view the content of the course online at www.core-curriculum.org.

Please send or phone registration requests or recommended names by [*date*] to [*contact person's name, phone number, and address*].

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Sample Registration Confirmation

We are pleased to confirm your registration!
Core Curriculum Spiritual Parenting, Course One

Tuesdays, October 6 to December 16, 7:30 p.m.



- Location:* Anywhere Bahá'í Center
99 Unity Lane, Covenant City, USA
Phone (909) 909-9999
- Directions:* From Highway 9, take the . . .
- Cost:* \$____ per person, includes:
Instructional materials for all sessions and refreshments
- Registration fee of \$____, payable by [date] to [Institutional address, phone]
- What to Bring:* Prayer book, pen or pencil, sweater or jacket, favorite art supplies to share, a smile
- What to Wear:* Comfortable clothes for sitting and moderate activity
- Who to Contact:* Please call either Mary Friend, (919) 191-1919, or John Helper, (919) 919-9191.

Kindly inform us if you are unable to attend.

FEEDBACK FORM FOR CORE CURRICULUM SPIRITUAL PARENTING COURSE ONE

Facilitators are requested to photocopy this form, complete it, and send it to:
National Bahá'í Education Task Force,
Office of Education and Schools at the Bahá'í National Center, 1233 Central St., Evanston, IL 60201
within two weeks of the completion of the course.
Email feedback prepared using this format is welcome at SCHOOLS@usbnc.org.
Please also enclose a roster of participants and a summary or copy of their evaluations.

FACILITATORS

Names _____
Addresses _____
Phone Numbers _____

LOGISTICS

Sponsoring Institution _____ Location of Course _____

Dates of Course _____

Total Number of Participants _____ Number Completing All Modules _____

Heritage:

____ African American	____ Hispanic	____ Pacific Islands
____ European American	____ Interracial	____ Persian
____ Asian	____ Native American	____ Other

EVALUATION

1. Did you complete the activities as designed?

2. What were the highlights of the course for you and for the participants?

3. What difficulties did you encounter, if any?

4. To what extent did you achieve the goals of each session?

5. What provisions were established by the sponsoring institution for:

Follow-through on participants' plans made during the course?

Continued support by providing ongoing networking and deepening?

Initiating new study circles or other activities?

Outreach to other parents?

Continuous improvement of Bahá'í education programs in the local community?

6. Further comments:

