

**Core Curriculum for
Spiritual Education
and Training**

Among the greatest of all services that can possibly be rendered by man to Almighty God is the education and training of children, young plants of the Abhá paradise. . . .

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

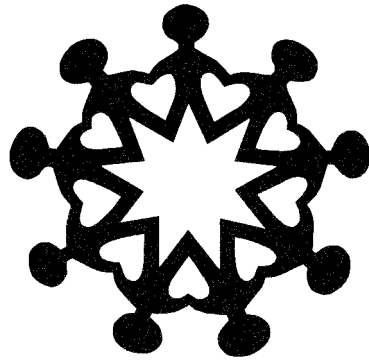
**Training
for
Teachers
of Children
and
Junior Youth**

*National Bahá’í Education
Task Force*

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Bahá’ís of the United States

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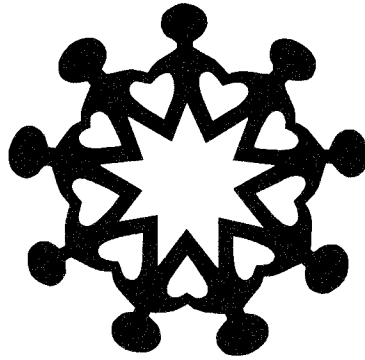


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and Training**

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Purpose of the Training



This Core Curriculum Training for Teachers of Children and Junior Youth strengthens teachers' unique role in spiritual education through the systematic development of their knowledge, understanding, spiritual insights, and skills of service. This training process involves the teacher's personal spiritual transformation and has the goal of raising children and junior youth who are consecrated Bahá'ís, dedicated teachers of the Faith, and active servants of humanity. The training program thus becomes a spiritual process which engages the teacher's own prayer, meditation, study of the creative Word, reflection, consultation, and dedicated practice.

This training prepares individuals to offer the comprehensive Core Curriculum for Spiritual Education of Children and Junior Youth in their community and neighborhood children's classes.

In the United States, Core Curriculum teacher training is offered under the sponsorship of Local Spiritual Assemblies or Regional Training Institutes on behalf of and in concert with the National Bahá'í Education Task Force.

PREFACE

Among the greatest of all services that can possibly be rendered by man to Almighty God is the education and training of children, young plants of the Abhá Paradise, so that these children, fostered by grace in the way of salvation, growing like pearls of divine bounty in the shell of education, will one day bejewel the crown of abiding glory.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, REV. ED. 1997, NO. 106, P. 133

Today the training and education of the believers’ children is the preeminent goal of the chosen. It is the same as servitude to the Sacred Threshold and waiting upon the Blessed Beauty. Joyously, therefore, canst thou pride thyself on this.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, BAHÁ’Í EDUCATION, REV. ED. 1999, NO. 63, P. 25

Children are the most precious treasure a community can possess, for in them are the promise and guarantee of the future. They bear the seeds of the character of future society which is largely shaped by what the adults constituting the community do or fail to do with respect to children. They are a trust no community can neglect with impunity. An all-embracing love of children, the manner of treating them, the quality of the attention shown them, the spirit of adult behaviour toward them—these are all among the vital aspects of the requisite attitude. Love demands discipline, the courage to accustom children to hardship, not to indulge their whims or leave them entirely to their own devices. An atmosphere needs to be maintained in which children feel that they belong to the community and share in its purpose. They must lovingly but insistently be guided to live up to Bahá’í standards, to study and teach the Cause in ways that are suited to their circumstances.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, TO THE BAHÁ’ÍS OF THE WORLD, RIDVÁN 2000

The National Spiritual Assembly has spent the last fifteen years developing the Core Curriculum for the spiritual education of children covering a range of topics, including the Central Figures of the Faith, its history and pivotal principles as well as its administrative order. It is our sincere hope that Bahá’í communities across the country will continue to develop their skill in presenting the full scope of this curriculum to the children in our community.

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE BAHÁ’ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES, JANUARY 29, 2003

The National Spiritual Assembly recommends that [the Core Curriculum] serve as the foundation for children’s classes in the United States.

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE BAHÁ’ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES, MARCH 24, 2003

The Core Curriculum is to remain the standard and program goal for Bahá’í education of children in the United States.

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE BAHÁ’ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES, APRIL 19, 2004

About Your Teacher Training

At the heart of the **Core Curriculum for Spiritual Education and Training** stands the spiritual education of children and junior youth. Within that heart, at the “core” of the Core Curriculum, deep and concentrated study of the Bahá’í sacred writings gives rise to knowledge of fundamental principles for spiritual living, understanding and insight into how these principles can be applied in our lives and in the world, and practice expressing them through our words and actions.

Curriculum Content

With the writings of Bahá’u’lláh, the Báb, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and the guidance of Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice, as the foundation of the Core Curriculum, the spiritual education curriculum for children and junior youth proceeds systematically through three main curriculum strands: **The Principle of Oneness**, **The Central Figures** of the Bahá’í Faith, and the **World Order** of Bahá’u’lláh. Several curriculum themes make up the content of each strand. For example, the Oneness Strand includes study of the oneness of religion, oneness of humanity, race unity, and equality of women and men. The book *Foundations for a Spiritual Education* compiles the quotations that underlie the entire curriculum.

Curriculum Process

The Bahá’í writings also indicate richly varied instructional methods and learning tools that engage the heart of the learner, provide active hands-on learning experiences, and adapt the curriculum to the diversity of individual capacities, capabilities, interests, and needs. These methods, such as direct study of the Bahá’í sacred writings, memorization, cooperative group learning, storytelling, music, drama, arts, crafts, and sciences, assist learners to internalize these spiritual teachings and then to express them in service to humanity, in words and deeds that promote unity, and in continuous outreach to their friends and neighbors.

Bahá’í Classes Open to All

While Bahá’í classes for the spiritual education of children and junior youth have always been open to all, increasingly systematic outreach to friends and neighbors and to the community as a whole increases active participation of children from all walks of life. In communities throughout the United States and in many countries around the world, this outreach process provides an exciting mix of children in long-standing Bahá’í classes and stimulates classes in some areas where most or all children are not from Bahá’í families. Beyond the outreach of Bahá’ís, community organizations may adopt elements of the curriculum for their own purposes. For example, a public school system in Ontario, Canada placed the *Bahá’u’lláh, Volume Two* storybook in every elementary school in its town as part of the second grade multicultural curriculum. A community-based interfaith organization in California adopted the Oneness Strand of the Core Curriculum for their summer school. Several countries use the curriculum to provide spiritual education in communities with up to 80% non-Bahá’í children.

Classroom Ready Learning Materials

This **Training for Teachers of Children and Junior Youth** provides practice using the **Core Curriculum Lesson Planning Guides** and the growing collection of **Core Curriculum Storybooks** to teach children. The Lesson Planning Guides provide hundreds of detailed plans for lessons to systematically progress through the entire nine-year curriculum as well as practical suggestions for adapting the lessons to diverse learners. Core Curriculum Storybooks provide a rich assortment of stories from Bahá'í history, stories that explore spiritual principles and spiritual qualities, and stories about heroic children and youth who champion the Cause of God through their actions.

An Integrated and Comprehensive Community Approach

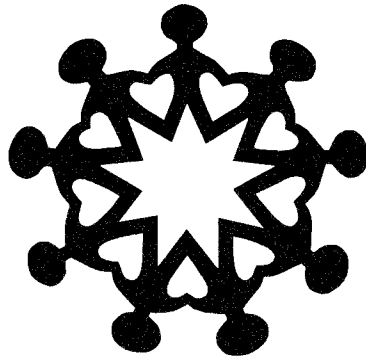
The spiritual education of children and junior youth, that process by which the community guides the spiritual development of its younger members and cultivates their contributions to the community as a whole, requires a comprehensive approach to spiritual education. Thus the Core Curriculum not only includes training of **teachers**, but also training to encourage **spiritual parenting**, training to foster **sound marriages**, training to **empower youth**, and training to promote the vital principles of **race unity** and **equality of women and men** throughout all aspects of community life. In addition to training for all these interrelated aspects of community development, the curriculum includes the **Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses**, a basic sequence designed to build the knowledge, spiritual insights, and skills that stimulate community growth. Trained facilitators offer these courses using a **facilitator guide** to enrich the learning experience for participants.

Growth and Development of the Core Curriculum

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States initiated the Core Curriculum in 1988 by appointing a committee to collect and assess some 300 curriculum materials for spiritual education from around the world. To carry out this task, the committee compiled quotations from the Bahá'í writings about the purpose, outcomes, contents, process, organization, roles, and responsibilities of spiritual education. The Assembly subsequently published the compilation with the title, *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*.

Not content with the assessment of existing materials or with a simple collection of lessons, the National Spiritual Assembly called for a comprehensive spiritual education curriculum to address the needs of Bahá'ís and seekers throughout the United States. By early 2004, the Curriculum included 14 Lesson Planning Guides, four fully illustrated storybooks, a record-keeping system to assure educational continuity as children progress through the curriculum or move from one locality to another, and numerous training programs to foster the growth and development of community life. Now in its second decade, the curriculum has been shared with over 100 countries, with most of those countries receiving materials or training in one form or another.

Established in 1991 as the National Teacher Training Center, the **National Children's Education and Research Center** at Louhelen Bahá'í School in Davison, Michigan, works closely with the National Bahá'í Education Task Force for the ongoing development of this curriculum. For more information about the curriculum or training programs, please contact the NCERC at (810) 653-5033, or email NCERC@usbnc.org.



**Core Curriculum for
Spiritual Education
and Training**

1. Welcome, Devotions, and Introductions
Presentation of the Course Book
2. Historical Overview of the Development of the
Core Curriculum
History, Current Status, and Future Direction
3. Organizational Schema
The Learning Framework: Rose Activity
4. Overview of the Teacher Training
Format and Contents of the Training
Modeling
Books and Materials
5. Summary: Personal Journal

Training for Teachers of Children and Junior Youth

Introduction

Welcome, Devotions and Introductions

Purpose:

Create a joyful, loving, and spiritually oriented atmosphere.

Build a unified sense of community.

Share logistical information regarding the training.

Introduce the training process and materials using a kinesthetic experience.

Welcome, and congratulations on your decision to arise in service to the children and junior youth of your community. Your spirit of service is humbly acknowledged and greatly appreciated by your sponsoring Local Spiritual Assembly, Regional Training Institute, and the National Bahá'í Education Task Force.

Devotions

Begin your teacher training session with a short devotional program including prayers, sacred writings, and music.

Logistics

Take a few moments to become acquainted with the layout of your facility, location of rest rooms, and other housekeeping announcements.

Introduction of the trainers and participants

Enjoy getting to know one another through the following interview activity, or another chosen by your facilitators.

1. Organize your group into pairs, preferably teaming with someone you don't already know well. Spend 10 minutes talking with each other, learning about each other's service and aspirations in the area of spiritual education, and what each hopes to gain from this teacher training. Look for a special spiritual quality in your partner.
2. Return to the large group and introduce your new friends, mentioning the spiritual quality that you have discerned in your partner through your consultation.
3. Alternatively, choose as a group one of the following questions to ask during the course of your conversations. Incorporate the answer to the question in the introduction of your new friend.
 - What is a special gift or blessing represented by your community?
 - How did you become a Bahá'í?
 - Describe your family.
 - What is the most fun you've ever had?
 - Why is it so important to educate children and youth?
 - What makes you laugh?
 - What is a special bounty given you by Bahá'u'lláh?
 - How would you define beautiful?

Name Cards

Ideally, your training can occur at tables, and you can create a name card for yourself to use throughout the training.

Alternatively, if tables are not available, reusable name tags may work as well.

Write your name, as you wish to be addressed, on the name card or name tag. Using the art materials supplied, decorate your name card and continue to do so throughout the training, adding more decoration to your name card to express your hopes and aspirations for the spiritual education of children and junior youth.

Course Books

The Core Curriculum Training for Teachers of Children and Junior Youth uses this course book as well as the book, *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*. Please take a few minutes to become acquainted with these materials, prepared through the contributions of thousands of individuals from around the world who have used them in their service to the spiritual education of children and junior youth everywhere.

Processing the Activity

Turn to a person sitting beside you and talk for a minute or so each on how the introduction activity worked for you. How might you use such an activity with children?

If desired, share your insights about this activity with the whole group.

Historical Overview of the Development of the Core Curriculum

Purpose:

Appreciate the comprehensive nature of the Core Curriculum project and its evolution from extensive research in the Bahá'í writings and the ongoing experiences of the friends.

History, current status, and future direction of the project

The National Bahá'í Education Task Force, working under the supervision of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, oversees the ongoing development and evolution of the Core Curriculum for spiritual education and training. The brief timeline on the following page provides an overview of the evolution of the Core Curriculum.

A few further points relating to the development of the Core Curriculum bear mentioning at this time:

- The Education Task Force recognizes the significant contributions of all the Bahá'í teachers and educators who have served the field of spiritual education and training since the very beginning of the Bahá'í Faith. We all stand on the shoulders of these giants.
- As a living curriculum, these spiritual education and training programs originate in study of the writings of the Bahá'í Faith and become increasingly effective in response to the experiences of the friends everywhere.
- The purpose of the comprehensive, sequential spiritual education curriculum for children and junior youth is to raise up consecrated, knowledgeable servants of God and humanity.
- The purpose of the Core Curriculum Training Programs for Community Development is to build patterns of community life that “welcome all with the light of oneness,”¹ to foster vibrant, unified families, and “to ensure that the vision of the community fully embraces its younger members.”² These programs address specific needs of Bahá'ís and seekers alike. This Core Curriculum Training for Teachers of Children and Junior Youth is one of the Core Curriculum training programs for community development. Other community development programs include training for parents, youth, married couples, and training to promote race unity and the equality of women and men.
- The purpose of the Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses is “to endow ever-growing contingents of believers with the spiritual insights, the knowledge, and the skills to carry out the many tasks of accelerated expansion and consolidation” of the Faith, “according to their God-given talents and capacities.”³

¹ Bahá'u'lláh, quoted in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 37

² Universal House of Justice, November 26, 1999

³ Universal House of Justice, December 26, 1995

The Core Curriculum for Spiritual Education and Training: Historical Development

1988–1993

National Bahá'í Education Committee appointed by the United States National Spiritual Assembly to develop resources for spiritual education, and for a comprehensive Bahá'í curriculum for children

Sacred Writings systematically reviewed for themes that pertain to education

Educational material assessment process developed, which assesses over 300 existing educational materials

Collaboration initiated with other National Education Committees, Continental Counselors, Representatives of the Trustees of Huququ'lláh and agencies and committees of the National Spiritual Assembly

1990 Core Curriculum key concepts elaborated, including:

a) Child Development Centered Community

b) Roles of parents, teachers and the Local Spiritual Assemblies

c) Content and Process of Bahá'í Spiritual Education
(Knowledge, Wisdom, Spiritual Perception and Eloquent Speech)

Strands on the Central Figures, the Principle of Oneness, the Administrative Order identified

1991 National Teacher Training Center established by the National Spiritual Assembly at Louhelen Bahá'í School

1992 First trainers' training session held at the National Teacher Training Center

Local teacher training sessions begin throughout North America

First Parenting Facilitator Training held at the National Teacher Training Center

1993–1996

First Race Unity Trainer Training at the National Teacher Training Center

1995 National Spiritual Assembly publishes *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*

Rapidly increasing materials for the spiritual education of children and junior youth

First Marriage and Family Life Facilitator Training held at the National Teacher Training Center

First International Teacher Trainer Workshop held at the National Teacher Training Center

1996–2001

Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses released

Scope and Sequence Documents prepared for spiritual education of children and junior youth

First Equality Trainer Training

First Youth Empowerment Facilitator Training

Teacher Development Workshops published

Process of Core Curriculum Trainer Training decentralized

2001–2004

The Central Figures: Bahá'u'lláh, Volumes One, Two, and Three storybooks published

Bahá'u'lláh Lesson Planning Guides, Levels One, Two, Three published

'Abdu'l-Bahá Lesson Planning Guides, Levels One, Two, Three published

Teacher Trainer trainings held in Europe, Asia, and the Pacific

Principle of Oneness Lesson Planning Guides, Levels One, Two published

The Báb Lesson Planning Guides, Levels One, Two, Three published

Fundamental Verities sequence of courses revised, expanded, and published in book form

The National Spiritual Assembly gives the National Teacher Training Center a new name:

The National Children's Education and Research Center

The Central Figures: The Báb, Volume One storybook published

The Organizational Schema

Purpose:

Become familiar with the guiding quotation for the Core Curriculum.

The Core Curriculum learning model is organized in accordance with the following statement of Bahá'u'lláh:

Strain every nerve to acquire both inner and outer perfections, for the fruit of the human tree hath ever been and will ever be perfections both within and without. It is not desirable that a man be left without knowledge or skills, for he is then but a barren tree. Then, so much as capacity and capability allow, ye needs must deck the tree of being with fruits such as knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception, and eloquent speech.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, REV. ED. 1999, NO. 9, P. 3

While it is not possible to define or limit the creative Word of God, learning objectives inspired by this statement of Bahá'u'lláh assist us to internalize His teachings and translate them into action in our own lives.

KNOWLEDGE (*I Know*)

To gain **information** about facts, spiritual principles, or sacred writings on a topic.

WISDOM (*I Understand*)

To gain **deeper understanding** of facts, principles, or writings.

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION (*I Perceive*)

To **reflect on the application** of facts, principles, or writings in one's own life and one's service to others.

ELOQUENT SPEECH (*I Teach, I Serve*)

To **articulate** or **demonstrate**, through words and deeds, understanding and application of facts, principles, and writings.

Read the words of Bahá'u'lláh again, with these questions in mind: How does this quotation assist us to understand the role of volition in the learning process? How does it assist us to appreciate diversity in the learning group? How does it assist us to understand the importance of spiritual education and training? What might be some examples of inner and outer perfections?

Please note that the objectives of this training course are arranged according to this framework. You may also note that the Content section of the book *Foundations for a Spiritual Education* elaborates the Core Curriculum learning model, which is used throughout the broad range of spiritual education and training programs available from the United States National Spiritual Assembly. We will explore the learning framework more fully later in this training.

The Core Curriculum Learning Framework

The Rose Activity

Let's begin this training with a gift—a gift of roses. But imagine for a moment that you do not speak the English language and you do not know the word “rose.”

Let's begin at the beginning and explore the concept of the rose together.

After completing the activity, process your learning with the questions below.

Purpose:

Understand the
Core Curriculum
learning framework.

Process the Activity:

As you complete your exploration of the rose, identify in the whole group which parts of this activity assist us to gain:

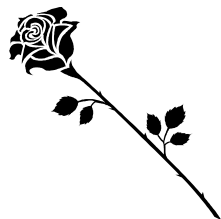
Knowledge _____

Wisdom _____

Spiritual Perception _____

Eloquent Speech _____

THE ROSE



1 Consider the rose: whether it blossometh in the East or in the West, it is none the less a rose. For what mattereth in this respect is not the outward shape and form of the rose, but rather the smell and fragrance which it doth impart.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE KITÁB-I-ÍQÁN*, REV. ED. 1983, P. 159

2 Hear Me, ye mortal birds! In the Rose Garden of changeless splendor a Flower hath begun to bloom, compared to which every other flower is but a thorn, and before the brightness of Whose glory the very essence of beauty must pale and wither.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, REV. ED. 1983, CLI, PP. 320-21

3 O Friend! In the garden of thy heart plant naught but the rose of love, and from the nightingale of affection and desire loosen not thy hold. Treasure the companionship of the righteous and eschew all fellowship with the ungodly.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *PERSIAN HIDDEN WORDS*, NO. 3

4 In short, it behooves us all to be lovers of truth. Let us seek her in every season and in every country, being careful never to attach ourselves to personalities. Let us see the light wherever it shines, and may we be enabled to recognize the light of truth no matter where it may arise. Let us inhale the perfume of the rose from the midst of thorns which surround it; let us drink the running water from every pure spring.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *PARIS TALKS*, REV. ED. 1995, PP. 136-37

5 We must make the soil of our hearts receptive and fertile by tilling in order that the rain of divine mercy may refresh them and bring forth roses and hyacinths of heavenly planting. We must have perceiving eyes in order to see the light of the sun. We must cleanse the nostril in order to scent the fragrances of the divine rose garden. We must render the ears attentive in order to hear the summons of the supreme Kingdom. No matter how beautiful the melody, the ear that is deaf cannot hear it, cannot receive the call of the Supreme Concourse. The nostril that is clogged with dust cannot inhale the fragrant odors of the blossoms. Therefore, we must ever strive for capacity and seek readiness.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, REV. ED. 1982, PP. 148-49

6 Were ye . . . to discover the perfume of the rose garden of understanding, ye would seek none other but Him. . . .

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *THE PROMISED DAY IS COME*, REV. ED. 1996, P. 77

Overview of the Teacher Training

Format and Contents of the Training

This 32-hour Core Curriculum Training for Teachers of Children and Junior Youth will equip and empower you to teach inspiring, dynamic, and well-planned Bahá'í classes for children and junior youth, Bahá'ís and others.

The training is organized in four modules.

Module One

The Bahá'í Teacher: Station, Role, Qualities, and Preparation

Module Two

The Spiritual Reality of the Child

Module Three

Teaching with Core Curriculum Lesson Planning Guides and Storybooks

Module Four

The Child-Development Centered Community

You may wish to further explore your course books and review your schedule at this time. Note that on most pages room has been left in the outside margins for you to make notes, if desired.

Modeling

During the training your facilitator will make every effort to model behaviors and techniques you will use in your classes for children and junior youth.

Among others, these methods include the direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings, memorization, music, storytelling, experiential learning activities, cooperative learning experiences, consultation, and creative expression.

Books and Materials

In addition to your course books, this training provides study and practice with the following materials:

As you know, *Foundations for a Spiritual Education: Research of the Bahá'í Writings* provides the compilation of Bahá'í writings that have guided the development and growth of this project. These writings are organized around key concepts of the curriculum framework for your in-depth study of the principles of spiritual education. We hope that this book will become your close companion as you strive to serve the children of the world and help them to embrace their destiny as lovers of God and servants of humanity.

During Module Three, we will have hands-on practice using **Core Curriculum Lesson Planning Guides and Storybooks** to create exciting, powerful lessons for children and junior youth based entirely on the Word of God for this Day.

Purpose:

Provide an overview of the training process.

Personal Journals

Purpose:

Perceive a sense of personal meaning for participation in this training.

This training provides opportunities for reflection and journaling, using the journal pages in the front of this manual or another journal of your choosing.

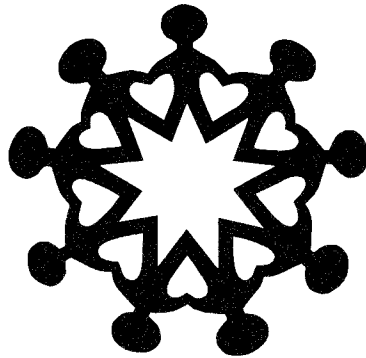
Journal work provides:

- Time to reflect and process events, new concepts, and activities
- 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

To begin this process, take a few minutes to reflect on the following question and record your thoughts:

- Why have I come to the Core Curriculum teacher training?

You might enjoy playing soft music during journal writing.



**Core Curriculum for
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1. Overview of Module One Themes and Objectives
2. Introduction to Module One
3. Qualities of Bahá'í Teachers
Learning From the Example of the Master
4. Role and Station of the Bahá'í Teacher
An Exploration of the Writings
The Station of the Teacher of Children
5. Spiritual Development of the Teacher
Personal Development
Setting Personal Goals
within the Curriculum Framework
6. Summary of Module One
7. Personal Study and Preparation for Module Two

Training for Teachers of Children and Junior Youth

Module One

*The Bahá'í Teacher:
Station, Role, Qualities
and Preparation*

Module One Themes

Station of the Teacher

In the scheme of human life the teacher and his system of teaching play the most important role, carrying with it the heaviest responsibilities and most subtle influences.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *STAR OF THE WEST*, VOL. 17, P. 55

O servant of the Blessed Beauty! Blessed art thou, since thou art engaged in rendering a service which will make thy face to shine in the Abhá Kingdom, and that is the education and training of children. If one should, in the right way, teach and train the children, he will be performing a service than which none is greater at the Sacred Threshold.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ’Í EDUCATION*, REV. ED. 1990, NO. 57, P. 31

Spiritual Development of the Teacher

You must, however, struggle unceasingly to perfect yourself and win ever higher achievements.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ’Í EDUCATION*, REV. ED. 1990, NO. 57, P. 32

The aim is this: The intention of the teacher must be pure, his heart independent, his spirit attracted, his thought at peace, his resolution firm, his magnanimity exalted and in the love of God a shining torch. Should he become as such, his sanctified breath will even affect the rock; otherwise there will be no result whatsoever. As long as a soul is not perfected, how can he efface the defects of others?

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *TABLETS OF THE DIVINE PLAN*, REV. ED. 1993, NO. 13, P. 54

Standards for Bahá’í Teachers

. . . Promote the fundamentals of instruction in the various branches of knowledge through teachers who are pure and sanctified, distinguished for their high standards of conduct and general excellence, and strong faith; educators with a thorough knowledge of science and arts.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ’Í EDUCATION*, REV. ED. 1990, NO. 62, P. 33

KNOWLEDGE

- Become familiar with the Bahá'í writings on the characteristics and station of the teacher.

WISDOM

- Understand, both individually and collectively, the distinctive qualities of a teacher, as embodied in the example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION

- Perceive the key role of the teacher in the education of children and junior youth and identify personal strengths and areas for growth as a Bahá'í teacher.

ELOQUENT SPEECH

- Participate in consultative learning experiences with others.
- Develop a systematic personal plan for continuous spiritual development.
- Experience how instructional methods and learning tools suggested in the Bahá'í writings can be used to understand the spiritual transformation process.

Please note that the learning model—Knowledge, Wisdom, Spiritual Perception, and Eloquent Speech—is not a linear model. This module begins with an activity designed to meet a “Wisdom” objective, exploring the example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Other objectives are accomplished through succeeding activities.

Qualities of Bahá'í Teachers

Learning from the Example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Purpose:

Ponder and reflect, both individually and collectively, on the distinctive qualities of the teacher, as embodied in the example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Participate in consultative learning experiences with others.

1. At the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to America in 1912, Howard Colby Ives, a Unitarian minister in New York, was attracted by the message and personage of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and was determined to meet Him, despite the lack of an appointment. In your whole group, read aloud the following account:

. . . I was at the Hotel Ansonia where the friends had reserved a room for Him. . . . Why was I here? What did I expect from the coming interview: indeed, how did I know there was going to be any interview at all? I had no appointment. Plainly all these other folk had come expecting to see and talk with Him. Why should I expect any attention from such an evident personage?

. . . A door was opening far across from me and a group was emerging and 'Abdu'l-Bahá appeared saying farewell. . . . His eyes met mine as my fascinated glance was on Him. He smiled and, with a gesture no word but "lordly" can describe, He beckoned me. Startled gives no hint of my sensations. Something incredible had happened. Why to me, a stranger unknown, unheard of, should He raise that friendly hand? I glanced around. Surely it was to someone else that gesture was addressed, those eyes were smiling! But there was no one near and again I looked and again He beckoned and such understanding love enveloped me that even at a distance and with a heart still cold a thrill ran through me as if a breeze from a divine morning had touched my brow!

2. After this reading, organize your group into pairs, so that you face each other, knee-to-knee. Turn to the narrative from *Portals to Freedom*, "A Meeting with 'Abdu'l-Bahá," on the following page.
3. Take turns reading this episode aloud to each other.
4. After both partners have read, briefly discuss the following:
 - What distinctive qualities of a teacher are embodied in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's example in this story?
 - What implications are there for you as a teacher of spiritual education?
5. Return to the large group and share your insights into the qualities and attributes of a teacher as exemplified by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. These may be recorded on chart paper as they are shared.

Process the Activity:

Briefly discuss or record in your journals your reflections on this question: How does sitting "knee to knee" and "eye to eye" while reading the narrative assist us to gain insight into the teaching and learning process?

A MEETING WITH 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ

From the memoir of Howard Colby Ives, *Portals to Freedom*, pp. 31-33

. . . As I approached the door where still He stood, He motioned others away and stretched His hand to me as if He had always known me. And, as our right hands met, with His left He indicated that all should leave the room, and He drew me in and closed the door.

Still holding my hand, 'Abdu'l-Bahá walked across the room towards where in the window, two chairs were waiting. Even then the majesty of His tread impressed me and I felt like a child led by his father, a more than earthly father, to a comforting conference. His hand still held mine and frequently His grasp tightened and held more closely. And then, for the first time, He spoke, and in my own tongue: Softly came the assurance that I was His very dear son.

Then we sat in the two chairs by the window: knee to knee, eye to eye. At last He looked right into me. It was the first time since our eyes had met with His first beckoning gesture that this had happened. And now nothing intervened between us and He looked at me. He looked at me! It seemed as though never before had anyone really seen me. I felt a sense of gladness that I at last was at home, and that one who knew me utterly, my Father, in truth, was alone with me.

He put His two thumbs to my eyes while He wiped the tears from my face: admonishing me not to cry, that one must always be happy. And He laughed.

I could not speak. We both sat perfectly silent for what seemed a long while, and gradually a great peace came to me. Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá placed His hand upon my breast saying that it was the heart that speaks.

Suddenly He leaped from His chair with another laugh as though consumed with a heavenly joy. Turning, He took me under the elbows and lifted me to my feet and swept me into His arms. Such a hug! No mere embrace. My very ribs cracked. He kissed me on both cheeks, laid His arm across my shoulders and led me to the door.

That is all. But life has never been quite the same since.



Role and Station of the Teacher

An Exploration of the Writings

Purpose:

Become familiar with the Bahá'í writings on the station and characteristics of teachers.

Extrapolate from the Bahá'í writings the responsibilities, influence and role of the teacher and the relationship of the teacher with parents.

1. Organize the group into smaller groups of 2–5. In your small group, study the writings provided in “The Station of the Teacher,” consult on the focus topics, and then prepare a presentation of your findings to the large group. Each small group will respond to one or more of the following topics. Consider a variety of ways to present your findings, including art, music, and drama.

Focus Topics

- 1) Responsibilities of teachers
 - 2) Influence of teachers
 - 3) The significance of provision for the teacher in one’s will
 - 4) The teacher’s role in the community
 - 5) The teacher’s relationship to parents and family
2. Return to the large group to share your reflections in the whole group. While listening to the presentations of other groups, try to infer which concepts are being expressed without being told by the presenters in advance, if the presentation is in the form of drama, poetry, dance, music, or drawing.
 3. If the responsibilities and qualifications of a teacher seem overwhelming, remember that Divine assistance is assured for those who arise to serve.

Remember not your own limitations; the help of God will come to you. Forget yourself. God’s help will surely come.

When you call on the Mercy of God waiting to reinforce you, your strength will be tenfold.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *PARIS TALKS*, REV. ED. 1995, p. 29

Recall also that in the future, the role of the teacher will differ greatly from the role ascribed to teachers today. Teachers will receive active support from the institutions and the entire community. We will explore ways to reinforce this mutual collaboration and support in Module Four.

Process the Activity:

How did reading the writings with a particular focus topic in mind enhance your group’s understanding of the passages?

1 O thou spiritual teacher! In thy school, instruct thou God's children in the customs of the Kingdom. Be thou a teacher of love, in a school of unity. Train thou the children of the friends of the Merciful in the rules and ways of His loving-kindness. Tend the young trees of the Abhá Paradise with the welling waters of His grace and peace and joy.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ’Í EDUCATION*, REV. ED. 1990, NO. 61, P. 24

2 Therefore must the mentor be a doctor as well: that is, he must, in instructing the child, remedy its faults; must give him learning, and at the same time rear him to have a spiritual nature. Let the teacher be a doctor to the character of the child, thus will he heal the spiritual ailments of the children of men.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ABDU’L-BAHÁ*, REV. ED. 1997, NO. 103, P. 130

3 The education and training of children is among the most meritorious acts of humankind and draweth down the grace and favor of the All-Merciful, for education is the indispensable foundation of all human excellence and alloweth man to work his way to the heights of abiding glory.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ABDU’L-BAHÁ*, REV. ED. 1997, NO. 103, P. 129

4 If one should, in the right way, teach and train the children, he will be performing a service than which none is greater at the Sacred Threshold. . . . You must, however, struggle unceasingly to perfect yourself and win ever higher achievements.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ’Í EDUCATION*, REV. ED. 1990, NO. 57, P. 23

5 . . . Promote the fundamentals of instruction in the various branches of knowledge through teachers who are pure and sanctified, distinguished for their high standards of conduct and general excellence, and strong faith; educators with a thorough knowledge of sciences and arts.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ’Í EDUCATION*, REV. ED. 1990, NO. 62, P. 24-25

6 How wonderful will it be if the teachers are faithful, attracted and assured, educated and refined Bahá’ís, well grounded in the science of pedagogy and familiar with child psychology; thus may they train the children with the fragrance of God. In the scheme of human life the teacher and his system of teaching plays the most important role, carrying with it the heaviest responsibilities and most subtle influences.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *STAR OF THE WEST*, VOL. 17, P. 55

7 Therefore, make ye an effort in order that these children may be rightly trained and educated and that each one of them may attain perfection in the world of humanity. Know ye the value of these children, for they are all my children.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, REV. ED. 1982, PP. 53-54

8 You are all my children, my spiritual children. Spiritual children are dearer than physical children, for it is possible for physical children to turn away from the Spirit of God but you are spiritual children and, therefore, you are most beloved. I wish for you progress in every degree of development. May God assist you. May you be surrounded by the beneficent light of His countenance, and may you attain maturity under His nurture and protection. You are all blessed.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, REV. ED. 1982, P. 92

9 O People of God! Righteous men of learning who dedicate themselves to the guidance of others and are freed and well guarded from the promptings of a base and covetous nature are, in the sight of Him Who is the Desire of the world, stars of the heaven of true knowledge. It is essential to treat them with deference. They are indeed fountains of soft-flowing water, stars that shine resplendent, fruits of the blessed Tree, exponents of celestial power, and oceans of heavenly wisdom. Happy is he that followeth them. Verily such a soul is numbered in the Book of God, the Lord of the mighty Throne, among those with whom it shall be well.

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *TABLETS OF BAHÁ’U’LLÁH*, REV. ED. 1988, PP. 96-97

10 Blessed is that teacher who shall arise to instruct the children, and to guide the people into the pathways of God, the Bestower, the Well-Beloved.

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *BAHÁ’Í EDUCATION*, REV. ED. 1990, NO. 25, P. 5

11 Blessed is that teacher who remaineth faithful to the Covenant of God, and occupieth himself with the education of the children. For him hath the Supreme Pen inscribed that reward which is revealed in the Most Holy Book. Blessed, blessed is he!

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *BAHÁ’Í EDUCATION*, REV. ED. 1990, NO. 26, P. 6

12 We have divided inheritance into seven categories. . . . To the teachers, three parts or one hundred and eighty shares.

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, REV. ED. 1993, NO. 20, P. 26

13 If the teacher is not of the people of Bahá, he doth not inherit. Should there be several teachers, the share is to be divided equally amongst them.

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS, NO. 33, P. 117

14 . . . The manner in which the law [teacher’s inheritance] will be applied in this respect will be determined by the House of Justice.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *SYNOPSIS AND CODIFICATION OF THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, 1973, NOTE NO. 22, P. 60

15 In a Tablet, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá compares teachers who are involved with the spiritual education of the child to the “spiritual father” who “endoweth his child with everlasting life”. He explains that this is the reason that “teachers are listed among the heirs” in the “Law of God .”

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, REV. ED. 1993, NOTE NO. 40, P. 185

Spiritual Development of the Teacher

Spiritual Growth Plan

1. Spiritual growth, like any other critical aspect of our lives, can be greatly enhanced by creating a plan. Refer to the passages quoted below, keeping in mind the importance of actively directing one's spiritual development process by consciously setting goals and striving to meet them.

You are all my children, my spiritual children. Spiritual children are dearer than physical children, for it is possible for physical children to turn away from the Spirit of God, but you are spiritual children and, therefore, you are most beloved. I wish for you progress in every degree of development. May God assist you. May you be surrounded by the beneficent light of His countenance, and may you attain maturity under His nurture and protection. You are all blessed.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, REV. ED. 1982, P. 92

The aim is this: The intention of the teacher must be pure, his heart independent, his spirit attracted, his thought at peace, his resolution firm, his magnanimity exalted and in the love of God a shining torch. Should he become as such, his sanctified breath will even affect the rock; otherwise there will be no result whatsoever. As long as a soul is not perfected, how can he efface the defects of others?

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *TABLETS OF THE DIVINE PLAN*, REV. ED. 1993, P. 54

2. Quietly and privately read the quotations provided on the following pages. Then use your journals to reflect on these themes:
 - From your study of the Creative Word, the example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and your learning from Module One in this course, develop your own set of characteristics of a Bahá'í teacher.
 - Set a personal goal (spiritual, cognitive, or social) that will strengthen your role as a teacher.
 - Consider using a visual image to represent yourself today and another image to represent your increased capability for service to children and junior youth after you achieve your goal.

Purpose:

Begin to identify one's own strengths and areas for growth as a Bahá'í teacher.

Develop a systematic personal plan for continuous spiritual development.

Use a journal to facilitate one's personal development plan.

Process the Activity:

How might you use personal goal-setting with those you teach?

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

1 Meditate upon that which hath streamed forth from the heaven of the Will of thy Lord, He Who is the Source of all grace, that thou mayest grasp the intended meaning which is enshrined in the sacred depths of the Holy Writings.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, REV. ED. 1988, p. 143

2 You must, however, struggle unceasingly to perfect yourself and win ever higher achievements.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, REV. ED. 1990, No. 57, p. 23

3 As long as a soul is not perfected how can he efface the defects of others?

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *TABLETS OF THE DIVINE PLAN*, REV. ED. 1993, p. 54

4 To thank Him for this, make ye a mighty effort, and choose for yourselves a noble goal.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, REV. ED. 1982, No. 17.3, p. 35

5 O thou true friend! Read, in the school of God the lessons of the spirit, and learn from love's Teacher the innermost truths. Seek out the secrets of Heaven, and tell of the overflowing grace and favor of God.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, REV. ED. 1982, No. 72.1, p. 110

6 It is incumbent upon you to ponder in your hearts and meditate upon His words, and humbly call upon Him, and to put away self in His heavenly Cause. These are the things that will make of you signs of guidance unto all mankind, and brilliant stars shining down from the all-highest horizon, and towering trees in the Abhá Paradise.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, REV. ED. 1982, No. 199.3, p. 241

7 Knowledge is love. Study, listen to exhortations, think, try to understand the wisdom and greatness of God. The soil must be fertilized before the seed can be sown.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *STAR OF THE WEST*, VOL. 20, No. 10, p. 314

8 Read ye the Hidden Words, ponder the inner meanings thereof, act in accord therewith. Read, with close attention, the Tablets of Tarázát (Ornaments), Kalimát (Words of Paradise), Tajallíyyát (Effulgences), Ishráqát (Splendors) and Bishárát (Glad Tidings), and rise up as ye are bidden in the heavenly teachings.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, REV. ED. 1982, No. 17.3, p. 35

9 If you read the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá with selflessness and care and concentrate upon them, you will discover truths unknown to you before and will obtain an insight into the problems that have baffled the great thinkers of the world.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, REV. ED. 1991, VOL. 1, NO. 430, P. 205

10 Let him first turn his eyes inwardly and search his own heart and satisfy himself that in his relations with his fellow-believers, irrespective of color and class, he is proving himself increasingly loyal to the spirit of his beloved Faith. Assured and content that he is exerting his utmost in a conscious effort to approach nearer every day the lofty station to which his gracious Master summons him. . . .

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *BAHÁ'Í ADMINISTRATION*, REV. ED. 1974, REPRINTED 1998, P. 130

11 Let him survey the possibilities which the particular circumstances in which he lives offer him, evaluate their advantages, and proceed intelligently and systematically to utilize them for the achievement of the object he has in mind.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *ADVENT OF DIVINE JUSTICE*, REV. ED. 1990, P. 57

12 . . . As to what subjects within the Faith you should concentrate on he feels that the young Bahá'ís should gain a mastery of such books as the *Gleanings*, *The Dawnbreakers*, *God Passes By*, the *Íqán*, *Some Answered Questions*, and the more important Tablets. All aspects of the Faith should be deeply studied.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOL. 1, REV. ED. 1991, NO. 501, P. 227

Setting Personal Goals within the Curriculum Framework

Purpose:

Begin to identify one's own strengths and areas for growth as a teacher.

Develop a systematic personal plan for continuous spiritual development.

Use a journal to facilitate one's personal development plan.

1. Collectively identify some possible goals for a personal transformation plan. What steps can be taken to strengthen your role as a teacher? List goals on chart paper as they are offered.
2. Review the learning framework and practice using it as you select one goal to systematically address to increase your capability as a teacher.

This is an example of how one teacher set a goal:

Sample Personal Goal: To be more patient.

<p style="text-align: center;">KNOWLEDGE (I know)</p> <p>A keen awareness of information and facts. The remembering and recall of previously learned material.</p>	<p><i>To read what the Writings say about patience.</i></p> <p><i>Post quotations around the house to focus my attention.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">WISDOM (I understand)</p> <p>True comprehension and insight. The discovery, through consultation, reflection, inspiration and experience, of the meaning of information and facts, and understanding of spiritual truth.</p>	<p><i>To read and reflect upon stories of people who display patience, by observing people who are patient and by discussing with others.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION (I perceive)</p> <p>Penetrating inner vision and the acquisition and application of a Bahá'í perspective. The bringing to bear of Bahá'í spiritual values, principles and laws to issues and problems.</p>	<p><i>To ascertain how I will be able to deal with situations more patiently.</i></p> <p><i>To discern where I have and where I have not been patient by bringing myself to account each day concerning patience.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">ELOQUENT SPEECH (I teach, I serve)</p> <p>Active expression, through words, actions, and deeds, of the understanding acquired through knowledge, wisdom and spiritual perception. As such it is the endeavor to live the Bahá'í Life, to teach and engage in service to humanity.</p>	<p><i>To recite memorized Writings about patience on a daily basis.</i></p> <p><i>To turn to God for assistance.</i></p> <p><i>To be patient and stop getting annoyed so easily with others.</i></p> <p><i>To prepare a short fireside presentation on patience.</i></p>

PERSONAL GOAL:

<p style="text-align: center;">KNOWLEDGE (I know)</p> <p>A keen awareness of information and facts. The remembering and recall of previously learned material.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">WISDOM (I understand)</p> <p>True comprehension and insight. The discovery, through consultation, reflection, inspiration and experience, of the meaning of information and facts, and understanding of spiritual truth.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION (I perceive)</p> <p>Penetrating inner vision and the acquisition and application of a Bahá'í perspective. The bringing to bear of Bahá'í spiritual values, principles and laws to issues and problems.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">ELOQUENT SPEECH (I teach, I serve)</p> <p>Active expression, through words, actions, and deeds, of the understanding acquired through knowledge, wisdom and spiritual perception. As such it is the endeavor to live the Bahá'í Life, to teach and engage in service to humanity.</p>	

Memorization of the Creative Word

Spiritual Development of the Teacher

Purpose:

Encourage memorization of the Creative Word as part of one's personal spiritual growth plan.

Provide examples of activities that can be used in one's community and Bahá'í classes.

1. Consider these words of Bahá'u'lláh:

From the texts of the wondrous, heavenly Scriptures they should memorize phrases and passages bearing on various instances, so that in the course of their speech they may recite divine verses whenever the occasion demandeth it, inasmuch as these holy verses are the most potent elixir, the greatest and mightiest talisman.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, P. 200

Then briefly discuss the question: What is the importance of memorization?

2. As a group, select a passage from the Bahá'í writings that you have studied today, such as the following:

The aim is this: The intention of the teacher must be pure, his heart independent, his spirit attracted, his thought at peace, his resolution firm, his magnanimity exalted and in the love of God a shining torch.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, TABLETS OF THE DIVINE PLAN, REV. ED. 1993, NO. 13, P. 54

3. Use a technique for group memorization such as:
 - Write the quotation on a chalkboard or whiteboard along with simple drawings that correspond to key words in the phrase. In the whole group read the verse out loud together several times. Then while reciting again, erase every fourth word. Continue this process until the verse is erased. At this point, the group is reciting from memory.
 - Put each word in the quotation on an index card, and place the cards on a low table or the floor. As you read through the quotation several times aloud, gradually remove one or two cards at a time until all the cards are gone.
 - As a group, create simple line drawings to represent key words. As you remove the words, the drawings serve as memory aids.
 - Use a simple tune or melody to chant or sing the verse.
 - Use another method of your choosing.

Process the Activity:

How could you use this group memorization activity with children and junior youth?

Summary of Module One: Evaluating Learning

Review the Learning Objectives for Module One listed on page 23. Do you feel that the objectives have been met?

Use one or more of the activities on the following pages to assist in summarizing and evaluating the learning for this module. These activities include:

- Matching Objectives and Activities, p. 36
- Word Splash, p. 37
- True False, p. 38

Purpose:

Provide a sense of closure.

Ponder, reflect and evaluate learnings in Module One.

MATCHING LEARNING OBJECTIVES TO ACTIVITIES

Match the **LEARNING OBJECTIVE** with the **ACTIVITY** from Module One listed below. Remember, a given objective may be addressed with one or more activities and a given activity may address more than a single learning objective.

KNOWLEDGE

Become familiar with the Bahá'í writings on the characteristics and station of teachers.

Sharing small group's findings on the station of teachers.

WISDOM

Ponder and reflect, both individually and collectively, on the distinctive qualities of a Bahá'í teacher, as embodied in the example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Experiencing a meeting with 'Abdu'l-Bahá through Howard Colby Ives's narration.

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION

Perceive the key role of the teacher in the education of the child and identify personal strengths and areas for growth as a teacher of children.

Memorization activity.

Individual reflection on personal goals.

ELOQUENT SPEECH

Participate in consultative learning experiences with others.

Develop a systematic personal plan for continuous spiritual development.

Small group consultation on the Bahá'í writings regarding the station of teachers.

Setting personal development goals.

Organize your group into small teams.

- Make as many true sentences as possible using the following words and terms.
- Encourage all to participate and all team members to agree on all statements.
- Share your team's sentences with the other teams.

scheme

peace

blessed

indispensable

garden

struggle

foundation

children

role

obligatory

unceasingly

Covenant

education

meritorious

teacher

influences

important

human life

subtle

reflect

teaching

excellence

loving kindness

tend

joy

tended

TRUE FALSE

Game Description:

Two teams, *Trues* and *Falses*, face off in the middle of a field with a safety area for each team about 20 feet behind. Trainer makes a statement about the theme. If correct the *Trues* chase the *Falses*. If incorrect the *Falses* chase the *Trues*. Anyone caught goes to the other team.

Statements will be about the role and station of the teacher.

Special Hints:

Let confusion reign before supplying the correct answer. Choose questions appropriate to knowledge of players. This is an excellent teaching game.

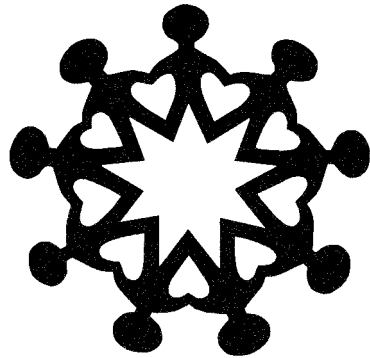
Reprinted from *Towards Peace: Cooperative Games and Activities*
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Personal Study and Preparation for Module Two

In preparation for the continuation of this training in Module Two, choose one or more of the activities below to complete before you meet again. If desired, you may choose a partner with whom to study.



- Select a passage from the Bahá'í writings used in Module One to memorize.
- Continue to work on your personal goals and identify some characteristics of a Bahá'í teacher that you would like to actively develop.
- Continue to reflect on your personal experiences in this training in your personal journal.
- Establish a supportive relationship with one of the training participants with whom you will be able to consult on an ongoing basis about child education.
- Prepare for Module Two by reading the quotations on the “Spiritual Reality of the Child.”



**Core Curriculum for
Spiritual Education
and Training**

1. Module Two Themes and Objectives
2. Recognizing the Spiritual Reality of the Child
3. A Perspective on Human Development
Understanding Stages of Maturity
Developmental Patterns
4. The Process of Spiritual Growth
Attending to Capacity, Capability, and Interest
Exploring the Process of Transformation
A Model for Spiritual Growth
Lessons Conveyed through Nature
Creating Models for Spiritual Growth
5. Facilitating Spiritual Growth
The Teacher as Mentor, Gardener, and Doctor
6. Summary of Module Two
Scavenger Hunt
7. Personal Study and Preparation for Module Three

Training for Teachers of Children and Junior Youth

Module Two

The Spiritual Reality of the Child

Introduction to Module Two

Devotions

Begin this module with heartfelt prayers for children, memorized verses, and music either sung or recorded.

Module One Reflections

In your group, briefly discuss any reflections on learnings from Module One.

Introduce Module Two — The Spiritual Reality of the Child

In your group read aloud the Module Two themes and objectives found on the following pages. Notice that, like all other aspects of the Core Curriculum, the themes for this module come directly from the Bahá'í writings.

Recognizing the Spiritual Reality of the Child

Thou hast asked Us concerning the nature of the soul. Know, verily that the soul is a sign of God. . . . It is the first among all created things to declare the excellence of its Creator, the first to recognize His glory, to cleave to His truth, and to bow down in adoration before Him.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, REV. ED. 1983, PP. 158-59

The Process of Spiritual Growth

The hearts of all children are of the utmost purity. They are mirrors upon which no dust has fallen. But this purity is on account of weakness and innocence, not on account of any strength and testing, for as this is the early period of their childhood, their hearts and minds are unsullied by the world. They cannot display any great intelligence. They have neither hypocrisy nor deceit. This is on account of the child's weakness, whereas man becomes pure through his strength.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, REV. ED. 1982, P. 53

Facilitating Spiritual Growth

The instruction of these children is even as the work of a loving gardener who tendeth his young plants in the flowering fields of the All-Glorious.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, REV. ED. 1990, NO. 47, P. 18

Therefore must the mentor be a doctor as well: that is, he must, in instructing the child, remedy its faults; must give him learning, and at the same time rear him to have a spiritual nature. Let the teacher be a doctor to the character of the child, thus will he heal the spiritual ailments of the children of men.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, REV. ED. 1990, NO. 55, P. 22

In thy school, instruct God's children in the customs of the Kingdom. Be thou a teacher of love, in a school of unity. Train thou the children of the friends of the Merciful in the rules and ways of His loving-kindness.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, REV. ED. 1990, NO. 61, P. 24

How wonderful will it be if the teachers are faithful, attracted and assured, educated and refined Bahá'ís well grounded in the science of pedagogy and familiar with child psychology; thus may they train the children with the fragrance of God. In the scheme of human life the teacher and his system of teaching plays the most important role, carrying with it the heaviest responsibilities and most subtle influences.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *STAR OF THE WEST*, VOL. 17, P. 55

Module Two Objectives

KNOWLEDGE

- Read the sacred texts to discover the spiritual nature of the human reality. Study human development patterns and their application to understand the learner.

WISDOM

- Obtain a deeper understanding of the process of spiritual growth.

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION

- Identify characteristics of differing stages of maturity and levels of capacity, capability and interest.
- Discern the role of the teacher as mentor, gardener, and doctor.
- Learn to observe behavioral indicators of growth and begin a process of diagnosing phases of spiritual growth.
- Integrate general knowledge of human development with Bahá'í writings on stages of maturity.

ELOQUENT SPEECH

- Create and describe a model or analogy for spiritual growth from the world of creation.
- Experience how instructional methods and learning tools suggested in the sacred texts can foster the spiritual transformation process.
- Apply learnings to the planning of multi-age groups in different settings.

Recognizing the Spiritual Reality of the Child

1. Working in groups of 2 or 3 (perhaps with your study partner identified at the end of Module One) study the writings on the following page, “The Spiritual Reality of the Child.”
2. In your small groups consult on the following focus questions:
 - What can you infer about the reality of the child?
 - What are the implications of these writings for a Bahá’í teacher’s relationship with children?
3. Using the art materials provided, convey the fruits of your consultation, the essence of the quotation, through artistic expression.
4. Share your insights with the other groups and record these on chart paper.

Purpose:

Become familiar with the sacred texts about the nature of the human reality.

Understand how spiritual education differs from material and human education.

Consider identifying a wall space to become an “art gallery” for the display of these and any other works produced during the training.

Process the Activity:

How could this form of studying and using art to convey understanding be used with students?

THE SPIRITUAL REALITY OF THE CHILD

1 O Son of Spirit! Noble have I created thee, yet thou hast abased thyself. Rise then unto that for which thou wast created.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *ARABIC HIDDEN WORDS*, NO. 22

2 Upon the inmost reality of each and every created thing He hath shed the light of one of His names, and made it a recipient of the glory of one of His attributes. Upon the reality of man, however, He hath focused the radiance of all of His names and attributes, and made it a mirror of His own Self.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, REV. ED. 1990, XXVII, P. 65

3 Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, REV. ED. 1990, CXXII, P. 260

4 Man has also spiritual powers: imagination, which conceives things thought, which reflects upon realities; comprehension, which comprehends realities, memory, which retains whatever man imagines, thinks, and comprehends. The intermediary between the five outward powers and the inward powers, is the sense which they possess in common, that is to say, the sense which acts between the outer and inner powers, conveys to the inward powers whatever the outer powers discern. It is termed the common faculty, because it communicates between the outward and inward powers, and thus is common to the outward and inward powers.

For instance, sight is one of the outer powers; it sees and perceives this flower, and conveys this perception to the inner power of imagination, which in its turn conceives and forms this image and transmits it to the power of thought; the power of thought reflects, and having grasped the reality, conveys it to the power of comprehension; the comprehension, when it has comprehended it, delivers the image of the object perceived to the memory, and the memory keeps it in its repository.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SOME ANSWERED QUESTIONS*, 1990 ED., PP. 210-11

5 In man there are two natures; his spiritual or higher nature and his material or lower nature. In one he approaches God, in the other he lives for the world alone.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *PARIS TALKS*, REV. ED., P. 55

6 How many a child though young in years, is yet mature and sound in judgment! How many an aged person is ignorant and confused! For growth and development depend on one's powers of intellect and reason, not on one's age or length of days.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, REV. ED. 1982, NO. 121.1, P. 142

7 Know thou that all men have been created in the nature made by God, the Guardian, the Self-Subsisting. Unto each one hath been prescribed a pre-ordained measure, as decreed in God's mighty and guarded Tablets.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, REV. ED. 1990, LXXVII, p. 149

8 It is evident that although education improves the morals of mankind, confers the advantages of civilization and elevates man from lowest degrees to the station of sublimity, there is nevertheless a difference in the intrinsic or natal capacity of individuals. Ten children of the same age, with equal station of birth, taught in the same school, partaking of the same food, in all respects subject to the same environment, their interests equal and in common, will evidence separate and distinct degrees of capability and advancement; some exceedingly intelligent and progressive, some of mediocre ability, others limited and incapable. . . . Nevertheless, although capacities are not the same, every member of the human race is capable of education.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, REV. ED., 1982, p. 85

9 . . . Capacity is of two kinds, natural capacity and acquired capacity. The first, which is the creation of God, is purely good—in the creation of God there is no evil; but the acquired capacity has become the cause of the appearance of evil. For example, God has created all men in such a manner, and has given them such a constitution and such capacities, that they are benefited by sugar and honey, and harmed and destroyed by poison. This nature and constitution is innate and God has given it equally to all mankind. But man begins little by little to accustom himself to poison by taking a small quantity each day, and gradually increasing it, until he reaches such a point that he cannot live without a gram of opium every day. The natural capacities are thus completely perverted. . . . One does not criticize vicious people because of their innate capacities and nature, but rather for their acquired capacities and nature.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SOME ANSWERED QUESTIONS*, 1990. ED. PP. 214-15

10 You are all my children, my spiritual children. Spiritual children are dearer than physical children, for it is possible for physical children to turn away from the Spirit of God, but you are spiritual children and, therefore, you are most beloved. I wish for you progress in every degree of development. May God assist you. May you be surrounded by the beneficent light of His countenance, and may you attain maturity under His nurture and protection. You are all blessed.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, REV. ED. 1982, p. 92

A Perspective on Human Development: Understanding Stages of Maturity

Purpose:

Know Bahá'í writings on stages of maturity.

Integrate general knowledge of human development with the Bahá'í writings on stages of maturity.

Apply learnings to the planning of activities for multi-age groups in different settings.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá has described the importance of understanding human development and the stages of maturity in the following words:

How wonderful it will be if the teachers are faithful, attracted and assured educated and refined Bahá'ís, well grounded in the science of pedagogy and familiar with child psychology; thus may they train the children with the fragrance of God.

‘ABDUL-BAHÁ, *STAR OF THE WEST*, VOL. 17, P. 55

From the beginning to the end of his life man passes through certain periods or stages each of which is marked by certain conditions peculiar to itself. For instance during the period of childhood his conditions and requirements are characteristic of that degree of intelligence and capacity. After a time he enters the period of youth in which his former conditions and needs are superseded by new requirements applicable to the advance in his degree. His faculties of observation are broadened and deepened, his intelligent capacities are trained and awakened, limitations and environment of childhood no longer restrict his energies and accomplishments. At last he passes out of the period of youth and enters the stage or station of maturity which necessitates another transformation and corresponding advance in his sphere of life-activity. New powers and perceptions clothe him, teaching and training, commensurate with his progression occupy his mind, special bounties and bestowals descend in proportion to his increased capacities and his former period of youth and its conditions will no longer satisfy his matured view and vision.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, P. 438

Before we begin the next activity to gain understanding of the stages of maturity, we must proceed with caution regarding current theories of human development. Read aloud the following cautions:

Caution No. 1

‘Abdu’l-Bahá instructs us that we must advance our understanding of the stages of life and the changes that take place across the lifespan. At this point in human history, almost all research regarding human development has been conducted without benefit of direct study of the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, and the Universal House of Justice. Many of the central concerns and controversies in the field of human development have been directly answered in these writings.

Caution No. 2

Most current theories of human development are based on the works of American and Western European scientists and therefore reflect study of the white, middle-class (and often male) population, a minority of the human beings on the planet. Although human development theory purposes to delineate universal understandings as well as variations of human cognition and behavior, these studies largely reflect the population groups immediately surrounding the scientists themselves. Awareness of these racial, ethnic, gender and religious biases, while very important for any student of human development, is crucial for those who seek to educate all the children in the world and raise a prejudice-free generation. We should therefore read broadly in the field, include cross-cultural findings in our study, and be sensitive to individual and cultural variations among the children with whom we work.

Caution No. 3

Human development has many aspects: social, cognitive, physical, artistic, emotional, spiritual, and moral. In most cases these various aspects of development are studied separately and reported separately. All these aspects of development affect each other and interact with one another. As we plan activities for children, a holistic understanding of child development increases our effectiveness as teachers.

Caution No. 4

The many theories of human development reflect both the historical and cultural environment in which they were developed and the personality, interests and life experiences of the theorists. If we see our understanding of human development as a jigsaw puzzle, and our task as finding the pieces of this puzzle, then each theoretical perspective and each research finding provides a piece of the puzzle. If we dismiss a theory completely or if we adopt a theory completely, we may lack an important part of the picture. Gradually, one piece at a time, we can put together an understanding of human development.

1. We will accomplish our investigation through a “jigsaw activity.” To begin, organize yourselves into three groups. Each group will study one of the following Stages of Maturity, using the pages in this manual, “Developmental Patterns” and “Intellectual Processes,” and related passages in Section D of the book *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*:
 - Early Childhood/Distinctions (*Foundations* book, pp. 144–47, Infancy and Childhood)
 - Middle Childhood (*Foundations* book, pp. 145–47, Childhood)
 - Puberty and Youth (*Foundations* book, pp. 147–49, Puberty and Youth)

Note that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá mentions these stages, as well stages of Infancy and Maturity. We will consider these three stages for this training.

2. Each group will read and consult upon the relevant paragraphs from both sources to extrapolate the characteristics of children or youth in that particular stage of maturity.
3. After all groups have completed their study, create new groups so that each new group has at least one member from each of the previous study groups. Briefly share with the other members of your new group the characteristics and behaviors identified for the stage of maturity you studied.
4. With each member considering the particular behavior and characteristics of the children of the stage of maturity they have just studied, the group’s task now is to design a multi-age session for a particular community event. Some examples are:
 - Race Unity picnic
 - Devotional Gathering
 - Nineteen Day Feast
 - Holy Day commemoration
 - Community service project
 - Cluster reflection meeting
5. Invite each group to share its results with the large group.

Process the Activity:

How did you feel about the jigsaw as a way of group learning?

How could you use an approach similar to this in your Bahá’í classes?

What do you need to know to be able to plan and implement jigsaws yourself?

DEVELOPMENTAL PATTERNS

The following picture of developmental patterns is not comprehensive but rather is offered as a taste of the various periods of human maturity. Human existence is a social existence and therefore no person's development can be understood separate from its social context. Human development continues well beyond age twenty with exciting developmental changes throughout life. These lifelong patterns are also subject to drastic individual differences. Human development occurs in somewhat predictable patterns marked with great irregularity and exception. The developmental patterns described here offer a very general description of the unique aspects of each period of development. It must be born in mind that human development is also accumulative, that is, in each period of life all the characteristics of the previous periods are also present and active.

Some possible sources for further reading include Jean Piaget, John Dewey, Benjamin Bloom, T. Barry Brazelton, Lawrence Kohlberg, Carol Gilligan, and John Fowler.

The general characteristics of broad age groups between conception and twenty cover areas of social, emotional, cognitive, artistic, moral, perceptual and motor development.

Conception through birth:

This is a period of rapid physical growth especially of the brain. Towards the end of the gestational period, the human fetus is able to see and hear gross variations in sound and light through the mother's body. The fetus has patterns of sleep and wakefulness, with variations in individual habitual characteristics such as the amount and intensity of movement and thumb-sucking.

Birth through approximately 2 years: (Infancy)

In many ways, this is the most unique period of life. It is a time of rapid physical, social and cognitive change. A span of one month covers many more changes at this time than at any other period after the birth of an individual. During this time, children grow from total physical dependency to independent walking and talking. Imitation and repetition are major forms of learning. Children of this age often repeat without distinction what they see and hear. From their original capacity to learn any and many languages, children become able to speak and understand the language (or languages) most dominant in their immediate environment. At this stage, children are interested in gross perceptual and motor contrasts. They are not aware of the permanency and consistency of objects around them. Their world is what they see, hear, smell, touch, and taste. They form their first relationships through secure attachments to the primary people around them. These attachment relationships give them the emotional stability and security to allow their exploration of the social and physical world around them. This is the period of exploration.

Approximately 2 through 6 years: (Early Childhood/Distinctions)

In this exciting period of life children become gradually and rapidly aware of the social and physical world around them. They become capable of manipulating this world. They begin this phase by being centered on themselves and end it with the ability to empathically take another's perspective. They are capable of understanding symbols and applying them to communicate their thoughts and ideas. They are very interested in the arts: music, dance, painting and drama. Their artistic expressions are original but primitive. Their major strength during this period is fantasy and imagination, the world of make-believe. Their thoughts are spontaneous and at times illogical. They have a strong will and more freedom (in some cultures) to exercise it than at other periods in life. Everything is an extension of play and fantasy. They want to do much more than they are physically or mentally able to accomplish. This is a period of expression.

Approximately 6 through 12 years: (Middle Childhood)

This is the period of life when children become participating members of society by learning rules and having obligations (e.g., homework, chores). They are very busy acquiring basic knowledge and skills. They are fascinated with the world, with questions of "how" and "why." They are logical and demand reasoning. They are attracted to their peer groups; with a rapidly expanding social world. They learn best through increasingly complex relationships and interactions with others. Children enjoy scientific experimentation and manipulation, explanation and concrete examples. They become skilled at manipulating more than one dimension and at imagining the process of previous actions. This is a period of construction.

Approximately 12 through 20 years: (Puberty and Youth)

This is an exciting time of change and re-examination. Children begin this stage with the body of a child and end it with the body of an adult. The brain is creating a massive interlock of physical, cognitive and socio-emotional changes. The children (now youth) are mentally capable of comprehending complicated concepts both concretely and abstractly. They question premises and validate their knowledge, values and beliefs. Their bodies undergo major quantitative and qualitative changes. The children (youth) experience strong feelings and emotions. They have the intellectual and physical capacity to take on the world and the time to do it, free from major social obligations of work and family (with much cultural variation). They are capable of hypothesizing into the unknown without concrete evidence and then examining their feelings before taking action. They want to be in charge and take control. They are critical of themselves and others and therefore require a supportive environment for effective sharing of thoughts, ideas, feelings, and work. Artistic expression is very important in this period (filled with emotions and intelligence, finally integrated) but unlike children aged two to five, their art is a private form of communication, it reflects their inner feelings and higher mental processes in such forms as poetry, stories, drawings, dance, music and sports. This is a period of cycles of production, examination, distraction, and more production.

**INTELLECTUAL PROCESSES:
CHRONOLOGICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

Phases Of the Life Span	Infancy 0-2	Early Childhood 2-6	Middle Childhood 6-12	Puberty & Youth 12-20
Physical	Rapid brain development; rapid improvement of the senses; rapid change in motor ability, especially large motor. Ends with ability to walk, run, push and pull objects, throw small balls and catch large balls. Clear hand preference develops.	Ability to ride bikes, walk on tip-toe, play simple ball games; rapid development and refinement of fine motor activity.	Increase in size and strength. In girls some puberty changes occur by end of this period.	Major hormonal changes (earlier in girls than boys); rapid brain development; rapid changes in height and weight. Starts with child's body and ends with an adult one.
Cognitive	All knowledge and learning are through the senses and motor activity. All basic capacities for processing information are in place: attention, perception, and memory. Ends with the ability to give basic empathetic responses.	Ability to mentally represent objects and engage in symbolic thought. No use of organized set of rules. More focused and controlled attention. Use of strategies in memorizing begins.	Organized and logical thinking; can classify, conserve, and do mental operations but only on concrete, present objects; ability to generalize; elaborate strategies for memorization; organization of knowledge; awareness of self-limitations.	Abstract and hypothetical thinking; becoming more in control of self mental capacity and one's cognitive styles.
Language	Communication changes from babbling to one word and two word utterances. Start of conversation and turn-taking ability.	Rapid growth in vocabulary, improved pronunciation, and start of metaphors. Clear sentences with increased usage of grammatical rules. More awareness of one's own speech and adjustment to social expectations.	More understanding of subtle meanings and awareness of multiple meanings; expanded metaphors and humor; more complex grammar, production of paragraphs, longer text. Advanced conversation ability.	More abstract vocabulary, understanding of irony and sarcasm, and increase in use of these conversational techniques; testing the limits of social conventions of language; refinement of grammar; improvement in detecting unclarity of other's speech and developing better awareness of one's own.
Personality & Emotions	Start of the recognition of self and ability to give basic empathetic responses.	Clear differentiation between one's self and others; high self-esteem and desire for achievement; start of emotional self-regulation and more reflective empathetic responses.	Self-consciousness; differentiated self-esteem (academic, physical, social) which is more affected by social comparison. More complex emotions such as jealousy, shame and guilt.	Mood changes; start of depression, with initial increase and tapering off; ability for self-inspection and social criticism; understanding multiple sources of emotions in self and others. Development of identity.
Social	Commence categorization of others by salient characteristics. Start of imitation of social models. Attachment to primary care giver(s) develops and becomes a secure base for exploring the physical and social worlds. Ends with make-believe play.	Concrete views of friendship based on material goods; becoming aware of social rules and conventions; beginning of social problem solving; increase in peer interaction and peer modeling; start of dominance hierarchy in peer groups. Starts with parallel play and ends with increased social dramatic play, increase in rough and tumble play, gender appropriate play and preference for same sex playmate.	Can see others' reasons but may have difficulty initially in coordinating different points of view; friendships based on trust; more skilled social problem solving; more flexible gender stereotyping; more verbal peer interaction; decline of physical aggression; more stable dominance hierarchy.	Able to create character sketches of others; friendships based on intimacy and loyalty; less pronounced same-gender preferences; initially an increase in conformity to gender type behavior followed by a decline, especially in girls. Increase in cooperative peer interaction. Increase in peer pressure, then a decline by end of this period with more formation of clear individual, unique identity.

The Process of Spiritual Growth

Attending to Capacity, Capability and Interest

Purpose:

Obtain a deeper understanding of the process of spiritual growth.

Read aloud in your whole group the following quotations, then briefly share with each other the insights gleaned from your reading:*

1 O thou whose years are few, yet whose mental gifts are many! How many a child though young in years, is yet mature and sound in judgment! How many an aged person is ignorant and confused! For growth and development depend on one's powers of intellect and reason, not on one's age or length of days.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, REV. ED. 1982, NO. 121.1, P. 142

2 The Great Being saith: Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can alone cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, REV. ED. 1990, CXXII, P. 260

3 Then, so much as capacity and capability allow, ye needs must deck the tree of being with fruits such as knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception and eloquent speech.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, REV. ED. 1990, NO. 9, P. 3

4 The attainment of the most great guidance is dependent upon knowledge and wisdom, and on being informed of the mysteries of the Holy Words. Wherefore must the loved ones of God be they young or old, be they men or women, each one according to his capabilities, strive to acquire the various branches of knowledge, and to increase his understanding of the mysteries of the Holy Books, and his skill in marshalling the divine proofs and evidences.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, REV. ED. 1990, NO. 27, P. 7

5 Every child without exception must from the earliest years make a thorough study of the art of reading and writing, and according to his own tastes and inclinations and the degree of his capacity and powers, devote extreme diligence to the acquisition of learning. . . .

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, REV. ED. 1990, NO. 105, P. 44

6 To be specific, at the start the teacher must place a pen in the child's hand, arrange the children in groups, and instruct each group according to its capacity. . . .

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, REV. ED. 1990, NO. 76, P. 31

*We return to this important topic in a Teacher Development Workshop.

Exploring the Process of Transformation

1. In this activity we will use storytelling to explore the process of spiritual transformation. Your facilitator will be the storyteller, or will arrange in advance another storyteller.
2. After listening to the story, discuss this question:
 - How can this story be seen as an example or a metaphor for spiritual transformation?

Purpose:

Understand how spiritual education differs from material and human education; to demonstrate this distinction in some tangible form.

Experience how instructional methods and learning tools suggested in the sacred texts can be used to understand the spiritual transformation process.

Explore the notion of spiritual growth and transformation.

Demonstrate the power and importance of storytelling.

Process the Activity:

Why is storytelling a dynamic teaching tool? How can storytelling and children's literature be a creative learning tool that can bring the affective side of human nature into play, encourage participation and seeing with different perspective.

How can you increase the use of storytelling in your classes?

GREAT WOLF AND LITTLE MOUSE SISTER

Once a Great Wolf stood crying in a golden meadow. Little Mouse Sister poked her head out of the ground to see who was making the noise. She felt sad to see Great Wolf so unhappy and wanted to help. “Great Wolf Brother, why are you crying?” she asked.

“Because I’ve lost my eyes and cannot see,” he returned. “Who are you?”

Little Mouse Sister hopped closer and saw that it was true; the Great Wolf was truly blind. “How did you lose your eyes?” asked the little mouse.

“My eyes fell out because I was very foolish and very selfish. If only I could see, I’d never be selfish again.” The wolf resumed his crying.

“Please,” said the Little Mouse Sister, “I will help you.”

Great Wolf laughed scornfully through his tears. “A little mouse help the great wolf?”

“I will give you my eyes,” she said. And she did.

The Great Wolf leaped and bounded in delight, forgetting entirely the one who’d given him sight, knocking her to the ground as he leapt. But when he saw here where she’d fallen, so kind, so humble, so unafraid, tears fell from his new eyes, washing away the hardness he had so long carried in his heart. “My little sister, why did you give me your eyes?”

“Because I’ve always been taught to give my very best for my brothers and sisters, that they might be well and happy. My eyes were my very best.”

The Great Wolf then sat by his Little Mouse Sister. Her words brought back ancient memories of a radiant morning when all creatures gathered beneath the shade of the Tree of Life, when they learned to love the Creator of all things and each other. Great Wolf finally spoke, “Little Sister, do you remember the promise of the Sacred Lake?”

“Yes, but I could never find it now.”

“Not alone, perhaps, but together we could find it.”

So together, the mouse on the wolf’s back, the two friends set out on a long and difficult journey. They traveled the Good Red Road, North to the mountains and met with many adventures along the way. But neither the playful Otters, nor the trickster Coyote, nor even the proud and learned Owl detained them from their path. At last, they reached their destination: the most beautiful lake the wolf had ever seen, hidden high in the snow-capped mountains.

“My beloved sister, we’ve come to the end of our journey. If only you could see this beautiful lake!”

“But I can see it—I can see it in my heart! I think I’ll walk the rest of the way.”

Little Mouse Sister grasped the Great Wolf's tail as they walked to the edge of the Sacred Lake. Great Wolf reached into his pouch and took out tobacco to make his offering. He asked the powers of the West, whence comes thunder and lightning to help his sister. He called on the powers of the North, whence comes the white snow; and the powers of the East, whence comes the red sunrise; and the powers of the South whence comes new life; and asked all these powers to assist his sister. Then he offered his tobacco to Father Sky in honor of the Great Spirit and all of the old people that had gone on to the Spirit World. Finally he beseeched Mother Earth, that brings forth and sustains all life. Then the Great Wolf leaned down and kissed his little sister good-bye. "I've done all that I can, Little Sister. The rest you must do yourself. Remember that the Creator speaks to each of us in our own way."

"Thank you, Great Wolf Brother."

"Thank you, beloved Sister, for your generous gift. If you need me, just call and I'll return."

Alone, Little Mouse Sister waited patiently. She asked the Great spirit to watch over the Otters, the Coyote, the Owl, and all the other creatures. She asked a special blessing for her brother Wolf, who she loved so very much. She heard a Voice say,

"Granddaughter, jump!"

The little mouse jumped.

"Jump higher!"

She jumped higher.

"JUMP HIGHER, GRANDDAUGHTER!"

Then the little mouse sister jumped higher than she believed possible and suddenly she felt herself soaring above the earth. The Voice said, "OPEN YOUR EYES, GRANDDAUGHTER."

When she opened her eyes, the little mouse found that she'd become the mighty Eagle. She screeched in happiness.

Again the Voice spoke. "Granddaughter, because you shared the best you had to help another find life, you shall henceforth be known as the Sacred Eagle. You shall fly above all the people's horizon and be a sign to them."

And that is how the Little Mouse became the Mighty Eagle—the Eagle of love, understanding, and vision.

(Various native peoples tell many different versions of this story. This version is adapted from the one told by Dick Hastings and Dan Vaillencourt for the Kipohtakaw Education Centre on the Alexander Indian Reserve, near Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. The Four Worlds Development Project, University of Lethbridge presents it in video format with a teacher's guide. Visit www.4worlds.org for more information.)

The Development of the Soul

Purpose:

Develop a deeper understanding of the process of spiritual growth, through study of the Bahá'í writings

The Bahá'í writings are rich with passages about spiritual growth and the development of the soul. This activity explores a drop from that ocean of Revelation.

1. Organize your group into small groups of 2–3.
2. In your work group read at least one of the following selections from the writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that describe the nature of the soul and its development. Groups may study more than one selection. Discuss the following focus questions; note that not all readings directly address all the questions.

What is a soul?

How does a soul progress?

How can a teacher, parent, or friend assist with this progress?

3. Share the results of your reading and consultation as suggested by your facilitator.

Process the Activity:

How does understanding this process of spiritual growth help the teacher of children?

THE EVOLUTION OF MATTER AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOUL

From *Paris Talks*, by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, pp. 64-68:

selection

1

Paris is becoming very cold, so cold that I shall soon be obliged to go away, but the warmth of your love still keeps me here. God willing, I hope to stay among you yet a little while; bodily cold and heat cannot affect the spirit, for it is warmed by the fire of the Love of God. When we understand this, we begin to understand something of our life in the world to come.

God, in His Bounty, has given us a foretaste here, has given us certain proofs of the difference that exists between body, soul and spirit.

We see that cold, heat, suffering, etc, only concern the body, they do not touch the spirit.

How often do we see a man, poor, sick, miserably clad, and with no means of support, yet spiritually strong. Whatever his body has to suffer, his spirit is free and well! Again, how often do we see a rich man, physically strong and healthy, but with a soul sick unto death.

It is quite apparent to the seeing mind that a man’s spirit is something very different from his physical body.

The spirit is changeless, indestructible. The progress and development of the soul, the joy and sorrow of the soul, are independent of the physical body.

If we are caused joy or pain by a friend, if a love prove true or false, it is the soul that is affected. If our dear ones are far from us—it is the soul that grieves, and the grief or trouble of the soul may react on the body.

Thus, when the spirit is fed with holy virtues, then is the body joyous; if the soul falls into sin, the body is in torment!

When we find truth, constancy, fidelity, and love, we are happy; but if we meet with lying, faithlessness, and deceit, we are miserable.

These are all things pertaining to the soul, and are not bodily ills. Thus, it is apparent that the soul, even as the body, has its own individuality. But if the body undergoes a change, the spirit need not be touched. When you break a glass on which the sun shines, the glass is broken, but the sun still shines! If a cage containing a bird is destroyed, the bird is unharmed! If a lamp is broken, the flame can still burn bright!

The same thing applies to the spirit of man. Though death destroy his body, it has no power over his spirit—this is eternal, everlasting, both birthless and deathless.

As to the soul of man after death, it remains in the degree of purity to which it has evolved during life in the physical body, and after it is freed from the body it remains plunged in the ocean of God’s Mercy.

From the moment the soul leaves the body and arrives in the Heavenly World, its evolution is spiritual, and that evolution is: The approaching unto God.

In the physical creation, evolution is from one degree of perfection to another. The mineral passes with its mineral perfections to the vegetable; the vegetable, with its perfections, passes to the animal world, and so on to that of humanity. This world is full of seeming contradictions; in each of these kingdoms (mineral, vegetable and animal) life exists in its degree; though when compared to the life in a man, the earth appears to be dead, yet she, too, lives and has a life of her own. In this world things live and die, and live again in other forms of life, but in the world of the spirit it is quite otherwise.

The soul does not evolve from degree to degree as a law—it only evolves nearer to God, by the Mercy and Bounty of God.

It is my earnest prayer that we may all be in the Kingdom of God, and near Him.

CONCERNING BODY, SOUL AND SPIRIT

From *Paris Talks* by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, pp. 96-99

selection

2

There are in the world of humanity three degrees; those of the body, the soul, and spirit.

The body is the physical or animal degree of man. From the bodily point of view man is a sharer of the animal kingdom. The bodies alike of men and animals are composed of elements held together by the law of attraction.

Like the animal, man possesses the faculties of the senses, is subject to heat, cold, hunger, thirst, etc.; unlike the animal, man has a rational soul, the human intelligence.

This intelligence of man is the intermediary between his body and his spirit.

When man allows the spirit, through his soul, to enlighten his understanding, then does he contain all Creation; because man, being the culmination of all that went before and thus superior to all previous evolutions, contains all the lower world within himself. Illumined by the spirit through the instrumentality of the soul, man's radiant intelligence makes him the crowning-point of Creation.

But on the other hand, when man does not open his mind and heart to the blessing of the spirit, but turns his soul towards the material side, towards the bodily part of his nature, then is he fallen from his high place and he becomes inferior to the inhabitants of the lower animal kingdom. In this case the man is in a sorry plight! For if the spiritual qualities of the soul, open to the breath of the Divine Spirit, are never used, they become atrophied, enfeebled, and at last incapable; whilst the soul's material qualities alone being exercised, they become terribly powerful—and the unhappy, misguided man, becomes more savage, more unjust, more vile, more cruel, more malevolent than the lower animals themselves. All his aspirations and desires being strengthened by the lower side of the soul's nature, he becomes more and more brutal, until his whole being is in no way superior to that of the beasts that perish. Men such as this, plan to work evil, to hurt and to destroy; they are entirely without the spirit of Divine compassion, for the celestial quality of the soul has been dominated by that of the material. If, on the contrary, the spiritual nature of the soul has been so strengthened that it holds the material side in subjection, then does the man approach the Divine; his humanity becomes so glorified that the virtues of the Celestial Assembly are manifested in him; he radiates the Mercy of God, he stimulates the spiritual progress of mankind, for he becomes a lamp to show light on their path.

You perceive how the soul is the intermediary between the body and the spirit. In like manner is this tree the intermediary between the seed and the fruit. When the fruit of the tree appears and becomes ripe, then

we know that the tree is perfect; if the tree bore no fruit it would be merely a useless growth, serving no purpose!

When a soul has in it the life of the spirit, then does it bring forth good fruit and become a Divine tree. I wish you to try to understand this example. I hope that the unspeakable goodness of God will so strengthen you that the celestial quality of your soul, which relates it to the spirit, will for ever dominate the material side, so entirely ruling the senses that your soul will approach the perfections of the Heavenly Kingdom. May your faces, being steadfastly set towards the Divine Light, become so luminous that all your thoughts, words and actions will shine with the Spiritual Radiance dominating your souls, so that in the gatherings of the world you will show perfection in your life.

Some men's lives are solely occupied with the things of this world; their minds are so circumscribed by exterior manners and traditional interests that they are blind to any other realm of existence, to the spiritual significance of all things! They think and dream of earthly fame, of material progress. Sensuous delights and comfortable surroundings bound their horizon, their highest ambitions centre in successes of worldly conditions and circumstances! They curb not their lower propensities; they eat, drink, and sleep! Like the animal, they have no thought beyond their own physical well-being. It is true that these necessities must be despatched. Life is a load which must be carried on while we are on earth, but the cares of the lower things of life should not be allowed to monopolize all the thoughts and aspirations of a human being. The heart's ambitions should ascend to a more glorious goal, mental activity should rise to higher levels! Men should hold in their souls the vision of celestial perfection, and there prepare a dwelling-place for the inexhaustible bounty of the Divine Spirit.

THE SPIRIT AND MIND OF MAN HAVE EXISTED FROM THE BEGINNING

From *Some Answered Questions*, by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, No. 51, pp. 198-99

selection
3

Question. Does man in the beginning possess mind and spirit, or are they an outcome of his evolution?

Answer. The beginning of the existence of man on the terrestrial globe resembles his formation in the womb of the mother. The embryo in the womb of the mother gradually grows and develops until birth, after which it continues to grow and develop until it reaches the age of discretion and maturity. Though in infancy the signs of the mind and spirit appear in man, they do not reach the degree of perfection; they are imperfect. Only when man attains maturity do the mind and the spirit appear and become evident in utmost perfection.

So also the formation of man in the matrix of the world was in the beginning like the embryo; then gradually he made progress in perfectness, and grew and developed until he reached the state of maturity, when the mind and spirit became visible in the greatest power. In the beginning of his formation the mind and spirit also existed, but they were hidden; later they were manifested. In the womb of the world mind and spirit also existed in the embryo, but they were concealed; afterward they appeared. So it is that in the seed the tree exists, but it is hidden and concealed; when it develops and grows, the complete tree appears. In the same way the growth and development of all beings is gradual; this is the universal divine organization and the natural system. The seed does not at once become a tree; the embryo does not at once become a man; the mineral does not suddenly become a stone. No, they grow and develop gradually and attain the limit of perfection.

All beings, whether large or small, were created perfect and complete from the first, but their perfections appear in them by degrees. The organization of God is one; the evolution of existence is one; the divine system is one. Whether they be small or great beings, all are subject to one law and system. Each seed has in it from the first all the vegetable perfections. For example, in the seed all the vegetable perfections exist from the beginning, but not visibly; afterward little by little they appear. So it is first the shoot which appears from the seed, then the branches, leaves, blossoms and fruits; but from the beginning of its existence all these things are in the seed, potentially, though not apparently.

In the same way, the embryo possesses from the first all perfections, such as the spirit, the mind, the sight, the smell, the taste—in one word, all the powers—but they are not visible and become so only by degrees.

Similarly, the terrestrial globe from the beginning was created with all its elements, substances, minerals, atoms and organisms; but these only appeared by degrees: first the mineral, then the plant, afterward the animal, and finally man. But from the first these kinds and species existed, but were undeveloped in the terrestrial globe, and then appeared only

gradually. For the supreme organization of God, and the universal natural system, surround all beings, and all are subject to this rule. When you consider this universal system, you see that there is not one of the beings which at its coming into existence has reached the limit of perfection. No, they gradually grow and develop, and then attain the degree of perfection.

THE APPEARING OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BODY

From *Some Answered Questions*, by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, No. 52, pp. 200-01

selection

4

Question. What is the wisdom of the spirit’s appearing in the body?

Answer. The wisdom of the appearance of the spirit in the body is this: the human spirit is a Divine Trust, and it must traverse all conditions, for its passage and movement through the conditions of existence will be the means of its acquiring perfections. So when a man travels and passes through different regions and numerous countries with system and method, it is certainly a means of his acquiring perfection, for he will see places, scenes and countries, from which he will discover the conditions and states of other nations. He will thus become acquainted with the geography of countries and their wonders and arts; he will familiarize himself with the habits, customs and usages of peoples; he will see the civilization and progress of the epoch; he will become aware of the policy of governments and the power and capacity of each country. It is the same when the human spirit passes through the conditions of existence: it will become the possessor of each degree and station. Even in the condition of the body it will surely acquire perfections.

Besides this, it is necessary that the signs of the perfection of the spirit should be apparent in this world, so that the world of creation may bring forth endless results, and this body may receive life and manifest the divine bounties. So, for example, the rays of the sun must shine upon the earth, and the solar heat develop the earthly beings; if the rays and heat of the sun did not shine upon the earth, the earth would be uninhabited, without meaning; and its development would be retarded. In the same way, if the perfections of the spirit did not appear in this world, this world would be unenlightened and absolutely brutal. By the appearance of the spirit in the physical form, this world is enlightened. As the spirit of man is the cause of the life of the body, so the world is in the condition of the body, and man is in the condition of the spirit. If there were no man, the perfections of the spirit would not appear, and the light of the mind would not be resplendent in this world. This world would be like a body without a soul.

This world is also in the condition of a fruit tree, and man is like the fruit; without fruit the tree would be useless.

Moreover, these members, these elements, this composition, which are found in the organism of man, are an attraction and magnet for the spirit; it is certain that the spirit will appear in it. So a mirror which is clear will certainly attract the rays of the sun. It will become luminous, and wonderful images will appear in it—that is to say, when these existing elements are gathered together according to the natural order, and with perfect strength, they become a magnet for the spirit, and the spirit will become manifest in them with all its perfections.

Under these conditions it cannot be said, “What is the necessity for the rays of the sun to descend upon the mirror?”—for the connection which exists between the reality of things, whether they be spiritual or material, requires that when the mirror is clear and faces the sun, the light of the sun must become apparent in it. In the same way, when the elements are arranged and combined in the most glorious system, organization and manner, the human spirit will appear and be manifest in them. This is the decree of the Powerful, the Wise.

From *Some Answered Questions*, by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, No. 55, pp. 208-09

selection

5

Question. What is the difference between the mind, spirit and soul?

Answer. It has been before explained that spirit is universally divided into five categories: the vegetable spirit, the animal spirit, the human spirit, the spirit of faith, and the Holy Spirit.

The vegetable spirit is the power of growth which is brought about in the seed through the influence of other existences.

The animal spirit is the power of all the senses, which is realized from the composition and mingling of elements; when this composition decomposes, the power also perishes and becomes annihilated. It may be likened to this lamp: when the oil, wick and fire are combined, it is lighted; and when this combination is dissolved—that is to say, when the combined parts are separated from one another—the lamp also is extinguished.

The human spirit which distinguishes man from the animal is the rational soul, and these two names—the human spirit and the rational soul—designate one thing. This spirit, which in the terminology of the philosophers is the rational soul, embraces all beings, and as far as human ability permits discovers the realities of things and becomes cognizant of their peculiarities and effects, and of the qualities and properties of beings. But the human spirit, unless assisted by the spirit of faith, does not become acquainted with the divine secrets and the heavenly realities. It is like a mirror which, although clear, polished and brilliant, is still in need of light. Until a ray of the sun reflects upon it, it cannot discover the heavenly secrets.

But the mind is the power of the human spirit. Spirit is the lamp; mind is the light which shines from the lamp. Spirit is the tree, and the mind is the fruit. Mind is the perfection of the spirit and is its essential quality, as the sun’s rays are the essential necessity of the sun.

This explanation, though short, is complete; therefore, reflect upon it, and if God wills, you may become acquainted with the details.

THE PHYSICAL POWERS AND THE INTELLECTUAL POWERS

group
6

From *Some Answered Questions*, by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, No. 56, pp. 210-11

In man five outer powers exist, which are the agents of perception—that is to say, through these five powers man perceives material beings. These are sight, which perceives visible forms; hearing, which perceives audible sounds; smell, which perceives odors; taste, which perceives foods; and feeling, which is in all parts of the body and perceives tangible things. These five powers perceive outward existences.

Man has also spiritual powers: imagination, which conceives things; thought, which reflects upon realities; comprehension, which comprehends realities; memory, which retains whatever man imagines, thinks and comprehends. The intermediary between the five outward powers and the inward powers is the sense which they possess in common—that is to say, the sense which acts between the outer and inner powers, conveys to the inward powers whatever the outer powers discern. It is termed the common faculty, because it communicates between the outward and inward powers and thus is common to the outward and inward powers.

For instance, sight is one of the outer powers; it sees and perceives this flower, and conveys this perception to the inner power—the common faculty—which transmits this perception to the power of imagination, which in its turn conceives and forms this image and transmits it to the power of thought; the power of thought reflects and, having grasped the reality, conveys it to the power of comprehension; the comprehension, when it has comprehended it, delivers the image of the object perceived to the memory, and the memory keeps it in its repository.

The outward powers are five: the power of sight, of hearing, of taste, of smell and of feeling.

The inner powers are also five: the common faculty, and the powers of imagination, thought, comprehension and memory.

THE STATE OF MAN AND HIS PROGRESS AFTER DEATH

From *Some Answered Questions*, by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, No. 64, pp. 234-37

selection

7

When we consider beings with the seeing eye, we observe that they are limited to three sorts—that is to say, as a whole they are either mineral, vegetable or animal, each of these three classes containing species. Man is the highest species because he is the possessor of the perfections of all the classes—that is, he has a body which grows and which feels. As well as having the perfections of the mineral, of the vegetable and of the animal, he also possesses an especial excellence which the other beings are without—that is, the intellectual perfections. Therefore, man is the most noble of beings.

Man is in the highest degree of materiality, and at the beginning of spirituality—that is to say, he is the end of imperfection and the beginning of perfection. He is at the last degree of darkness, and at the beginning of light; that is why it has been said that the condition of man is the end of the night and the beginning of day, meaning that he is the sum of all the degrees of imperfection, and that he possesses the degrees of perfection. He has the animal side as well as the angelic side, and the aim of an educator is to so train human souls that their angelic aspect may overcome their animal side. Then if the divine power in man, which is his essential perfection, overcomes the satanic power, which is absolute imperfection, he becomes the most excellent among the creatures; but if the satanic power overcomes the divine power, he becomes the lowest of the creatures. That is why he is the end of imperfection and the beginning of perfection. Not in any other of the species in the world of existence is there such a difference, contrast, contradiction and opposition as in the species of man. Thus the reflection of the Divine Light was in man, as in Christ, and see how loved and honored He is! At the same time we see man worshipping a stone, a clod of earth or a tree. How vile he is, in that his object of worship should be the lowest existence—that is, a stone or clay, without spirit; a mountain, a forest or a tree. What shame is greater for man than to worship the lowest existences? In the same way, knowledge is a quality of man, and so is ignorance; truthfulness is a quality of man; so is falsehood; trustworthiness and treachery, justice and injustice, are qualities of man, and so forth. Briefly, all the perfections and virtues, and all the vices, are qualities of man. . . .

Man is said to be the greatest representative of God, and he is the Book of Creation because all the mysteries of beings exist in him. If he comes under the shadow of the True Educator and is rightly trained, he becomes the essence of essences, the light of lights, the spirit of spirits; he becomes the center of the divine appearances, the source of spiritual qualities, the rising-place of heavenly lights, and the receptacle of divine inspirations. If he is deprived of this education, he becomes the manifestation of satanic qualities, the sum of animal vices, and the source of all dark conditions.

The reason of the mission of the Prophets is to educate men, so that this piece of coal may become a diamond, and this fruitless tree may be engrafted and yield the sweetest, most delicious fruits. When man reaches the noblest state in the world of humanity, then he can make further progress in the conditions of perfection, but not in state; for such states are limited, but the divine perfections are endless.

Both before and after putting off this material form, there is progress in perfection but not in state. So beings are consummated in perfect man. There is no other being higher than a perfect man. But man when he has reached this state can still make progress in perfections but not in state because there is no state higher than that of a perfect man to which he can transfer himself. He only progresses in the state of humanity, for the human perfections are infinite. Thus, however learned a man may be, we can imagine one more learned.

Hence, as the perfections of humanity are endless, man can also make progress in perfections after leaving this world.

THE EXISTENCE OF THE RATIONAL SOUL AFTER THE DEATH OF THE BODY

From *Some Answered Questions*, by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, pp. 239-241: No. 66

selection

8

Question. After the body is put aside and the spirit has obtained freedom, in what way will the rational soul exist? Let us suppose that the souls who are assisted by the bounty of the Holy Spirit attain to true existence and eternal life. But what becomes of the rational souls—that is to say, the veiled spirits?

Answer. Some think that the body is the substance and exists by itself, and that the spirit is accidental and depends upon the substance of the body, although, on the contrary, the rational soul is the substance, and the body depends upon it. If the accident—that is to say, the body—be destroyed, the substance, the spirit, remains.

Second, the rational soul, meaning the human spirit, does not descend into the body—that is to say, it does not enter it, for descent and entrance are characteristics of bodies, and the rational soul is exempt from this. The spirit never entered this body, so in quitting it, it will not be in need of an abiding-place: no, the spirit is connected with the body, as this light is with this mirror. When the mirror is clear and perfect, the light of the lamp will be apparent in it, and when the mirror becomes covered with dust or breaks, the light will disappear.

The rational soul—that is to say, the human spirit—has neither entered this body nor existed through it; so after the disintegration of the composition of the body, how should it be in need of a substance through which it may exist? On the contrary, the rational soul is the substance through which the body exists. The personality of the rational soul is from its beginning; it is not due to the instrumentality of the body, but the state and the personality of the rational soul may be strengthened in this world; it will make progress and will attain to the degrees of perfection, or it will remain in the lowest abyss of ignorance, veiled and deprived from beholding the signs of God.

Question. Through what means will the spirit of man—that is to say, the rational soul—after departing from this mortal world, make progress?

Answer. The progress of man’s spirit in the divine world, after the severance of its connection with the body of dust, is through the bounty and grace of the Lord alone, or through the intercession and the sincere prayers of other human souls, or through the charities and important good works which are performed in its name.

Using The Four Valleys as a Model of Spiritual Growth

Purpose:

Identify characteristics of differing levels of maturity and consider their implications for our instruction.

Read the Sacred Texts to discover the nature of the human reality.

Become acquainted with a sample model for spiritual growth.

The Four Valleys is a mystical work that is like a limitless ocean. This “jigsaw” activity is designed to explore some of the features that distinguish this ocean. The Bahá’í writings make it clear that God gives understanding to any who ask, that all human interpretation is limited and changing, and that individual study and interpretation are valuable fruits of human endeavor.

The Four Valleys may be understood in many different ways: as a symbolic description of different **phases of spiritual awareness**; as a framework for understanding variation in **learning styles**; and as a **learning cycle** through which we may pass many times as we grow and develop through our lives, through many series of cycles within cycles.

1. **Divide** into four small groups so that each group studies a different Valley. Read your excerpt aloud several times with care before any discussion, then to come jointly to the best understanding you can of the brief passages given. It is perfectly acceptable to have humble tentative perceptions of the spiritual concepts explored in this mystical work.
2. **Recombine** into new groups so that each new group has four members, one member from each of the four previous groups. Each person shares with their new group the understanding gained through their previous group’s discussion. The new groups then jointly explore the pattern of flow throughout the Four Valleys.
3. **Reconvene** in the whole group for open consultation and summary.

Processing the Activity

How might this jigsaw activity be utilized as a means of community deepening on other portions of the Sacred Writings?



O my eminent friends! Those who progress in mystic wayfaring are of four kinds. I shall describe them in brief, that the grades and qualities of each kind may become plain to thee.

The FIRST VALLEY

If the travelers seek after the goal of the Intended One, this station appertaineth to the self. . . .

On this plane, the self is not rejected but beloved; it is well-pleasing and not to be shunned. Although at the beginning, this plane is the realm of conflict, yet it endeth in attainment of the throne of splendor.

This station hath many signs, unnumbered proofs. Hence it is said: "Hereafter We will show them Our signs in the regions of the earth, and in themselves, until it become manifest unto them that it is the truth," there is no God but Him.

One must, then, read the book of his own self. . . .

~ BAHÁ'U'LLÁH



O my eminent friends! Those who progress in mystic wayfaring are of four kinds. I shall describe them in brief, that the grades and qualities of each kind may become plain to thee.

The SECOND VALLEY

If the wayfarer's goal be the dwelling of the Praiseworthy One, this is the station of primal reason. . . . Here reason signifieth the divine, universal mind, whose sovereignty enlighteneth all created things. . . .

On this plane, the traveler meeteth with many a trial and reverse. Now is he lifted up to heaven, now is he cast into the depths.

This station confereth the true standard of knowledge, and freeth man from tests. In this realm, to search after knowledge is irrelevant, for He hath said concerning the guidance of the travelers on this plane, "Fear God, and God will instruct thee."

~ BAHÁ'U'LLÁH



O my eminent friends! Those who progress in mystic wayfaring are of four kinds. I shall describe them in brief, that the grades and qualities of each kind may become plain to thee.

The THIRD VALLEY

If the loving seekers wish to live within the precincts of the Attracting One, no soul may dwell on this Kingly Throne save the beauty of love. This realm is not to be pictured in words.

This plane requireth pure affection and the bright stream of fellowship.

On this plane, neither the reign of reason is sufficient nor the authority of self.

The denizens of this plane speak no words . . . but they gallop their chargers. They see but the inner reality of the Beloved. To them all words of sense are meaningless, and senseless words are full of meaning.

In this realm, instruction is assuredly of no avail.

The lover's teacher is the Loved One's beauty,
His face their lesson and their only book.

~ BAHÁ'U'LLÁH



O my eminent friends! Those who progress in mystic wayfaring are of four kinds. I shall describe them in brief, that the grades and qualities of each kind may become plain to thee.

The FOURTH VALLEY

If the mystic knowers be of those who have reached to the beauty of the Beloved One, this station is the apex of consciousness and the secret of divine guidance. This is the center of the mystery: “He doeth what He willeth, ordaineth what He pleaseth.”

This is the realm of full awareness, of utter self-effacement. Even love is no pathway to this region. . . .

For this is the realm of Absolute Command and is free of all the attributes of earth.

Herein the high heavens are in no conflict with the lowly earth, nor do they seek to excel it, for this is the land of mercy, not the realm of distinction.

And now the hand can write no more, and pleadeth that this is enough. Wherefore do I say, “Far be the glory of thy Lord, the Lord of all greatness, from what they affirm of Him.”

~ BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Lessons of Spiritual Growth Conveyed through Nature

1. While playing soft music in the background, read aloud Persian Hidden Word No. 29 several times with great feeling.

O Son of Bounty! Out of the wastes of nothingness, with the clay of My command I made thee to appear, and have ordained for thy training every atom in existence and the essence of all created things. Thus, ere thou didst issue from thy mother's womb, I destined for thee two founts of gleaming milk, eyes to watch over thee, and hearts to love thee. Out of My loving-kindness, 'neath the shade of My mercy I nurtured thee, and guarded thee by the essence of My grace and favor. And My purpose in all this was that thou mightest attain My everlasting dominion and become worthy of My invisible bestowals. And yet heedless thou didst remain, and when fully grown, thou didst neglect all My bounties and occupied thyself with thine idle imaginings, in such wise that thou didst become wholly forgetful, and, turning away from the portals of the Friend didst abide within the courts of My enemy.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, PERSIAN *HIDDEN WORDS*, NO. 29

2. Go on a solitary nature walk to find ways that nature manifests the Word of God. Look for examples in nature that illustrate spiritual growth.
3. Identify a Hidden Word or another passage from the Bahá'í writings that is illustrated by your example from nature or could be used to reinforce a spiritual lesson.
4. After gathering again as a whole group, individually share what you have found in nature and how it provides a model of spiritual growth.
5. You may wish to record your nature walk experience in your journal.

Purpose:

Obtain a deeper understanding of spiritual growth.

Discern models of spiritual growth in nature.

Create a model or analogy for spiritual growth.

Process the Activity

How did the nature walk assist your understanding of spiritual growth? How could we use nature walks and other field trips to support the teaching of spiritual principles?

Optional Activities: The Process of Spiritual Growth

Purpose:

Obtain a deeper understanding of spiritual growth.

Discern models of spiritual growth in nature.

Create a model or analogy for spiritual growth.

Creating Models for Spiritual Growth

Form groups of two. Seeing yourselves as ‘educationalists of the future,’ work with your partner to develop a model or analogy for spiritual growth. Take into consideration your own personal understanding of the Bahá’í writings, the passages studied today, models discovered during the nature walk, the transformation story we heard, and the Hidden Word, as well as your knowledge of human development.

The idea is to use something that is readily understood to represent something that may be more abstract. Almost anything can be used as an explanatory symbol to help in the instruction process. You may choose to use construction materials to create a physical model. Other models may be acted out kinesthetically, through creative movement or dance.

Reflection and Journaling

Reflect on the following quotation of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and write in your journals about children you have observed who have demonstrated spiritual awareness and capacity beyond your expectations for their age. How do such children encourage you as a teacher?

How many a child, though young in years, is yet mature and sound in judgment! How many an aged person is ignorant and confused! For growth and development depend on one’s powers of intellect and reason, not on one’s age or length of days.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITING OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ*, REV. ED. 1997, NO. 121.1, P. 142

The Teacher as Gardener, Mentor, and Doctor

The instruction of these children is even as the work of a loving gardener who tendeth his young plants in the flowering fields of the All-Glorious.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ’Í EDUCATION*, REV. ED. 1999, NO. 47, P. 18

Therefore must the mentor be a doctor as well: that is, he must, in instructing the Child, remedy its faults; must give him learning, and at the same time rear him to have a spiritual nature. Let the teacher be a doctor to the character of the child, thus will he heal the spiritual ailments of the children of men.

ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ*, REV. ED. 1997, NO. 103.2, P. 130

Purpose:

Discern the role of the teacher as mentor, gardener, and doctor.

Understand how spiritual education differs from material and human education; to demonstrate this distinction in some tangible form.

Demonstrate how instructional methods and learning tools suggested in the Sacred Texts can be used to understand the spiritual transformation process.

1. Organize yourselves into three working groups. Assign each group one of the roles listed below:
 - Teacher as gardener
 - Teacher as doctor
 - Teacher as mentor
2. Using your book *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*, read in your small groups the ‘The Role and Station of the Teacher,’ Section E, pp. 175–78.
3. After reading, briefly discuss and answer the following question by brainstorming as many examples as possible:
 - How is a teacher like a gardener (or doctor, or mentor)? Or if you prefer, complete the sentence: “The teacher is like a gardener/doctor/mentor because. . . .”
4. In your small group, plan a brief dramatic presentation illustrating your answer to the question.
5. Share your presentation in the large group.

Process the Activity

How did the assignment to develop a dramatic presentation encourage you to think more deeply about the quotations and the process of facilitating spiritual growth?

How can drama be used as a learning tool?

Scavenger Hunt: Summary of Module Two

Purpose:

To recall how instructional methods and learning tools were demonstrated in this session.

Working in pairs, small groups, or the whole group, review the activities of Module Two using the form below. What examples can you find of the following instructional methods and learning tools that are mentioned in the Core Curriculum training?

Refer to part D of the *Foundations for a Spiritual Education* for more information on the methods and tools.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS	ACTIVITY
Establishing a loving environment	
Direct use of the Sacred Writings	
Education directed toward God	
Education must include service to humanity	
Engaging the mind and the heart	
Private study of the Writings	
Establishing bonds of unity and friendship	
Use of consultation	
Use of questioning and peer teaching	
Independent investigation and use of the power of reasoning	
Use of memorization and recitation	
Use of meditation and reflection	
Use of parables and stories	
Use of music	
Use of drama	
Employing Creativity and use of the arts	
The study of science and the world of nature	
The importance of play and the use of manipulatives	
Use of travel	
Recreation	
Organize education	
Use evaluation	

Personal Study and Preparation for Module Three

In preparation for the continuation of this training in Module Three, choose one or more of the activities below to complete before you meet again. If desired, you may choose a partner with whom to study.



- Memorize Persian *Hidden Word* No. 29 and a passage from *Words of Wisdom* for the next session's opening devotions.
- Begin a file of stories about the Master, the Prophets, and the Dawnbreakers and of parables and fables that can be used to illustrate spiritual principles. *Brilliant Star* Magazine is an excellent source of stories. The *Brilliant Star* index cross-references articles, activities and stories with the Core Curriculum strands, themes, and goals. It can be found online at www.education.usbnc.org. Bring your file to the next training session to share with each other.
- Begin a file of activities that can be used to teach a spiritual principle. Include the nature walk activity and storytelling ideas used in Module Two. Also read the introduction to Adib Taherzadeh's *The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh* (George Ronald, 1992) and extract examples he uses from nature to describe spiritual processes. Bring your file to the next training session to share with each other.
- Use journals to begin collecting your thoughts and observations about indicators of spiritual growth and awareness in children and youth.

Group Memorization of Words of Wisdom

Optional Activity

This is a very powerful, moving experience with the Creative Word, using Bahá'u'lláh's *Words of Wisdom* on the following pages, and provides an example of a learning tool that may be used in communities and classrooms.

1. If desired, photocopy the Words of Wisdom and cut apart so that each passage (i.e., The source of all . . .) is on a separate slip of paper. Be sure to number them on the back. You will end up with 23 separate passages, counting the opening salutation.
2. Each training participant may select one or more passages to memorize.
3. If possible before your next training session, work to memorize your passage, so that you may recite it for opening devotions for Module Three.
4. When you reconvene for Module Three, form a circle with your fellow participants, following the numbered order of your passages. Everyone should join the circle, even those who may not have memorized a passage from Words of Wisdom.
5. Beginning with the salutation, go around the circle with each person eloquently reciting or reading a verse.

Bahá'u'lláh's *Words of Wisdom*

In the Name of God, the Exalted, the Most High

The source of all good is trust in God,
Submission unto His command,
and contentment with His holy will and pleasure.

The essence of wisdom is the fear of God,
the dread of His scourge and punishment,
and the apprehension of His justice and decree.

The essence of religion is to testify unto that which the Lord hath revealed,
and follow that which He hath ordained in His mighty Book.

The source of all glory is acceptance of whatsoever the Lord hath bestowed,
and contentment with that which God hath ordained.

The essence of love is for man to turn his heart to the Beloved One,
and sever himself from all else but Him,
and desire naught save that which is the desire of his Lord.

True remembrance is to make mention of the Lord,
the All-Praised,
and forget aught else beside Him.

True reliance is for the servant to pursue his profession and calling in this world,
to hold fast unto the Lord, to seek naught but His grace,
inasmuch as in His Hands is the destiny of all His servants.

The essence of detachment is for man to turn his face towards the courts of the Lord,
to enter His Presence, behold His Countenance,
and stand as witness before Him.

The essence of understanding is to testify to one's poverty,
and submit to the Will of the Lord,
the sovereign, the Gracious, the All-Powerful.

The source of courage and power is the promotion of the Word of God,
and steadfastness in His Love.

The essence of charity is for the servant to recount the blessing of his Lord,
and to render thanks unto Him at all times and under all conditions.

The essence of faith is fewness of words and abundance of deeds;
he whose words exceed his deeds,
know verily his death is better than his life.

The essence of true safety is to observe silence,
to look at the end of things and to renounce the world.

The beginning of magnanimity is when man expendeth his wealth on himself,
on his family and on the poor among his brethren in his Faith.

The essence of wealth is love for Me;
whoso loveth Me is the possessor of all things,
and he that loveth Me not is indeed of the poor and needy.
This is that which the Finger of Glory and Splendor hath revealed.

The source of all evil is for man to turn away from his Lord
and set his heart on things ungodly.

The most burning fire is to question the sighs of God,
to dispute idly that which He hath revealed,
to deny Him and carry one's self proudly before Him.

The source of all learning is the knowledge of God, exalted be His Glory,
and this cannot be attained save through the knowledge of His Divine Manifestation.

The essence of abasement is to pass out from under the shadow of the Merciful
and seek the shelter of the Evil One.

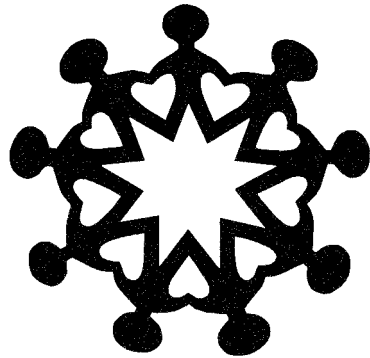
The source of error is to disbelieve in the One true God,
rely upon aught else but Him, and flee from His Decree.

True loss is for him whose days have been spent in utter ignorance of his self.

The essence of all that We have revealed for thee is Justice,
is for man to free himself from idle fancy and imitation,
discern with the eye of oneness His glorious handiwork,
and look into all things with a searching eye.

Thus have We instructed thee,
manifested unto thee Words of Wisdom,
that thou mayest be thankful unto the Lord, thy God,
and glory therein amidst all peoples.

Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, rev. ed. 1988, pp. 155-57



**Core Curriculum for
Spiritual Education
and Training**

1. Module Three Themes and Objectives
2. The Content: Deciding What to Teach
3. The Core Curriculum Scope and Sequence
4. The Process: Deciding How to Teach the Content, and How Students Will Learn It
5. Integrating Content and Process with the Diverse Capacities, Capabilities, and Interests of Learners
6. Presentation of the Core Curriculum Teaching Materials
7. Planning Lessons Using the Lesson Planning Guides and Storybooks
8. Practice Teaching—Feedback and Support
9. Evaluating Learning
10. Systematic Use—A Continuum of Learning
11. Making Use of Available Resources
12. Summary of Module Three: Building Lessons, Taking Flight

Training for Teachers of Children and Junior Youth

Module Three

Teaching with the Core Curriculum Materials

Introduction to Module Three

Devotions

Open with prayers and memorized verses or readings from *Words of Wisdom*. Include singing or recorded music.

Reflection and Review

Discuss any questions, concerns, or new insights that have emerged since you were last together.

Review Personal Study and Preparation

If you chose to begin files of stories or activities, share with the group the contents of your files and your experiences in creating them.

Introduce Module Three: Teaching through the Use of the Core Curriculum

Insight into your role as a teacher (Module 1) and understanding the spiritual nature of your students (Module 2) provides a foundation for effectively using any curriculum.

In Module 3 we explore the development of teaching skills for implementing the Core Curriculum. Of course for some of us, this module launches our service as teachers, while for others it continues our on-going journey as teachers.

To implement this spiritual education curriculum, we will:

- become familiar with the scope of the curriculum content, and the process suggested through instructional methods and learning tools described in the Bahá'í writings
- understand the importance of integrating the content and the process of spiritual education
- connect this understanding with our knowledge of differing capacities, capabilities, needs, and interests of learners

Read as a group the themes and objectives for Module Three on the following pages.

Organizing Content for Bahá'í Education to Meet Diverse Needs

Then, so much as capacity and capability allow, ye needs must deck the tree of being with fruits such as knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception, and eloquent speech.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, REV. ED. 1999, NO. 9, P. 3

Integrating Content and Process with Other Curriculum Components

. . . Among the parts of existence there is a wonderful connection and interchange of forces, which is the cause of the life of the world and the continuation of these countless phenomena.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *DIVINE ART OF LIVING*, REV. ED. 1965, CHAPTER 14, P. 108

Prioritizing Study of the Central Figures and Oneness

That which is of paramount importance for the children, that which must precede all else, is to teach them the oneness of God and the Laws of God.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, REV. ED. 1990, NO. 14, P. 3

KNOWLEDGE

- Become familiar with the structure of *Foundations For a Spiritual Education*.
- Become familiar with the instructional methods and learning tools described in the Bahá'í writings.
- Know that the instructional methods and learning tools described in the Core Curriculum are derived from the writings.
- Become familiar with the scope of the Central Figures Strand major theme, *Bahá'u'lláh*.
- Know how to write a lesson plan.

WISDOM

- Gain a deep appreciation of the broad range of curriculum content areas identified in the Bahá'í writings.
- Understand how the spiritual education curriculum integrates content and process to meet the diverse needs of learners.
- Gain insight into the importance of binding the hearts of the students to the love of Bahá'u'lláh.
- Understand the importance of evaluating the effectiveness of spiritual education activities.

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION

- Perceive the importance of prioritizing study of the Central Figures.
- Reflect on one's own preferred method of teaching and learning.
- Recognize the need to extend one's own preferred style to meet the diverse needs of those we teach.
- Perceive the teacher's role in diagnosing learning needs.
- Discern the varied instructional methods modeled during this training.
- Reflect on the impact of using the Core Curriculum in Bahá'í classes.
- Realize how the spiritual growth of the teacher affects the teaching and diagnostic process.
- Discern the spiritual nature of evaluation in spiritual education.

ELOQUENT SPEECH

- Practice teaching a short class.
- Use Core Curriculum concepts and methods to evaluate the implementation of the curriculum.
- Practice designing and using an evaluation process.
- Become resourceful and creative in making use of available resources to implement the Core Curriculum.
- Begin the development of local and regional networks to exchange ideas, materials, and support among teachers.

Spiritual Education Content: Deciding What to Teach

Overview

Remember the organizing quotation for the Core Curriculum:

Strain every nerve to acquire both inner and outer perfections, for the fruit of the human tree hath ever been and will ever be perfections both within and without. It is not desirable that a man be left without knowledge or skills, for he is then but a barren tree. Then, so much as capacity and capability allow, ye needs must deck the tree of being with fruits such as knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception, and eloquent speech.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, REV. ED. 1999, NO. 9, P. 3

Foundations for a Spiritual Education

The purpose of the National Bahá'í Education Task Force in preparing the book *Foundations for a Spiritual Education* was to provide, to the extent possible, a collection of the Bahá'í writings on education that guide the development of the Core Curriculum.

1. Take a few minutes to become familiar with the purpose and reasoning for the organization of the book, referring to the preface, pp. ix–x. The Bahá'í writings provide us with a clear idea of what to teach (the content) and how to teach and learn the content (the process).
2. The knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception, and eloquent speech learning model provides a framework for spiritual education. The model leads us from knowledge and understanding to insight, application, and action. The content section of *Foundations for a Spiritual Education* is therefore organized according to this framework. However, these four content areas are very much interrelated and interconnected, as you will recognize when reading through the narrative headings.
3. Read aloud the narrative headings under “The Content of Spiritual Education” in Part Three of the book (pp. 193–198) to gain an appreciation for the broad scope of educational content.
4. PLEASE NOTE: this training provides only an overview of the content areas described in the writings. As you study and add the fruits of your own research of the Bahá'í writings, you may choose to add your own notes to the content section of this book.

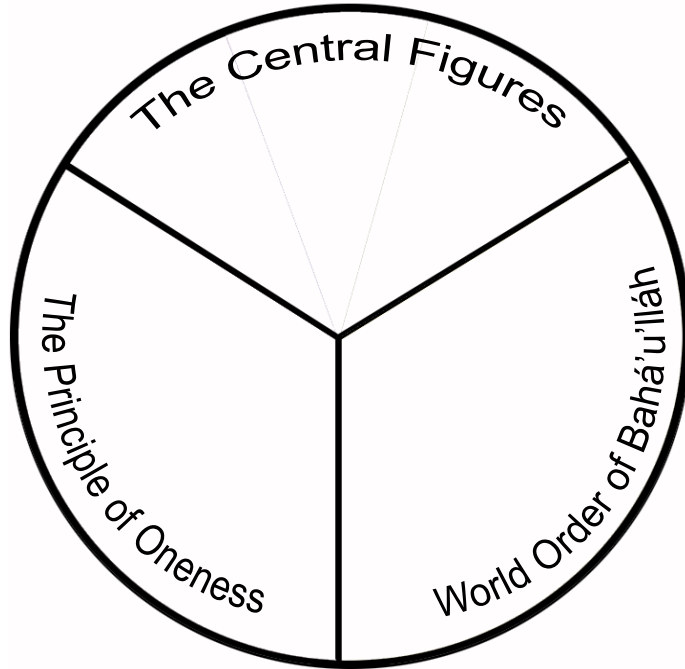
Purpose:

Become familiar with the structure of *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*.

Gain a deep appreciation of the broad range of curriculum content areas identified in the Bahá'í writings.

Perceive the importance of prioritizing study of the Central Figures.

The Core Curriculum Strands

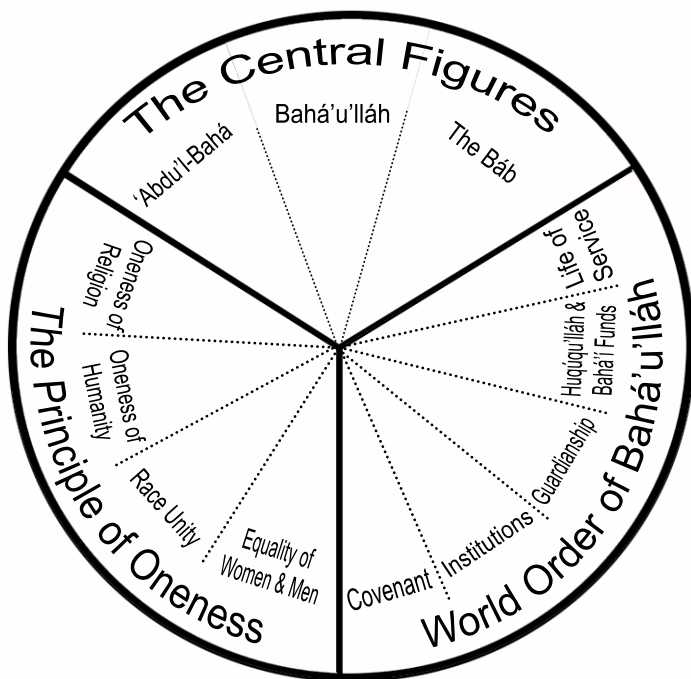


‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s exhortation to parents to bind the children’s hearts to the love of God, the Oneness of God and the Laws of God prompted the decision to organize the content of the Core Curriculum into three “strands,” or major categories of study:

- The **Central Figures** of the Faith
- The **Principle of Oneness**
- The **World Order of Bahá’u’lláh**

The Core Curriculum Strands: Major Themes

Each strand has several curriculum themes.



The Central Figures includes “The Báb,” “Bahá’u’lláh,” and “‘Abdu’l-Bahá.”

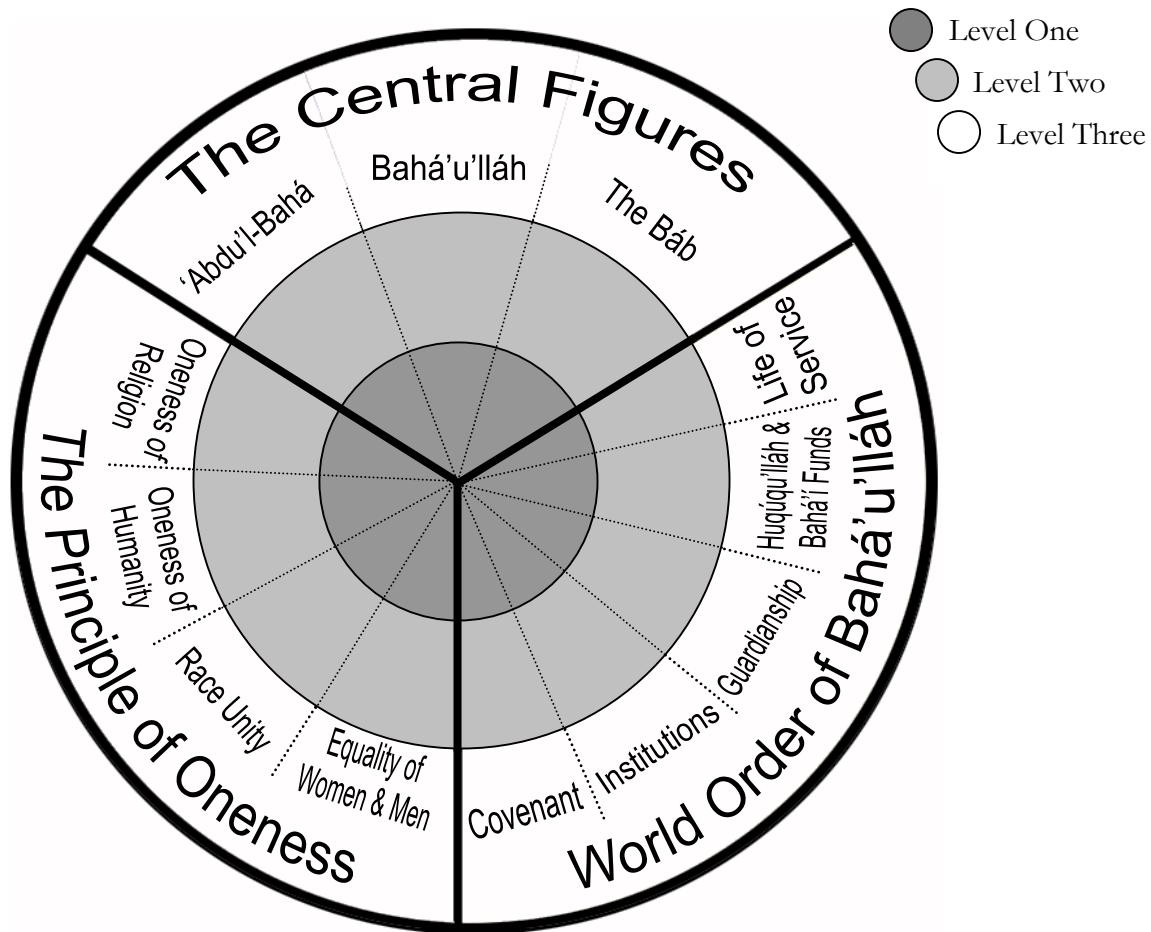
The Principle of Oneness includes “The Oneness of Religion,” “The Oneness of Humanity,” “Race Unity,” and “The Equality of Women and Men.”

The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh includes “The Covenant,” “The Institutions of the Faith,” “The Guardianship,” “Huqúqu’lláh and the Bahá’í Funds,” and “A Life of Service.”

Within each theme, specific learning goals and topics systematically guide the learner to increasingly deeper levels of knowledge, understanding, spiritual insight, and action.

The Core Curriculum Themes: Three Levels

The Core Curriculum has been designed with three levels of topics and learning objectives. This sequential approach presents a well-balanced division of all available topics to be learned over a nine-year curriculum. The levels can apply to an individual's general knowledge and understanding as well as to chronological age. For instance, level one is applicable to a new believer of any age. The objectives of the strands are therefore ageless and may apply equally to adults and children, by wisely adjusting and/or selecting age-appropriate activities to match each learning objective.



The Core Curriculum Scope and Sequence

The Universal House of Justice describes the importance of a systematic approach to all aspects of Bahá'í service, including the education of children:

Systematization ensures consistency of lines of action based on well-conceived plans. In a general sense, it implies an orderliness of approach in all that pertains to Bahá'í service, whether in teaching or administration, in individual or collective endeavour. While allowing for individual initiative and spontaneity, it suggests the need to be clear-headed, methodical, efficient, constant, balanced and harmonious.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, RIDVÁN 155

All the strands, themes, and goals of the Core Curriculum have been outlined in a comprehensive Scope and Sequence table. “Scope” and “sequence” have been defined in this way:

Scope—extent covered; range

Sequence—series; chronological order of events; succession, progression

Read aloud the *Scope and Sequence Purpose* statement with the whole group.

Purpose—The Core Curriculum Scope and Sequence is designed to assist teachers and communities in planning curriculum for Bahá'í classes. It creates an integrated sequential program across all published core curriculum strands. Following this tool throughout the nine years of instruction ensures that the full range of content is covered, and can:

- Assist Local Spiritual Assemblies and education committees in providing guidance for structuring a systematic spiritual education
- Provide teachers with a tool for sequencing curricular units of study in Bahá'í education (Teacher's Spiritual Education Plan)
- Keep parents informed through a feedback tool that shows what a child or youth has studied or will study (Student's Spiritual Education Record)
- Ensure consistency in quality and content of spiritual educational program throughout the Bahá'í community
- Ensure that students and youth maintain a consistent spiritual education program after moving from one community to another
- Enable new students to be easily incorporated into a systematic Bahá'í educational program

This sequential approach presents a well-balanced division of all available topics of study, flexibly applied over a nine-year curriculum. Criteria for this division includes diversity of topics and average capacities and capabilities of learners.

Examine the Scope and Sequence table on the following pages.

Note the layout:

The Scope and Sequence is structured so that going across the page from left to right the contents of the curriculum are listed in rows for each of the levels. Going down the table, the content of each theme is displayed across levels. **Learning Goals** are listed in bold type; Topics are listed in regular type. Although it is possible to find the same goal of a given theme mentioned in more than one level, a specific topic is only assigned to one level.

Core Curriculum for Spiritual Education of Children and Junior Youth

		STRAND: PRINCIPLE OF ONENESS				STRAND: THE CENTRAL	
		ONENESS OF RELIGION	ONENESS OF HUMANITY	RACE UNITY	EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND MEN	THE BÁB	BAHÁ'U'LLÁH
L E V E L 1	<p>Understanding of the Oneness of God:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Meaning of Divine Unity <p>Understanding of the Major Religions of the Past:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Nature and Purpose of Religion 	<p>The Prime and Pivotal Teaching:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Prime and Pivotal Principle <p>To Know that Human Reality Is Spiritual:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No Distinction or Separation ○ All Are Born with Potential 	<p>Understanding the Principle of Unity in Diversity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Beauty and Purpose of Diversity in the Realm of Creation <p>Eliminating Racial Prejudice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Following the Example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá 	<p>Equality and How It Differs from Being the Same:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Equal in Value, not Appearance <p>Equality In Family and Community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Roles of Fathers, Mothers, Wives and Husbands <p>Examples of Heroes and Heroines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Holy Family 	<p>Historical Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Religious Awakening in Anticipation ○ Mulla Husayn's Search <p>The Station of the Báb:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Titles of the Báb <p>The Life of the Báb:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Early Life of the Báb ○ Declaration of the Báb <p>The Writings of the Báb:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prayers of the Báb 	<p>Love for Bahá'u'lláh:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prayers and Meditations ○ Loving Acts ○ Children of His Household <p>The Station of Bahá'u'lláh:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ... as Stated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá <p>His Life & Ministry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Childhood of Bahá'u'lláh ○ Youth and Early Manhood <p>The Principles of Bahá'u'lláh:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Oneness of God and of Humanity 	
	<p>Understanding of Oneness of God:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To Be a True Seeker <p>Understanding of Major Religions of the Past:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Mission of the Prophets ○ The History, Laws, and Teachings of Major Religions <p>The Greatest Means for Unity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Essential Foundation of All Religions 	<p>The Prime and Pivotal Teaching:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For the Peoples of the World <p>The Diversity of Humanity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciating Diversity <p>The Importance of the Principle of the Elimination of All Prejudices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A Barrier to Oneness and World Peace 	<p>The Unity and Equality of the Races:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Created from the Same Dust ○ A Composite Harmony and Beauty 	<p>Equality and How It Differs from Being the Same:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Equality in Nature <p>The Principle of Equality as it is Reflected in Bahá'í Teachings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The History of Equality and Inequality <p>Equality In Family and Community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Collaborative Family Life <p>Examples of Heroes and Heroines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Expressing Equality 	<p>Historical Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The World of the 19th Century ○ Iran in the 19th Century <p>The Station of the Báb:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Herald of Bahá'u'lláh <p>The Life of the Báb:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Letters of the Living ○ The Ministry of the Báb After His Declaration ○ Conference at Badash̄t <p>The Writings of the Báb:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Development of the Bahá'í Calendar 	<p>Love for Bahá'u'lláh:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Suffering and Sacrifices ○ Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá ○ The Holy Family <p>The Station of Bahá'u'lláh:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ... as Stated by the Báb ○ ... as Stated by His Own Pen <p>His Life & Ministry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bahá'u'lláh in the Siyáh-Chál ○ Banishment to Iraq ○ Declaration in the Garden of Ridván <p>Proofs & Evidences of His Station</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Progressive Revelation <p>The Principles of Bahá'u'lláh:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Social Principles <p>Writings of Bahá'u'lláh:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Significance of the Writings 	
JUNIOR YOUTH: COMING OF AGE							
L E V E L 3	<p>Understanding of the Oneness of God:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Progressive Revelation – The Prophetic Cycle <p>The Greatest Means for Unity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Religious Prejudice as Cause of War and Hatred ○ Religion Must Be Cause of Love and Unity 	<p>The Diversity of Humanity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Principle of Unity in Diversity <p>The Importance of the Principle of the Elimination of All Prejudices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All Must Strive to Overcome Prejudice ○ True Unity as the Outcome of the Elimination of All Prejudice 	<p>Eliminating Racial Prejudice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Most Vital and Challenging Issue ○ Spiritual Qualities and Responsibilities Needed ○ Promised Outcomes 	<p>The Principle of Equality as it is Reflected in Bahá'í Teachings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Role of the Institutions <p>Equality in Family and Community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Development of Human Economy ○ Equality and World Peace 	<p>The Station of the Báb:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Islamic Prophecies <p>The Life of the Báb:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Martyrdom of the Báb ○ Upheavals Associated with the Ministry of the Báb ○ The Shrine of the Báb <p>The Writings of the Báb:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Major Writings 	<p>The Station of Bahá'u'lláh:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ... as Stated in the Holy Books of Previous Religions ○ ... as Stated by Shoghi Effendi <p>His Life & Ministry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exiles - Constantinople, Adrianople ○ Exile to the Holy Land <p>Proofs and Evidences of His Station</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Proofs and Evidences Found in Divine Religions of the Past <p>The Principles of Bahá'u'lláh:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Personal Principles <p>Laws of Bahá'u'lláh:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Need for Laws ○ The Kitáb-i-Aqdas <p>Writings of Bahá'u'lláh:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mysteries and Hidden Meanings ○ Major Texts 	

- Scope and Sequence -

Learning Goals are in bold **Topics** in regular type

STRAND: WORLD ORDER OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH						
FIGURES	THE COVENANT	THE GUARDIANSHIP	HUQÚQU'LLÁH / BAHÁ'Í FUNDS	INSTITUTIONS OF THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH	A LIFE OF SERVICE	
<p>The Life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Childhood of 'Abdu'l-Bahá ○ 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Life of Service ○ The Mother Temple of the West <p>The Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tablets and Talks Addressed to Children 	<p>A Divine Covenant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Definition of a Divine Covenant <p>The Greater Covenant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How the Manifestations have been Received by Humanity 	<p>The Life of the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lineage and Early Life, Childhood, Early Youth, Schooling <p>Guardian's Contributions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Development of the World Center 	<p>The Bahá'í Fund:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Bahá'í Fund 	<p>The Structure and Function of the Administrative Order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Nineteen Day Feast 	<p>The Purpose of Living a Life of Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Purpose of Life <p>Caring for One's Body</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Relationship between physical cleanliness and spirituality <p>Developing Intellectual Faculties</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Excellence and Education <p>Developing Spiritual Capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Spiritual Foundations <p>Developing Social Life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Daily Deeds of Service 	L E V E L 1
<p>Station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 'Abdu'l-Bahá as Exemplar ○ 'Abdu'l-Bahá as Interpreter <p>Life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Youth of 'Abdu'l-Bahá ○ The Sacrifices of 'Abdu'l-Bahá <p>The Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Major Topics and Titles ○ <i>Memorials of the Faithful</i> <p>Journeys and Talks in the West:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Significance to the Western Believers ○ Important Principles Emphasized 	<p>The Greater Covenant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Covenant of the Báb ○ The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh <p>The Lesser Covenant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ First of Its Kind in Religious History 	<p>The Life of the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Character of the Guardian and His Excellence in All Things <p>GUARDIAN'S CONTRIBUTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Translation and Interpretation of the Writings, Correspondence with the Bahá'ís of the World, and His Writings ○ The Appointment of Shoghi Effendi as Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith 	<p>The History of Huqúqu'lláh:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Unique Nature of Huqúqu'lláh <p>Purpose of the Law of Huqúqu'lláh for Institutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reciprocity, Mutual Assistance and Cooperation ○ Building the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh <p>Purpose of the Law of Huqúqu'lláh for the Individual:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Personal Aspects of the Law ○ Outcomes for the Individual 	<p>Significance and Distinction of the Institutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Administrative Order ○ Administrative Systems of the Past ○ The Covenant <p>Development of the Administrative Order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Heroic and Formative Ages ○ Institution of the Learned ○ The Bahá'í World Centre <p>Structure and Function of the Administrative Order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Structure and Form ○ The Learned and the Rulers ○ Local and National Institutions <p>Citizenship:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Individual's Relationship to Institutions ○ Service to the Institutions 	<p>The Purpose of Living a Life of Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Power of Action <p>Caring for One's Body</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Chastity and Purity <p>Developing Intellectual Faculties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Needs of our Time <p>Developing Spiritual Capacity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Spiritual Habits <p>Developing Social Life:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Serving the World and Humanity ○ Teaching through Words and Deeds 	L E V E L 2
JUNIOR YOUTH: COMING OF AGE						
<p>The Station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Kitáb-i-'Ahd ○ The Center of the Covenant ○ The Reactions of Others <p>Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Themes in... ○ Bahá'í Administrative Order <p>The Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Some Answered Questions</i> <p>Public Addresses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Style and Presentation 	<p>The Lesser Covenant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Its Purpose to Preserve Unity <p>The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Will and Testament of ○ Guardianship and the Universal House Of Justice <p>The Individual & the Covenant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Complete Loyalty to Bahá'u'lláh ○ Participation and Obedience ○ Covenant-Breakers 	<p>The Life of the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Family Relationships: Marriage, Greatest Holy Leaf, Covenant Breakers ○ Passing of the Guardian <p>GUARDIAN'S CONTRIBUTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Expansion and Implementation of the Bahá'í Administrative Order, Design, Implementation ○ The Institution of the Guardianship 	<p>The History of Huqúqu'lláh:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Development of the Institution of Huqúqu'lláh ○ The Trusteeship of Huqúqu'lláh <p>Purpose of the Law of Huqúqu'lláh for Institutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Disbursement of Huqúqu'lláh <p>Application of the Law of Huqúqu'lláh:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Features of Huqúqu'lláh ○ Calculating Huqúqu'lláh <p>The Bahá'í Fund:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Distinction Between the Bahá'í Fund and Huqúqu'lláh 	<p>Development of the Administrative Order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Role as Architect <p>Structure and Function of the Administrative Order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Universal House of Justice ○ Bahá'í Elections <p>Consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Role of Consultation ○ Spiritual Prerequisites ○ Decision Making ○ The Steps Used in Consultation <p>Citizenship:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ America's Spiritual Destiny <p>The Mission and Future of the Faith:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Purpose and Mission of Bahá'u'lláh ○ Unfolding Destiny 	<p>Developing Intellectual Faculties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Kitáb-i-Aqdas ○ Heroes and Heroines <p>Developing Spiritual Capacity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Spiritual Practices <p>Developing Social Life:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community Service ○ Preparation for Marriage ○ Teaching our Peers 	L E V E L 3

IDENTIFYING THE GOALS, TOPICS AND OBJECTIVES IN THE STRANDS

The Scope and Sequence is structured so that it is possible to find the same goal of a given theme mentioned in more than one level, but a specific topic is only assigned to one level.

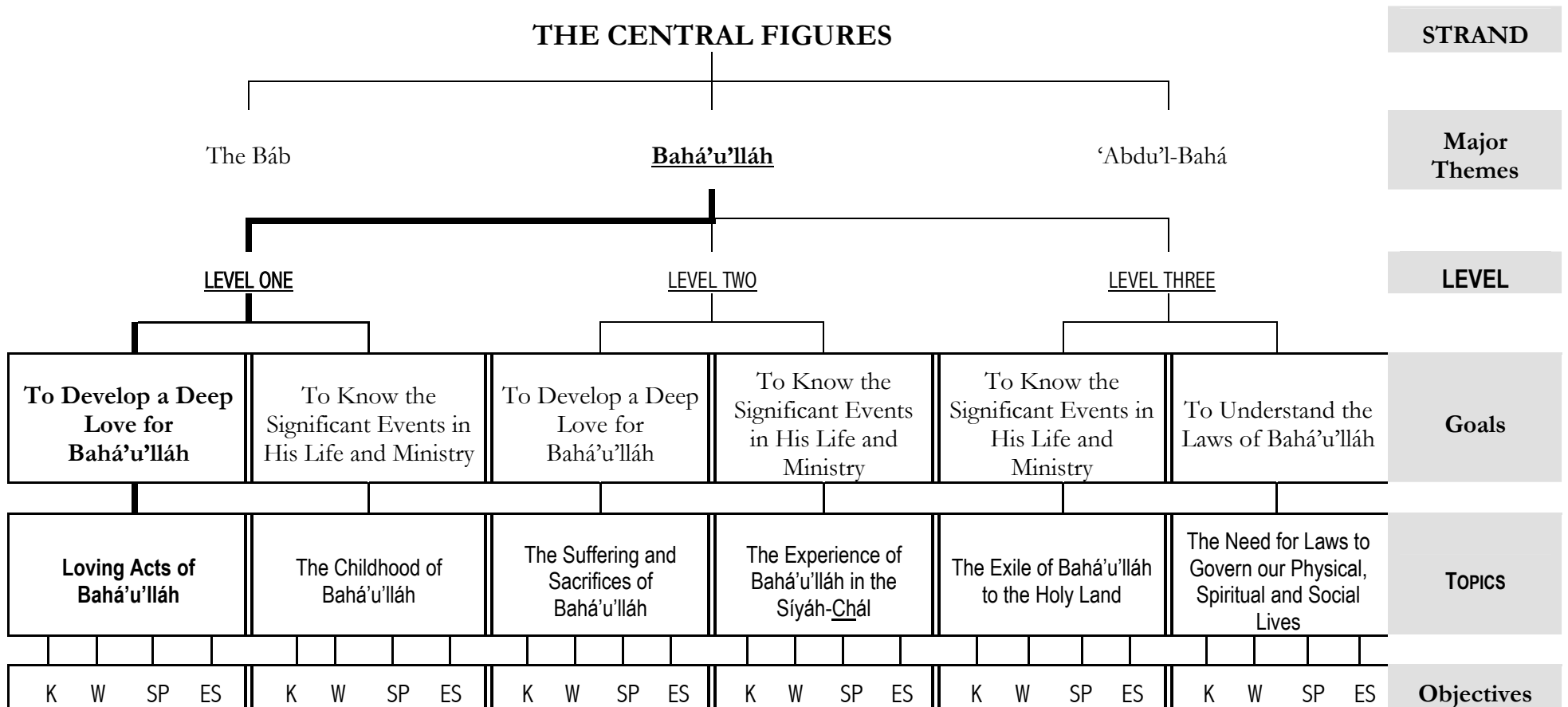
For example, under the Central Figures strand and the theme *Bahá'u'lláh*, the goal “To Develop a Deep Love for Bahá'u'lláh” appears in both level one and level two but the topics of that goal covered under level one are different from those covered under level two. Every topic from the Core Curriculum Lesson Planning Guides is placed in this table; thus a student who completes a course of study that is designed by using the Scope and Sequence systematically studies every topic of the entire curriculum over the course of nine years.

SPIRITUAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

THE PRINCIPLE OF ONENESS				THE CENTRAL FIGURES			THE WORLD ORDER OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH					STRAND
Oneness of Religion	Oneness of Humanity	Race Unity	Equality of Women and Men	The Báb	Bahá'u'lláh	'Abdu'l-Bahá	The Covenant	The Guardianship	The Institutions	Huqúqu'lláh and the Funds	Life of Service	Major Themes
LEVELS 1,2,3	LEVELS 1,2,3	LEVELS 1,2,3	LEVELS 1,2,3	LEVELS 1,2,3	LEVELS 1,2,3	LEVELS 1,2,3	LEVELS 1,2,3	LEVELS 1,2,3	LEVELS 1,2,3	LEVELS 1,2,3	LEVELS 1,2,3	Goals and Topics

Identify Goals and Topics

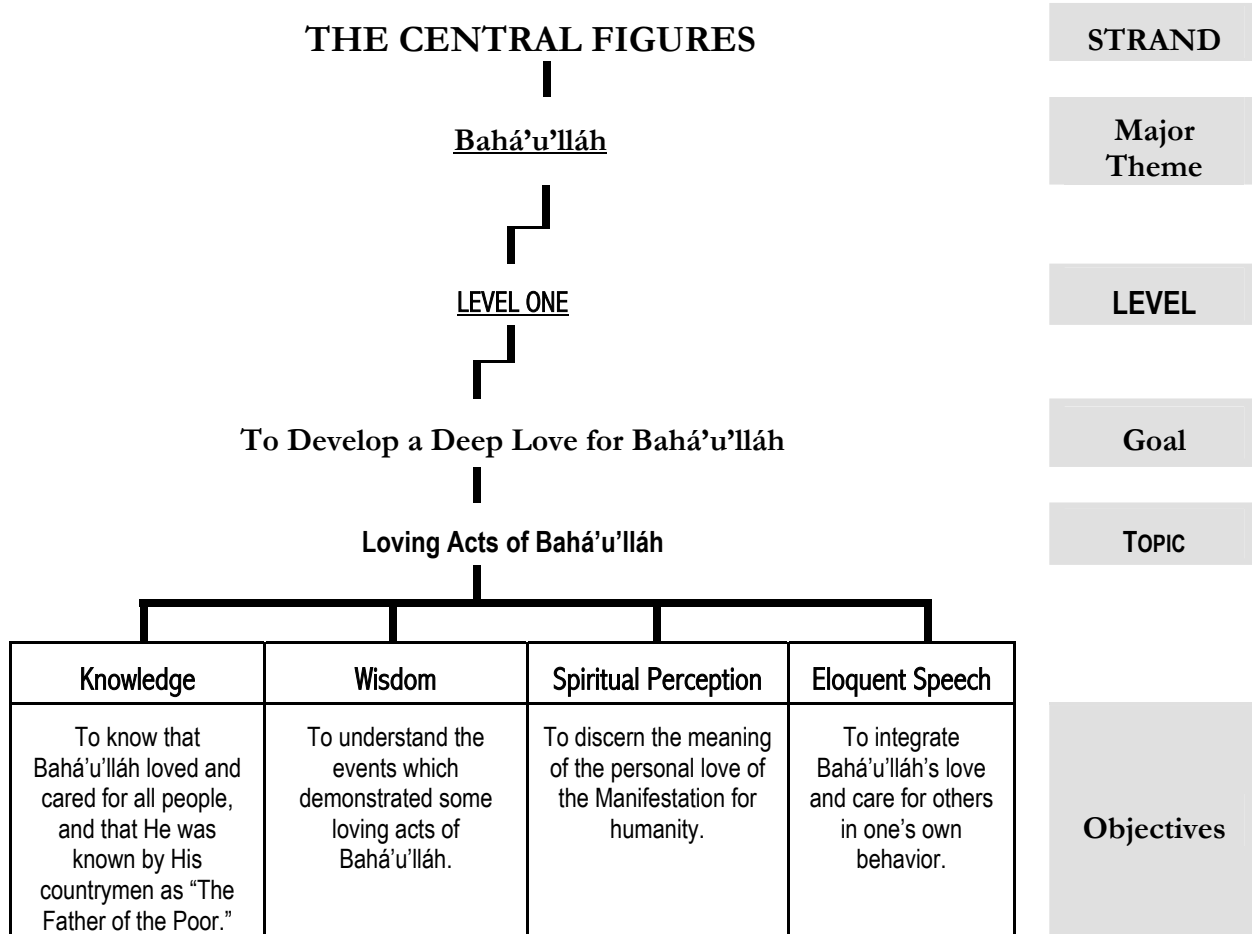
- The Bahá'í writings determine the broad goals within the Strand. Every goal has been extrapolated from research of the Bahá'í Writings. Some goals appear at all three levels of the Major Theme. Other goals only appear in one or two levels.
For the theme “Bahá'u'lláh,” **read aloud an example of a goal:** “To Develop a Deep Love for Bahá'u'lláh.”
- Research of the Bahá'í writings also provides the topics within each goal. Note that although the same goal may appear in more than one level, topics are unique and appropriate to each level.
For the goal selected, **read aloud an example of a topic:** “Loving Acts of Bahá'u'lláh.”



Identify Objectives

1. Knowledge, Wisdom, Spiritual Perception and Eloquent Speech objectives are identified for every topic of every goal.

Read an example of learning objectives within the previously mentioned Goal and Topic:



2. Allow time for clarifying comments and questions about the steps in identifying the content objectives of the curriculum.
3. Briefly discuss: What is the essential role of the teacher in selecting the most appropriate objectives of study for Bahá'í classes?
4. Please bear in mind that curriculum development is an on-going process and more topics may be created in the future. Please share your ideas and suggestions with the National Bahá'í Education Task Force.

Process the Activity

How helpful was the formal walk-through of the content and process sections of the Spiritual Education Curriculum? What alternative ways could you suggest for becoming familiar with the material?

The Process: Deciding How to Teach the Content, and How Students Will Learn It

Quietly play in the background a selected piece of classical music, perhaps something baroque, like the *Four Seasons* by Vivaldi, while you:

1. Read aloud the introductory statements to each of the Instructional Methods and Learning Tools in *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*, (pp. 152–67), also selecting a portion of one of the guiding quotations under each heading.
2. Using the form on the following page, silently reflect on the variety of instructional methods and learning tools suggested in the writings, and which ones, as both a learner and a teacher, you use most often or are most comfortable with. If desired, use your journal to make notes.
3. Pair with the person next to you, and share reflections about yourselves as learners and teachers.
4. Reconvene as a whole group and briefly discuss the questions:
 - Why do you think it is important to use a variety of instructional methods and learning tools when teaching?
 - What different instructional methods and learning tools have you experienced during this training?
 - How did the music playing in the background affect you during this session?
 - As a teacher how can you accommodate diverse learners whose thinking may be enhanced or distracted by music?

Purpose:

Become familiar with the instructional methods and learning tools described in the Bahá'í writings.

Know that the instructional methods and learning tools described in the curriculum books are derived from the Bahá'í writings.

Reflect on one's own preferred method of teaching and learning.

Recognize the need to expand one's own preferred style in order to meet the diverse needs of those we teach.

Perceive the varied instructional methods modeled during this training.

Process the Activity

As a teacher, what will you do differently to utilize the guidance in the Bahá'í writings about instructional methods and learning tools?

CORE CURRICULUM INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS

Method or Learning Tool	I Enjoy as a Learner	I Use as a Teacher	My Students Enjoy
Establish a Loving Environment			
Direct Use of the Sacred Writings			
Education Directed Toward the Recognition of God			
Involve Service to Humanity, including Teaching the Cause			
Engage the Mind and Heart			
Private Study of the Writings			
Establish Bonds of Unity and Fellowship			
Use of Consultation			
Use of Questioning and Peer Teaching			
Independent Investigation and Power of Reasoning			
Use of Memorization and Recitation			
Use of Meditation and Reflection			
Use of Parables and Stories			
Use of Music			
Use of Drama			
Employ Creativity and the Arts			
Engage in Science and Investigation of Nature			
Play and Use of Manipulatives			
Use of Travel			
Use of Recreation			

Methods I might add to my current teaching style:

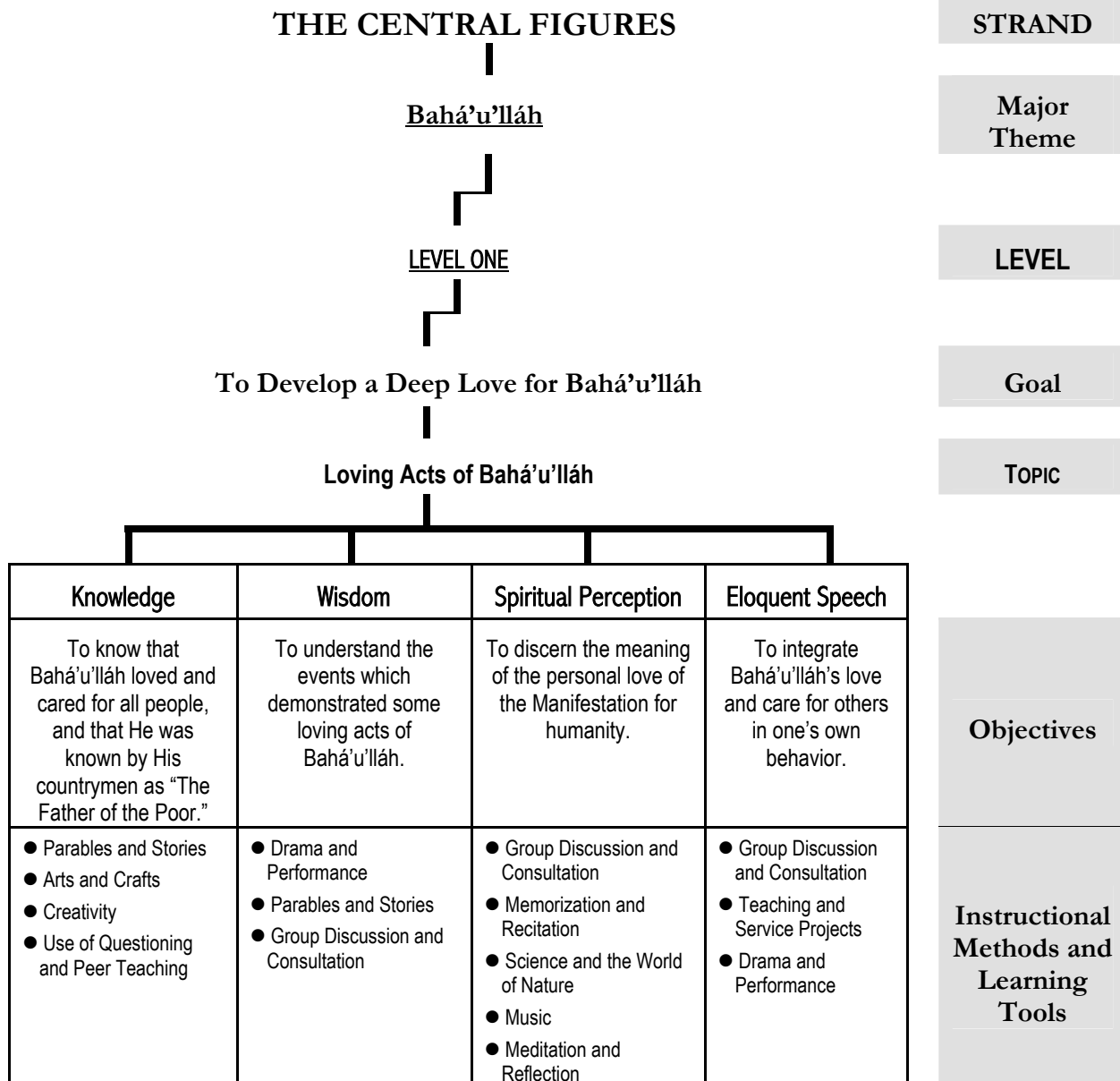
*Integrating Content & Process with the Diverse Capacities,
Capabilities and Interests of Learners*

- The instructional methods and learning tools referred to in the Bahá'í writings are selected as applicable to each set of objectives. Take a moment to see how the instructional methods and learning tools are added to the diagram below, before moving on to the remainder of this activity.

Purpose:

Understand how the curriculum integrates content and process to meet the diverse needs and interests of learners.

Perceive the teacher's role in diagnosing those needs.



Choosing the most appropriate learning activities for your students

All children need to learn their numbers and alphabets, but the way in which these are taught are as numerous as the number of teachers and as diverse as each child and each learning environment. We are probably all aware of the common technique to simply drill children, but ‘Abdu’l-Bahá suggests making candy alphabets and letting the child eat them after identifying the letter! (See *Bahá’í Education: A Compilation*, USA, p. 39.) Similarly, there are many ways to learn about Bahá’u’lláh, the Covenant, or the principle of oneness. The wise teacher uses teaching methods, learning tools and activities that are adjusted to the learners’ capacities, capabilities, and interests.

1. Recall the Module Two discussion of the teacher’s roles as mentor, gardener, and physician for the spiritual development of students. Factors to diagnose learning needs and determine the most appropriate activities for your students include:
 - your knowledge and interests
 - your understanding of the stages of maturity, capacity, capability, and interests of the student
 - your ability to consult with the parents and the student herself or himself.
2. Your knowledge of the individual and the collective learning needs of your students enables you to select the most appropriate activities to use in your lesson plans. See the chart on the next page to see some suggested activities for the topic chosen in our example.

At this point in the training, it may be helpful to **discern the difference between activities and lessons.**

- A lesson is a structured learning experience with a beginning, middle and end designed to accomplish one or more specific objectives. It may include one or several activities. For example, a single lesson may include activities such as: recite a prayer, sing a song, memorize a quotation, listen to a story. While some activities may be common to the whole class (prayers and songs are good examples), not all students may be engaged in the same activities throughout the lesson.
- The kind of activity an individual, or group is engaged in depends on stage of maturity, capacity, capability, interests. Again, the wise and skillful teacher’s assessment determines the most appropriate activities.

THE CENTRAL FIGURES

Bahá'u'lláh

LEVEL ONE

To Develop a Deep Love for Bahá'u'lláh

Loving Acts of Bahá'u'lláh

Knowledge	Wisdom	Spiritual Perception	Eloquent Speech
To know that Bahá'u'lláh loved and cared for all people, and that He was known by His countrymen as "The Father of the Poor."	To understand the events which demonstrated some loving acts of Bahá'u'lláh.	To discern the meaning of the personal love of the Manifestation for humanity.	To integrate Bahá'u'lláh's love and care for others in one's own behavior.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parables and Stories ● Arts and Crafts ● Creativity ● Use of Questioning and Peer Teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Drama and Performance ● Parables and Stories ● Group Discussion and Consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Group Discussion and Consultation ● Memorization and Recitation ● Science and the World of Nature ● Music ● Meditation and Reflection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Group Discussion and Consultation ● Teaching and Service Projects ● Drama and Performance
<p>Consult about His title, "Father of the Poor"; share stories relating to this title.</p> <p>Have children work in small groups to read specific stories of Bahá'u'lláh's acts of loving kindness (e.g., <i>The Central Figures: Bahá'u'lláh, Vol. One</i>, pp. 22-25, 27-30).</p>	<p>Encourage the children in using various art media to illustrate scenes from stories of Bahá'u'lláh's loving-kindness.</p> <p>Invite children to develop plays, mimes, dances which describe the feelings and reactions of those people who were affected by Bahá'u'lláh's love and kindness.</p>	<p>Use music to teach one of the <i>Hidden Words</i> which relates to His love for us.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for children to reflect on times when they felt they experienced Bahá'u'lláh's love. Consider how this love increased personal strength.</p>	<p>Ask the children to make a presentation based on their research about Bahá'u'lláh's acts of loving-kindness, through a short play.</p> <p>Invite children to prepare special devotions on this theme of love of Bahá'u'lláh and exhibit their artwork during the social portion of the Nineteen Day Feast.</p>

STRAND

Major Theme

LEVEL

Goal

TOPIC

Objectives

Instructional Methods and Learning Tools

Suggested Activities

Presentation of the Core Curriculum Materials

Purpose:

Gain insight into the importance of binding the hearts of the students to the love of Bahá'u'lláh.

Reflect on the impact of the use of Core Curriculum Strands in their Bahá'í education classes.

1. Relax and enjoy a story read by your facilitator.
2. Take a moment to quietly reflect on the story as your facilitators present you with your Core Curriculum Lesson Planning Guide and Storybook.
3. Enjoy becoming acquainted with these books.
4. Review the following quotation and briefly discuss the importance of binding the hearts to the love of Bahá'u'lláh and the principle of oneness as a prime purpose of the spiritual education curriculum.

That which is of paramount importance for the children, that which must precede all else, is to teach them the oneness of God and the Laws of God.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, REV. ED. 1999, NO. 14

In the Core Curriculum, this admonition is applied in the following ways:

- The Central Figures Strand binds the hearts of children and junior youth to the Manifestation of God for this Day, the ideal means for coming to know the Oneness of God.
 - The Oneness Strand explores the pivotal principle around which all other teachings of Bahá'u'lláh revolve. This strand is ideal for reaching out to the community at large.
 - The World Order Strand explores elements of the society that will draw upon the contributions of children, youth, and adults to build a united and prosperous life for all.
5. Recall that the guidance for prioritizing the study of particular content is found in the Bahá'í writings, and that all the goals and topics of the Core Curriculum are likewise taken from the writings. As we recall, many of these writings are provided in the book, *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*.
 6. Take a moment to become familiar with the titles of other major themes, storybooks, and lesson planning guides that are available, and those currently being developed.
 7. Use your journal to reflect on how your classes with children and junior youth may be transformed by the use of this curriculum as part of a well-organized systematic spiritual education program, and to visualize what the outcome of such a program might be.

Process the Activity

How did the story prepare you for receiving your Core Curriculum books?

Format of the Core Curriculum Lesson Planning Guides

For the next few minutes we will be exploring the format of the curriculum Lesson Planning Guide for *The Central Figures: Bahá'u'lláh, Level One* and its accompanying storybook, *The Central Figures: Bahá'u'lláh, Volume One*.*

1. Turn to the Table of Contents and select one of the Goals from the Bahá'u'lláh Lesson Planning Guide, Level One (for example, you may choose To Develop a Deep Love for Bahá'u'lláh, p. 3).
2. Then select one Topic from that Goal and turn to that page in the Lesson Planning Guide (e.g., Loving Acts of Bahá'u'lláh, page 13).
3. Note how the page is set up:
 - Name of the Topic at the top
 - Spiritual Qualities relevant to the topic
 - Quotations related to the study of the topic.
4. Now turn to the two pages following this title page. Note the placement of the Goal, Topic, Learning Objectives, and Suggested Learning Activities.
5. Read aloud in your group each of the Learning Objectives and Suggested Learning Activities. Note that all the Goals in all the levels of the Core Curriculum lesson planning guides are presented in this same format.
6. Next, turn the page to find the first of the sample activities that address the goal for this topic. Note how the sample activities identify objectives, provide a suggested time for the activity, list the materials needed, and the steps to follow in order to execute the activity. Note also that the sample activities on the succeeding pages follow this same format.
7. Finally, turn to the Resource Pages for this topic (pages 20–22 for “Loving Acts of Bahá'u'lláh”). These pages provide, when possible, specific materials listed to carry out the sample activities of this topic. The final resource page is a List of Additional Resources that might be useful in developing the suggested activities or for activities of your own design.

Play some quiet music while you take another few minutes to become familiar with the remainder of the Lesson Planning Guide.

Purpose:

Understand the format of the Core Curriculum Lesson Planning Guides and storybooks.

*If desired, some participants may choose to complete this activity, following the same procedures, using Lesson Planning Guides for Level Two or Level Three, or Lesson Planning Guides for The Principle of Oneness.

Using the Core Curriculum Lesson Planning Guides and Storybooks

Purpose:

Know how to write a lesson plan and use the Core Curriculum Lesson Planning Guides and storybooks.

1. Organize your group into teams of 2 or 3, ideally people who will have the opportunity to serve together as teachers.
2. In your groups, identify the following:
 - Similarities between the Lesson Planning Guide and the Storybook. (Carefully examining the tables of contents for each will assist you.)
 - Unique features of the storybook and how it relates to the Lesson Planning Guide.
3. Share with the other groups the similarities and unique aspects you discovered. The relationship between the two will provide the basis for developing lessons on the topics of the Core Curriculum.

Planning Lessons

The teacher must provide lessons that not only engage learners, but also systematically lead them through the entire learning framework, so that learning becomes internalized and results in service to humanity. At the same time, not every lesson will go through the entire learning framework. A complete learning cycle may be accomplished through a series of lessons.

Reform your small groups of 2–3 participants.

Using the Lesson Planning Template, you will plan a lesson that includes at least 2 activities and with at least one activity including a story from a Core Curriculum storybook. Later you will practice co-teaching a 10-15 minute segment from this lesson, using all the materials needed.

We encourage beginning teachers to carefully follow the lesson planning guidelines step by step.

Read through the guidelines as a whole group and fill in your Lesson Planning Template as you work.

Lesson Planning Guidelines

1. In your work group, pray for Divine assistance.
2. Using the Lesson Planning Template on pages 111-12 (or preferably photocopies of those pages), record the following:
 - Ages of your students
 - Number of students
 - Key characteristics of students
3. Go to your Lesson Planning Guide and
 - Select a Goal
 - Select a Topic

4. Find the Goal/Topic pages in the Lesson Planning Guide. Note the quotations provided for your own reflection as well as the spiritual qualities relevant to this topic.
 - Record the Strand, Theme, Goal, Topic, and Spiritual Qualities relevant to this topic on your Lesson Planning Template.
5. Turn to the Learning Objectives and Suggested Activities pages that immediately follow the Goal/Topic page.
 - Select one knowledge objective, one wisdom objective, one spiritual perception objective, and one eloquent speech objective.
 - Record these selected objectives on your Lesson Planning Template. You will identify activities to teach two of your selected objectives in this lesson. The other objectives may be addressed in a subsequent lesson.
6. Turn to the Sample Activities pages in the Lesson Planning Guide. Select a detailed *sample* activity from the Sample Activities pages that addresses one of the objectives you selected.
 - Record the page number and activity title of your selected activity on page 2 of the Lesson Planning Template: “Activities.”
 - Record the materials needed and time needed.
7. In the Lesson Planning Guide, return to your selected Goal/Topic’s “Objectives and Suggested Activities” pages.
 - Read through the objectives and suggested activities.
 - Consult with your partner(s) and choose one *suggested* activity to address a second learning objective that you have already recorded on your Lesson Planning Template.
 - Work together to create and record your own detailed plans for that activity in the “Activities” section of template, page 2.*
8. Now complete the following: Opening, Welcome, Motivating the Lesson, Conclusion, Action assignments, and Closing.
9. Review your lesson to be sure that this lesson includes attention to one or more of the spiritual qualities relevant to this topic. Adjust your lesson, if necessary.
10. Calculate and note the time needed to organize your materials and prepare to teach this lesson. Also calculate and record the time needed to teach your lesson.

*Alternatively, there may be times when beginning teachers choose to develop their lessons using two of the detailed sample activities from the Lesson Planning Guide. We will have the opportunity again to practice writing our own detailed activity plans in the Teacher Development Workshops.

Reminder:

- Objectives from all four parts of the learning cycle (K, W, SP, ES) are not always utilized in each lesson; the Core Curriculum learning framework is not linear, and may be used appropriately in any order.
- A lesson may include several activities. While some activities may be common to the whole class (prayers and songs are good examples), there also may be times when small groups of students engage in different activities at the same time.

Assess your teaching strategy:

- What instructional methods will you use?
- What learning tools will students use?
- How will you get the attention and engage the interest of the learners in the topic you are going to teach?

Use the Instructional Methods and Learning Tools checklist to assure you have included a diversity of strategies appropriate to the stage of maturity, capacity, capability, and interests of the students.

Revise your plan after your assessment, if necessary.

Remember that this process will become more and more comfortable as you use it!

LESSON PLANNING TEMPLATE

Strand _____ Theme _____

Goal _____ Topic _____

Spiritual Qualities Relevant to this Topic _____

Ages of learners _____ Number of Learners _____

Key Characteristics and Special Diversities of Learners:

Time needed to prepare to teach this lesson:

Time needed to actually teach this lesson:

Objectives for this lesson: (Use relevant objectives from the Lesson Planning Guide)

At the end of this lesson the learners will be able to:

Knowledge: (Become Informed)

Wisdom: (Understand)

Spiritual Perception: (Reflect and Apply)

Eloquent Speech: (Act/Teach/Serve)

Instructional Methods and Learning Tools: (Use the checklist to ensure diverse strategies)

Materials/Resources needed to teach this lesson:

Procedure for this lesson:

Opening prayers and music:

Welcome, review of previous lesson and action assignments:

Motivating the lesson: *(How will you engage the interest/curiosity/attention of the students?)*

Use sample activities and/or develop suggested activities:

Activities

Materials needed

Time needed

Conclusion: *(How will you bring the activities in the lesson to an end?)*

Action assignments to be completed before the next class:

Closing prayers and music:

ALTERNATIVE LESSON PLANNING TOOL

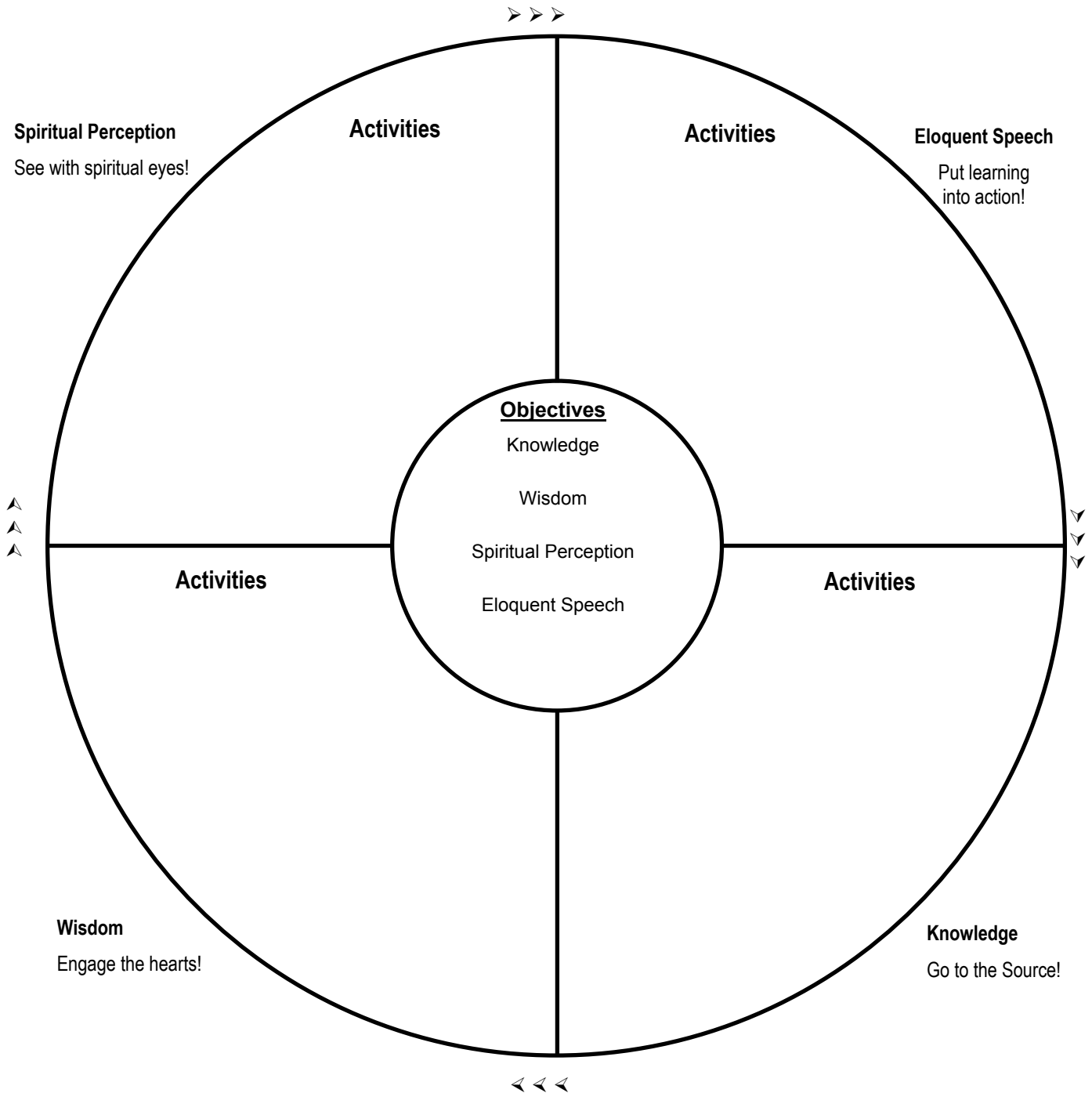
Strand:

Theme:

Topic:

Goal:

Spiritual Qualities:



INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS CHECKLIST

Strand:														
Theme:														
Goal:														
Topic:														
Spiritual Quality:														
Lesson:														
Activity:														

Briefly describe your activity in the left hand column. Then check off which instructional methods or learning tools you are using.

Look for gaps and, if necessary, revise your lesson plan to better meet the capacities and interests of your class.

Core Curriculum Instructional Methods & Learning Tools

taken from *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*, pp. 152-68

Establish a Loving Environment

Be thou a teacher of love in a school of unity.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ’Í EDUCATION*, p. 24

Direct Use of the Bahá’í Sacred Writings

Train these children with divine exhortations.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, p. 53

Education Directed Toward the Recognition of God

We have decreed, O people, that the highest and last end of all learning be the recognition of Him Who is the Object of all knowledge. . . .

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *EPISTLE TO THE SON OF THE WOLF*, p. 129

Involve Service to Humanity

The honor and distinction of the individual consist in this, that he among all the world’s multitudes should become a source of social good.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *THE SECRET OF DIVINE CIVILIZATION*, pp. 2-3

To assist Me is to teach My Cause.

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *TABLETS OF BAHÁ’U’LLÁH*, p. 196

Engage the Mind and Heart

The principles of the Teachings of Bahá’u’lláh should be carefully studied, one by one, until they are realized and understood by mind and heart—so will you become strong followers of the light. . . .

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *PARIS TALKS*, p. 22

Private Study of the Writings

. . . Stimulate the students to proceed in their studies privately once they return home. . . .

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *CENTERS OF BAHÁ’Í LEARNING*, p. 8

Establish Bonds of Unity and Friendship

Let them seek but love and faithfulness. . . .

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ*, p. 257

Use of Consultation

Take ye counsel together in all matters, inasmuch as consultation is the lamp of guidance which leadeth the way, and is the bestower of understanding.

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, IN *CONSULTATION: A COMPILATION*, NO. 1, p. 3

Use of Questioning and Peer Teaching

Oral questions must be asked and answers must be given orally. They must discuss with each other in this manner.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *THE BAHÁ’Í WORLD*, VOL. IX, p. 543

Independent Investigation and Using the Power of Reasoning

Therefore, depend upon your own reason and judgment and adhere to the outcome of your own investigation. . . .

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, p. 293

Use of Memorization and Recitation

It is . . . highly praiseworthy to memorize the Tablets, divine verses and sacred traditions.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, IN *BAHÁ’Í EDUCATION*, NO. 77, p. 30

Teach . . . the words that have been sent down from God, that they may recite. . . .

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, IN *BAHÁ’Í EDUCATION*, NO. 23, p. 6

Use of Meditation and Reflection

Meditation is the key for opening the doors of mysteries.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *PARIS TALKS*, PP. 174-75

The source of crafts, sciences and arts is the power of reflection.

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *TABLETS OF BAHÁ’U’LLÁH*, P. 72

Use of Parables and Stories

Divine things are too deep to be expressed by common words. The heavenly teachings are expressed in parables in order to be understood and preserved for ages to come.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, QUOTED IN *‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ IN LONDON*, P. 80

. . . Stories regarding the life of different Prophets together with Their sayings will also be useful to better understand the literature of the Cause. . . .

ON BEHALF OF SHOGLI EFFENDI, *BAHÁ’Í EDUCATION*, NO. 130, P. 53

Use of Music

Music is an important means to the education and development of humanity. . . .

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ’Í WRITINGS ON MUSIC*, P. 8

Use of Drama

The drama is of the utmost importance. It has been a great educational power of the past; it will be so again.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, QUOTED IN *‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ IN LONDON*, P. 93

Employ Creativity and the Arts

Art can better awaken such noble sentiments than cold rationalizing, especially among the masses of people.

SHOGLI EFFENDI, QUOTED IN “IN ITS FULL SPLENDOR,” *BAHÁ’Í NEWS*, NO. 73 (MAY 1973), P. 7

Engage in Science and in the Investigation of the World of Nature

Arts, crafts and sciences uplift the world of being, and are conducive to its exaltation.

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *EPISTLE TO THE SON OF THE WOLF*, P. 26

And whatever time I contemplate the mountains, I am led to discover the ensigns of Thy victory and the standards of Thine omnipotence.

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS*, P. 272

Play and Use of Manipulatives

They should be taught, in play, some letter and words . . . —as is done in certain countries where they fashion letters and words out of sweets...

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ’Í EDUCATION*, NO. 78, P. 30

Use of Travel

If a man should live his entire life in one city, he cannot gain a knowledge of the whole world. To become perfectly informed he must visit other cities, see the mountains and valleys, cross the rivers and traverse the plains. . . .

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, P. 295

Use of Recreation

A wise schoolmaster should send his scholars out to play . . . so that their minds and bodies may be refreshed, and during the hour of the lesson they may learn it better.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, IN “BAHÁ’Í METHODS OF EDUCATION,” *STAR OF THE WEST*, VOL. 9, NO. 8, P. 91

Sample Lesson Plan

LESSON PLANNING TEMPLATE

Strand CENTRAL FIGURES Theme BAHA'U'LLAH
Goal To Develop a deep love for Bahá'u'lláh Topic Loving Acts of Bahá'u'lláh
Spiritual Qualities Relevant to this Topic Caring, Patience, Love.
Ages of learners 6-8 years Number of Learners 8

Key Characteristics and Special Diversities of Learners:

5 girls, 3 boys; Like to read; enjoy working together,
1 has some problems reading.

Time needed to prepare to teach this lesson:

Time needed to actually teach this lesson:

Objectives for this lesson: (Use relevant objectives from the Lesson Planning Guide)

At the end of this lesson the learners will be able to:

Knowledge: (Become Informed)

To know that Bahá'u'lláh loved and cared for all people,
and that He was known by His countrymen as "The Father of the Poor."

Wisdom: (Understand)

To understand the events which demonstrated the loving acts
of Bahá'u'lláh.

Spiritual Perception: (Reflect and Apply)

To discern the meaning of personal love of the
Manifestations for humanity.

Eloquent Speech: (Act/Teach/Serve)

To integrate Bahá'u'lláh's love and care for others
in one's own behavior

Instructional Methods and Learning Tools: (Use the checklist to assure diverse strategies)

Use of stories, Engaging mind and heart, Direct use of
Sacred writings, Employing creativity, Use of reflection.

Materials/Resources needed to teach this lesson:

The Central Figures: Bahá'u'lláh, Vol. One, pp. 27-30;
printed quote, p. 20; markers, chart paper, art supplies.

Procedure for this lesson:

Opening prayers and music:

Have 2 children read prayers (play soft music in background)
(Children asked to prepare the previous week)

Welcome, review of previous lesson and action assignments:

Sing Welcome song. Review memorization assignment.

Motivating the lesson: (How will you engage the interest/curiosity/attention of the students?)

Ask question: What kind of things do we do because of our love for Bahá'u'lláh?

Today we're going to figure that out!

Use sample activities and/or develop suggested activities:

<u>Activities</u>	<u>Materials needed</u>	<u>Time needed</u>
1. Learn about Bahá'u'Kali's acts of loving kindness. (Level 1 - Lesson Planning Guide, p. 17)	Storybook, Central figures: Bahá'u'lláh Vol. One, pp. 27-30	10 min.
2. a. Discuss how we love all out of love for Bahá'u'lláh b. Chart examples given. c. Think of someone in community they love as a result of their love of Bahá'u'lláh. d. Prepare a gift (decorate a quote) for them.	printed quote art supplies wrapping paper markers chart paper	30 min.

Conclusion: (How will you bring the activities in the lesson to an end?)

Ask them to think again about all Bahá'u'lláh's loving acts.

Ask them to quietly say a little prayer thanking Bahá'u'lláh.

Action assignments to be completed before the next class:

1. Memorization.

2. Identify loving actions done by their own parents.

Closing prayers and music:

1. Class sing "how me that I may love thee ..."

2. Ask student to recite a prayer.

Practice Teaching—Feedback and Support

1. Determine the order in which your small groups will demonstrate your lesson plans.
2. Present a 10–15 minute segment of your lesson. You will actually teach this segment to your fellow participants. When in the role of participant, please give your full and courteous attention to each demonstration.
3. Before beginning your presentation, inform the group of key information:
 - What is the stage of maturity (age) of this class?
 - What special interests and needs did you plan for?
 - What topic did you choose?
4. At the end of each demonstration:
 - On chart paper list the Knowledge, Wisdom, Spiritual Perception, Eloquent Speech elements that participants observed within the lesson. Identify the Knowledge, Wisdom, Spiritual Perception, Eloquent Speech elements that address objectives for the chosen topic. Remember that some elements of the learning framework may not be addressed within this lesson and that this 10-15 minute demonstration does not make up the entire lesson. Invite presenters to briefly describe activities that might be included in other lessons of their unit to complete the learning cycle. Allow other participants to contribute ideas.
 - Use index cards or small pieces of paper and the “Sentence Starters for Feedback Notes” to provide encouraging feedback notes to your “teachers.” Please identify a particular excellence demonstrated in each lesson.
5. We will have additional opportunities to practice planning and teaching in the Teacher Development Workshops.

Purpose:

Practice teaching a portion of a children’s class.

Assess skill areas for improvement.

SENTENCE STARTERS FOR FEEDBACK NOTES

Dear _____:

Thank you for sharing your lesson on _____

- You really got my attention when . . .
- This idea came across very clearly because . . .
- I enjoyed the . . .
- At the close of the lesson I . . .
- The activity made me want to . . .

Processing and Self-Assessment

1. Use the “Self-Assessment Tool” below to assess your teaching of the lesson. Identify what you would do the same and what you might do differently next time. Feel free to use the Self-Assessment as an ongoing personal learning tool to continuously refine and improve your lessons.
2. Share your insights about this process as a whole group.

Self-Assessment Tool

Review your objectives and assess the degree to which you judge your lesson and its activities to have met your objectives by answering the following questions:

1. What did you enjoy about teaching this lesson?
2. To what extent did the activities in the lesson match the interests of the learners?
 - Did the learners actively participate? If not, why?
 - Did the learners ask questions to extend their learning? If not, why?
 - Did the learners answer questions with enthusiasm?
 - Did the learners exhibit a sense of pleasure and satisfaction in the results of their work?
 - Did the learners express interest in learning more?
3. To what extent did the activities in this lesson match the capabilities of the learners?
 - Did all learners understand your instruction? If some did not, why?
 - Did all complete their assignments? If some did not, why?
 - Did the learners remain focused on the activities for most of the time? If some were distracted, why do you think that was?
 - Did you feel the level of the lesson was appropriate? Were the tasks too difficult or complex? Or too simple for any individual, or group?
 - What might you do differently next time to ensure all learners enjoyed their learning?
4. If you were to teach this lesson again, in what ways would you revise your plan?

Process the Session:

Play some quiet music. Read your feedback notes, and reflect in your journal on what you learned about the teaching and learning process as a result of your practice, your encouraging feedback notes, and your self-assessment. What next steps can you plan for your own growth in lesson planning, teaching, and giving and receiving feedback?

Read aloud the following quotations of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

The students must show results of their studies in their department and deeds; otherwise they have wasted their lives.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOL. 1, NO. 424, P. 203

Thus shall they be enabled to carry to a successful conclusion whatsoever they undertake.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ*, NO. 25, P. 125

1. Discuss the importance of having an evaluation plan. Note that evaluation methods in a spiritual education curriculum may be different than those used in academic education. Briefly discuss the following question:

- How will teachers, parents, children and spiritual assemblies know that a spiritual education program is successful and that the learners are growing spiritually?

2. In Bahá’í education, spiritual characteristics are valued and appreciated above all else. While knowledge is one of the categories in which objectives are set forth, this knowledge does not reach its fullest expression until it is expressed in deeds. This is the purpose of the Eloquent Speech category of the learning framework.

Effective evaluation has many levels which include: the immediate assignment, the overall concepts being taught, the spiritual growth of each student, how a student’s deeds or behavior in the community and family reflect the knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual perception learned in classes and at home. Clearly, consultation between parents and teachers is a significant tool.

- In what ways can successful achievement of the Eloquent Speech Objectives function as an evaluation tool?

3. Note the relationship between learning objectives and evaluation methods: strategies for evaluation must reflect the objectives. Review the learning objectives of Module Three in this teacher training course (pp. 89–90) and briefly discuss:

- How might we evaluate the achievement of the objectives for this module of the teacher training program?
- List responses on chart paper or chalkboard.

4. Review the lessons and activities that you have developed during this training.

- How could you evaluate the success of these lessons and activities?

Please note that the subject of evaluation is covered in more detail in the Teacher Development Workshops for continuing education, available from the National Children’s Education and Research Center.

Purpose:

Realize how the spiritual growth of the teacher affects the diagnostic and teaching process.

Use curriculum concepts and methods to diagnose learners’ and communities’ needs.

Become aware of the importance of evaluating the effectiveness of spiritual education activities.

Discern the spiritual nature of evaluating Bahá’í education.

Systematic Use of the Scope and Sequence

A Continuum of Learning

Purpose:

To know the meaning of a continuum.

To understand applications for the continuum.

1. Read and consider the following definition:

Continuum—a sequence of things in regular order

2. Examine the booklets provided by your facilitator, *Teacher's Spiritual Education Plan* and *Student's Spiritual Education Record*. Note that the Scope and Sequence table is reproduced in these documents, and explore the layout and progression of the Continuum in the booklets.

Local Spiritual Assemblies, School Education Committees, or teams of teachers may consultatively plan a school curriculum using the Scope and Sequence and these documents. Briefly discuss:

- How might these documents be used in your community, taking into consideration curriculum plans already in place?

Practice Using the Spiritual Education Plan booklets

The following activity will assist you to become familiar with the use of the booklets in the context of the Scope and Sequence.

1. Think of the classes you are currently teaching or have recently taught.
2. Begin to fill out the *Teacher Spiritual Education Plan* using the data from your classes. You need not remember every detail about every student, but try to be as detailed as possible.
3. If you are not actively teaching at this time, fill out your *Teacher Spiritual Education Plan*, using fictional or potential information.
4. After about 10 minutes, turn to the person next to you and share your plans with each other, making certain that any participant who is **not** actively teaching is paired with someone who is.
5. Next, individually think of one child that you are teaching or have recently taught, and fill out the *Student's Spiritual Education Record* with that child in mind, as completely as possible. Again pair and share.
6. Allow time for clarifying questions about the use of the Spiritual Education Plan and Record booklets. We revisit these booklets in a Teacher Development Workshop.

Process the Activity

How do the Scope and Sequence and Continuum assist community educators to be more systematic? What might be their values as children move from one community to another?

How might you personally apply the Scope and Sequence and Continuum in your teaching endeavors?

Making Use of Available Resources

1. Discuss in your large group what you would like or need in the form of support, follow-up training, networking, and resources.
 - Make dates with each other to get together for support and sharing ideas.
 - Discuss the possibility of a regional forum, including institute boards or summer school committee members, for sharing lesson plans, educational materials, etc.
 - When might you begin your Teacher Development Workshops on such topics as children's classes open to all, classroom management, planning lessons, storytelling, and other learning tools?
2. Share with each other the titles of books you have found helpful in your service as a teacher.
3. If you are familiar with any of the following Core Curriculum resources, please share your knowledge with the other participants.
 - Core Curriculum Alignment, available on the National Bahá'í Education website, www.education.usbnc.org.
 - *Brilliant Star* Magazine articles and activities are cross-referenced with the Core Curriculum Themes and Topics. A current Topical Index is available at the National Bahá'í Education website, www.education.usbnc.org. Subscriptions for *Brilliant Star* and other Bahá'í magazines are available through Bahá'í Subscriber Services, 1-800-999-9019.
 - Core Curriculum E-mail Listserve, a forum for sharing of ideas and activities. Instructions for joining this email list are on the following page.
 - Information about other Core Curriculum training and education programs and downloadable materials is available at www.louhelen.org/ncerc.
 - A lesson plan bank is being developed on the National Bahá'í Education website, www.education.usbnc.org. We encourage you to submit your lesson plans for inclusion in this website.

Purpose:

Become resourceful and creative in making use of available resources, building a personal library, and in creating educational activities to implement the curriculum.

Begin the development of local and regional networks to encourage ideas, materials, and support among teachers of children.

The Core Curriculum E-mail Listserve

The purpose of Core Curriculum Converse is to provide Core Curriculum Trainers throughout the world the opportunity to enlarge their vision, be sources of encouragement to other trainers, and share their core curriculum experiences. Additionally it can be used to facilitate communication to and from the National Education Task Force and between Core Curriculum Trainers, including news, information, announcements, comments, suggestions and developments regarding Core Curriculum.

To subscribe or unsubscribe:

1. **Using your email program**, create a new email message addressed to:

`core-teachers-request@bccca.org`

2. Indicate in your subject line your Core Curriculum program.

`CCTT`

(which stands for Core Curriculum Teacher Trainer)

3. **Provide the following information:**

`email`

`last name, first name`

`Bahá'í ID No. (if applicable)`

`city, state or province`

`country`

That's it! BCCA (Bahá'í Computer and Communications Association) will send you a welcome message with easy directions to start "talking."

To post messages once you have subscribed, you will use the following email address:

`core-teachers@bccca.org`

Your message will then go to everyone who has subscribed to that list.

We look forward to a rich exchange, in the warm and supportive environment of this "family."

Summary of Module 3: Building Lessons, Taking Flight

1. Once again briefly review the learning objectives for Module Three. Celebrate the successful completion of Module Three by reading the following passages from Ridván 157 B.E. message from the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World:

Even though children's activities have been a part of past Plans, these have fallen short of the need. Spiritual education of children and junior youth are of paramount importance to the further progress of the community. It is therefore imperative that this deficiency be remedied. Institutes must be certain to include in their programmes the training of teachers of children's classes, who can make their services available to local communities. But although providing spiritual and academic education for children is essential, this represents only a part of what must go into developing their characters and shaping their personalities. The necessity exists, too, for individuals and the institutions at all levels, which is to say the community as a whole, to show a proper attitude towards children and to take a general interest in their welfare. Such an attitude should be far removed from that of a rapidly declining order.

Children are the most precious treasure a community can possess, for in them are the promise and guarantee of the future. They bear the seeds of the character of future society which is largely shaped by what the adults constituting the community do or fail to do with respect to children. They are a trust no community can neglect with impunity. An all-embracing love of children, the manner of treating them, the quality of the attention shown them, the spirit of adult behaviour toward them—these are all among the vital aspects of the requisite attitude. Love demands discipline, the courage to accustom children to hardship, not to indulge their whims or leave them entirely to their own devices. An atmosphere needs to be maintained in which children feel that they belong to the community and share in its purpose. They must lovingly but insistently be guided to live up to Bahá'í standards, to study and teach the Cause in ways that are suited to their circumstances.

Among the young ones in the community are those known as junior youth, who fall between the ages of, say, 12 and 15. They represent a special group with special needs as they are somewhat in between childhood and youth when many changes are occurring within them. Creative attention must be devoted to involving them in programmes of activity that will engage their interests, mold their capacities for teaching and service, and involve them in social interaction with older youth. The employment of the arts in various forms can be of great value in such activity.

Purpose:

To reflect on what has been learned in Module Three and to apply this learning to implementing the systematic use of the Core Curriculum.

Your completion of this training and your commitment to the spiritual education of children and junior youth represents a direct response to the request of the Universal House of Justice.

2. As a group, brainstorm a list of complementary elements of the Core Curriculum for children and junior youth. Record your list on chart paper. Some examples include:

<u>Process</u>	and	<u>Content</u>
<u>Systematic</u>	and	<u>Flexible</u>
<u>Training of teachers</u>	and	<u>Spiritual education of children</u>

How many more complementary elements can you list?

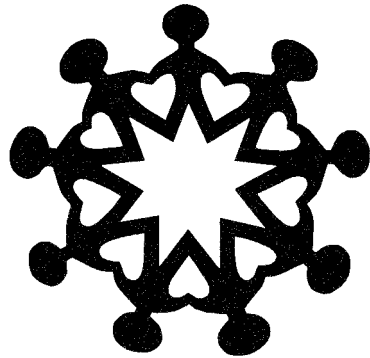
3. As we know, the two wings of a bird can serve as a metaphor for the power of complementary elements working together. In a bird, the power of complementarity produces flight. In our service, complementarity also allows us to soar. Read the following quotation as you consider the power of flight:

In this divine garden, thousands of fresh and verdant trees have raised their tops to the Supreme Apex and on every tree there are thousands of nests. Therefore, for thee, who art a bird of high flight, a nest has been prepared. Then soar, that thou mayest attain to that nest. This is a divine nest in the Heavenly Kingdom. Every bird that attained to this nest learned a melody and also taught the birds of the meadows the divine harmony which moves and enraptures the East and the West. Do thou therefore strive with all thy heart and soul that thou mayest abide in this nest and thrive till eternity.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *JAPAN WILL TURN ABLAZE*, p. 40

4. Consider preparing a symbolic representation of your power of flight, as suggested by your facilitator, then read the quotation again.

Congratulations on your completion of Module Three of the Core Curriculum Training for Teachers of Children and Junior Youth!



**Core Curriculum for
Spiritual Education
and Training**

1. Module Four Themes and Objectives
2. Assisting Children to Fulfill their Destiny before God
3. The Child-Development Centered Community
Major Features of the Child Development
4. Roles and Responsibilities Within the Community
5. Children's Classes Open to All
6. From Here to There: Vision to Reality
7. Appreciating and Celebrating Diversity in the Classroom and Community
8. Summary of Module Four: Mining the Gems
9. Concluding Your Teacher Training

Training for Teachers of Children and Junior Youth

Module Four

The Child-Development Centered Community

Introduction to Module Four

Devotions

Begin this module with heartfelt prayers for children, memorized verses, and music either sung or recorded.

Module Three Reflections

In your group, briefly discuss any reflections on learnings from Module Three. Address any questions, concerns, or insights gained since your last meeting together.

Introduce Module Four—The Child-Development Centered Community

In your group read aloud the Module Four themes and objectives found on the following pages.

Children and Youth as Teachers of the Cause

Yea, certain persons shall in this divine dispensation produce heavenly children and such children shall promulgate the teachings of the Beauty of Abhá and serve His great Cause. Through a heavenly power and spiritual confirmation they shall be enabled to promote the Word of God and to diffuse the fragrances of God.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, TABLETS OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, VOL. 3, P. 647

Children and Youth as Servants of Humanity

Utilize every means to make this School a garden of the All-Merciful, from which the lights of learning will cast their beams, and wherein the children, whether Bahá’í or other, will be educated to such a degree as to become God’s gifts to man, and the pride of the human race.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS, VOL. 1, P. 277

Module Four Learning Objectives

KNOWLEDGE

- Become familiar with sacred texts and letters from the Universal House of Justice regarding the role of children and youth in the Bahá'í community at this time.

WISDOM

- Understand the role of Bahá'í community in assisting children and youth to fulfill their divine destiny.

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION

- Understand the connection between the strength, welfare, and growth of the community and the education of children and youth.
- Discern the difference between child indulgence and child development.
- Distinguish the unique role and responsibilities of Spiritual Assemblies, parents, teachers, and others in the Bahá'í community for the spiritual development of children and youth.
- Perceive and appreciate the diversity that exists within our homes, classrooms, and communities.

ELOQUENT SPEECH

- Identify ways that the community can be used and developed as a laboratory beyond children's classes.
- Learn how to consult and work with Spiritual Assemblies, communities, and parents in the development of children and youth as teachers of the Cause and servants of humanity.
- Incorporate an appreciation of diversity into all activities.
- Experience how instructional methods and learning tools suggested in the sacred texts can be used to understand the spiritual transformation process.

Assisting Children to Fulfill Their Destiny before God

1. Organize yourselves into small groups and read together the extracts on the following pages from the writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, and the Universal House of Justice.
2. Regarding teaching plans, Shoghi Effendi writes: “A systematic, carefully conceived, and well-established plan should be devised, rigorously pursued and continuously extended,” (*MESSAGES TO AMERICA*, p. 7).

In your small groups, consult on the following questions, using chart paper and art supplies to reflect the key ideas of your consultation:

- How can we devise “systematic, carefully conceived and well established plans” to assist the children of the world to fulfill their destiny before God?
 - . . . as proclaimers of the Faith
 - . . . as instruments of healing
 - . . . as a door to entry by troops
 - . . . as a fruitful source of teachers
 - Think of your own experiences either from your own childhood or from the lives of children or junior youth you know personally: What is an example of a child or junior youth arising as a powerful teacher of the Cause or as a servant to humanity? Share your examples with each other.
3. Reconvene to share the results of your consultation.

ASSISTING CHILDREN TO FULFILL THEIR DESTINY BEFORE GOD

1 Yea, certain persons shall in this divine dispensation produce heavenly children and such children shall promulgate the teachings of the Beauty of Abhá and serve His great Cause. Through a heavenly power and spiritual confirmation they shall be enabled to promote the Word of God and to diffuse the fragrances of God. These children are neither Oriental nor Occidental, neither Asiatic nor American, neither European nor African, but they are of the Kingdom; their native home is heaven and their resort is the Kingdom of Abhá. This is but truth and there is naught after truth save superstitions (or fancy). May all humanity welcome with open arms the children of the Kingdom!

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *TABLETS OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ*, VOL. 3, PP. 647-48

2 How many a child, though young in years, is yet mature and sound in judgment! How many an aged person is ignorant and confused! For growth and development depend on one’s powers of intellect and reason, not on one’s age or length of days.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ*, NO. 121, P. 142

3 Wherefore, O ye illumined youth, strive by night and by day to unravel the mysteries of the mind and spirit, and to grasp the secrets of the Day of God. Inform yourselves of the evidences that the Most Great Name hath dawned. Open your lips in praise. Adduce convincing arguments and proofs. Lead those who thirst to the fountain of life; grant ye true health to the ailing. Be ye apprentices of God, be ye physicians directed by God, and heal ye the sick among humankind. Bring those who have been excluded into the circle of intimate friends. Make the despairing to be filled with hope. Waken them that slumber; make the heedless mindful. Such are the fruits of this earthly life. Such is the station of resplendent glory.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ’Í EDUCATION*, NO. 97, P. 41

4 Utilize every means to make this School a garden of the All-Merciful, from which the lights of learning will cast their beams, and wherein the children, whether Bahá’í or other, will be educated to such a degree as to become God’s gifts to man, and the pride of the human race.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ’Í EDUCATION*, NO. 71, P. 28

5 I supplicate God that thou mayest become a kind parent to orphaned children, quickening them with the fragrances of the Holy Spirit, so that they will attain the age of maturity as true servants of the world of humanity and as bright candles in the assemblage of mankind.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ*, NO. 112, P. 138

6 Just because you are children does not mean you cannot serve the Faith, and teach it, by your example. . . .

ON BEHALF OF SHOOGHI EFFENDI, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, p. 71

7 Our Faith is just as much for children as for older people, and it rejoices his heart when he sees both working together to bring this great Message of good to all mankind.

ON BEHALF OF SHOOGHI EFFENDI, *FAMILY LIFE* (INDIA) p. 42, (CANADA) p. 23

8 . . . The flourishing of the community, especially at the local level, demands a significant enhancement in patterns of behaviour: those patterns by which the collective expression of the virtues of the individual members and the functioning of the Spiritual Assembly are manifest in the unity and fellowship of the community and the dynamism of its activity and growth. This calls for the integration of the component elements—adults, youth and children—in the spiritual, social, educational and administrative activities; and their engagement in local plans of teaching and development.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, RIDVÁN 153 B.E., 1996

9 Children are the most precious treasure a community can possess, for in them are the promise and guarantee of the future. They bear the seeds of the character of future society which is largely shaped by what the adults constituting the community do or fail to do with respect to children. They are a trust no community can neglect with impunity. An all-embracing love of children, the manner of treating them, the quality of the attention shown them, the spirit of adult behaviour toward them—these are all among the vital aspects of the requisite attitude. Love demands discipline, the courage to accustom children to hardship, not to indulge their whims or leave them entirely to their own devices. An atmosphere needs to be maintained in which children feel that they belong to the community and share in its purpose. They must lovingly but insistently be guided to live up to Bahá'í standards, to study and teach the Cause in ways that are suited to their circumstances.

Among the young ones in the community are those known as junior youth, who fall between the ages of, say, 12 and 15. They represent a special group with special needs as they are somewhat in between childhood and youth when many changes are occurring within them. Creative attention must be devoted to involving them in programmes of activity that will engage their interests, mold their capacities for teaching and service, and involve them in social interaction with older youth. The employment of the arts in various forms can be of great value in such activity.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, RIDVÁN 157 B.E., 2000

Banners Proclaiming the Children of the Kingdom

Optional Activity

1. Following consultation on these quotations, rejoin your small groups from the previous activity and share your vision of the destiny, and of the tasks facing the children and youth of the world at this moment, through the creation of a banner.

Consider incorporating key phrases from the extracts, such as “the children of the Kingdom” or “apprentices of God” in your banners.

2. Parade your completed banners through the building, with music and singing of songs celebrating the children in your community.
3. You may also consider presenting these banners at a community gathering, cluster reflection meeting, or local Bahá'í school.

Process the Activity

How did the creation of a banner help cement and express the group's reaction to these quotations?

How might this activity be a useful exercise with children and youth?

The Child-Development Centered Community

These sacred writings and authoritative texts may be summarized by the phrase, “a child-development centered community.”

1. Discuss Figure 1 below as a visual metaphor of the roles and responsibilities in Bahá’í education.

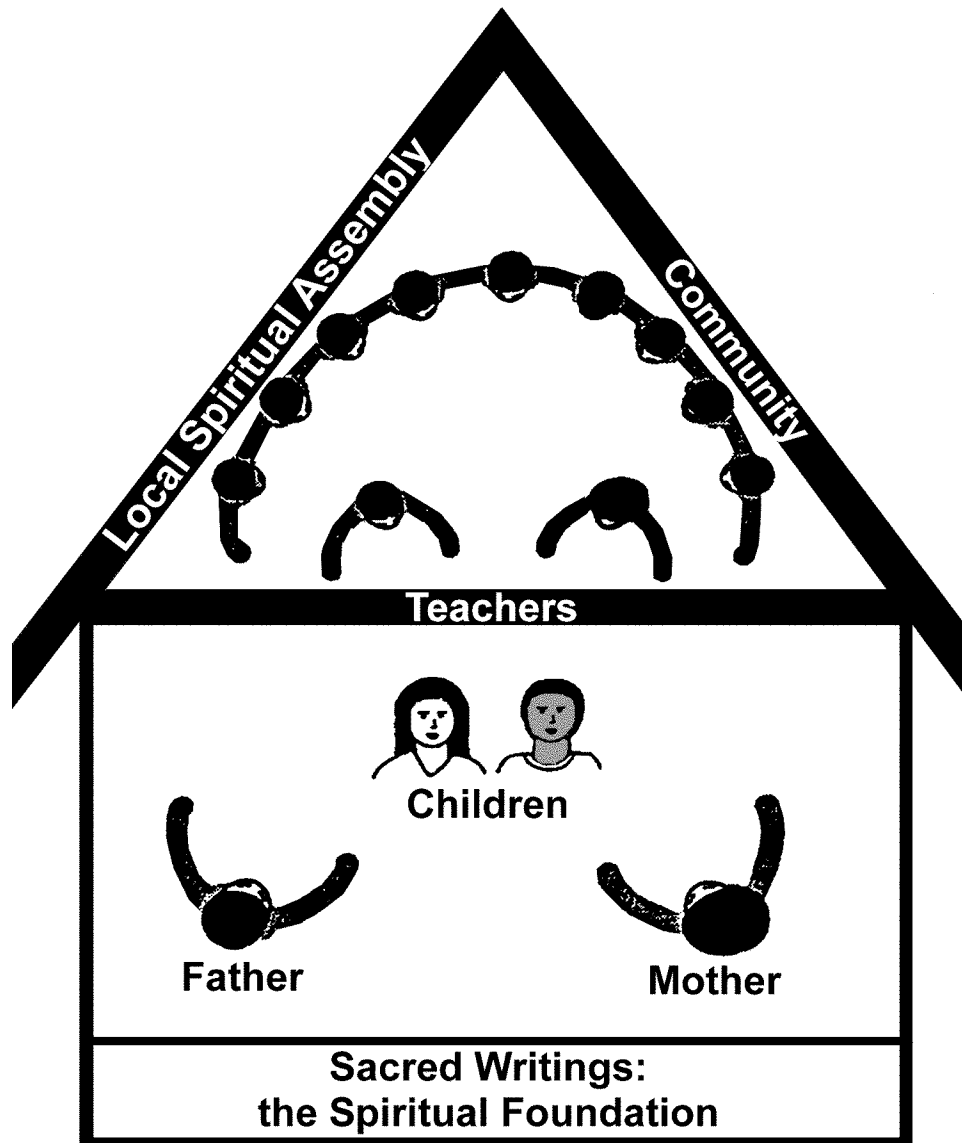


Figure 1:
Roles and Responsibilities in Bahá’í Education: The Infrastructure

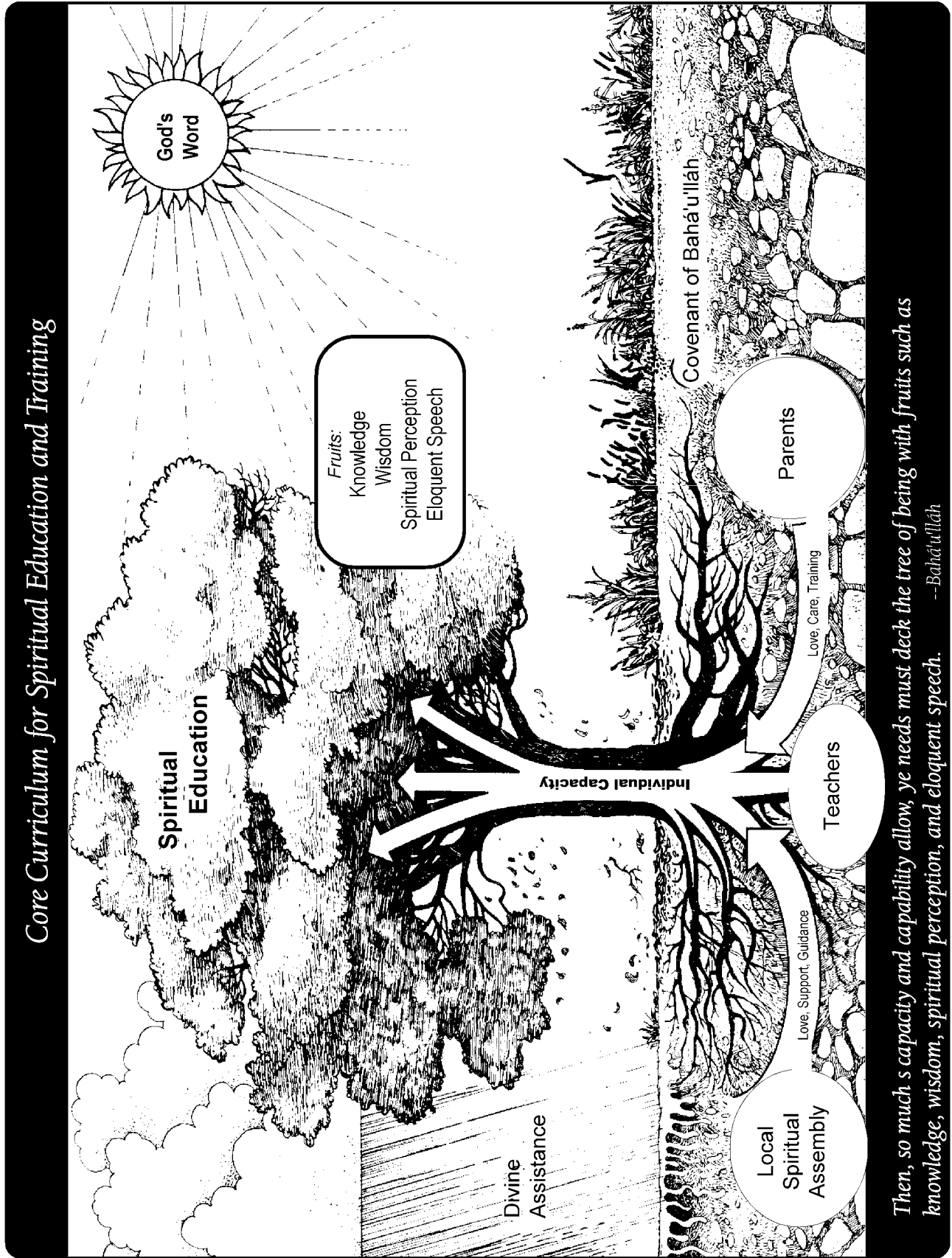
2. Briefly compare with Figure 2 on the following page as another way of visualizing roles and responsibilities in the community.

Purpose:

Present the concept of the Child Development Centered Community as a natural outgrowth of concepts described in the Bahá’í writings.

Discern the difference between child indulgence and child development.

Figure 2



MAJOR FEATURES OF THE CHILD-DEVELOPMENT CENTERED COMMUNITY

as elicited from the Bahá'í sacred writings and letters of the Universal House of Justice



- The main goal of the spiritual education curriculum is the development of spiritually transformed children who, in turn, help to transform the community. Spiritual education in the child-development centered community results in children developing as loving servants of Bahá'u'lláh, who fulfill their destiny as teachers of the Cause, servants of humanity, and responsible contributors in marriage and parenthood.
- Vital elements of community growth and development include renewing the Feast and placing the development of children and youth at the center of community activities.
- The roles and relationships within each community are examined through consultation and renewed in this new age. This is particularly true for parents, teachers, and Assemblies in relationship to children and youth.
- The spiritual development of children and youth becomes a central focus of community life, and is routinely considered in plans, consultation, resource allocation, and organized activities.
- Parents are encouraged, supported, and trained as important members of the community, so that they are empowered to carry on the important task of rearing children. Parent training is an important component of this process.
- The teaching of children and youth is elevated to a station that is commensurate with the vital and sensitive role that it will become. Teachers are appointed by the Assembly or group to carry out the responsibility of Bahá'í classes. They play a critical role in the spiritual education of children and junior youth. This role necessitates a new look at the Bahá'í sacred writings to identify the competencies and criteria for training teachers.
- The relationship between parents and teachers is carefully considered and developed through consultation. It is a collaborative relationship that carries on an integrated and harmonious approach to the education and nurturing of the children and youth. The teachers become mentors, catalysts, and facilitators for the dynamic relationships among parents, children, youth, and community. They also become consultants to Spiritual Assemblies, parents, and the community regarding the education of children and youth and the achievement of spiritual education goals.
- The child-development centered community draws upon examples and models within the entire Bahá'í community where members operate as extended family. These relationships contribute positively to the establishment of community life and fellowship. Many of these relationships become catalysts for development of deepened Bahá'ís engaged in significant service to the community as a whole.

1. Introduce the community web activity by reading the following quotation:

Liken the world of existence to the temple of man. All the limbs and organs of the human body assist one another; therefore life continues. When, in this wonderful organism, there is disconnection, life is changed to death and the parts of the body disintegrate. Likewise, among the parts of existence there is a wonderful connection and interchange of forces, which is the cause of the life of the world and the continuation of these countless phenomena. When one considers the living beings and the growing plants, he realizes that the animals and man sustain life by inhaling the emanations from the vegetable world, and this . . . element is called oxygen. The vegetable kingdom also draws life from the living creatures in the substance called carbon.

. . . From this illustration one can see the base of life is this material aid and helpfulness, and the cause of destruction and non-existence would be the interruption of this material assistance. The more the world aspires to civilization the more this most important matter of cooperation becomes manifest. Therefore in the world of humanity one sees this matter of helpfulness attain to a high degree of efficiency; so much so that the continuance of humanity entirely depends upon this interrelation.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *DIVINE ART OF LIVING*, CHAPTER 14, PP. 107-08

Purpose:

Understand the connection between the strength, welfare, and growth of the community and the education of children.

Distinguish the unique role and responsibilities of Spiritual Assemblies, parents, teachers, and others in the Bahá’í community in the spiritual development of children and youth.

2. Enjoy playing **Community Web**, guided by your facilitator.
3. Note what happens as the game continues.
4. At the end of the game, discuss the implications of our roles and responsibilities and the effect of our behavior on the growth and development of the children, youth, and the community.
 - How do these roles interconnect to assist the children and youth in fulfilling their destinies?
 - What are the implications of these interconnections for the community’s welfare and growth?
 - How is the community strengthened by the participation of all its members in the spiritual education of children and youth?

Process the Activity

What are some other possible uses of this “webbing” activity? Discuss the use of webs to understand the interdependent relationships among other phenomena.

Construct a Model of the Child-Development Centered Community

Optional Activity

Purpose:

Distinguish the unique role and responsibilities of Spiritual Assemblies, parents, teachers, and others in the Bahá'í community in the spiritual development of children and youth.

1. Read as a group the following quotation:

With regard to your activities in connection with the training and education of Bahá'í children; needless to tell you what a vital importance the Guardian attaches to such activities, on which so much of the strength, welfare and growth of the Community must necessarily depend. What a more sacred privilege, and also what a weightier responsibility than the task of rearing up the new generation of believers, and of inculcating into their youthful and receptive minds the principles and teachings of the Cause, and of thus preparing them to fully assume and properly discharge the weighty responsibilities and obligations of their future life in the Bahá'í Community.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *COMPILATION ON BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, No. 120, p. 49

2. Break into small groups and build a model out of tinker toys, toothpicks, clay, pipe cleaners, or some other construction method to illustrate how a community can assist the children and youth to fulfill their divine calling. Incorporate each of the identified roles from the Community Web game into your model.
3. Share your group's model with the other groups.

Process the Activity

How does this activity help us understand the interconnectedness of the various roles in the Bahá'í community?

1. Read the following statement from the Ridván 2002 message from the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the world:

Where a training institute is well established and constantly functioning, three core activities—study circles, devotional meetings, and children's classes—have multiplied with relative ease. Indeed, the increasing participation of seekers in these activities, at the invitation of their Bahá'í friends, has lent a new dimension to their purposes, consequently effecting new enrolments. Here, surely, is a direction of great promise for the teaching work. These core activities, which at the outset were devised principally to benefit the believers themselves, are naturally becoming portals for entry by troops. By combining study circles, devotional meetings and children's classes within the framework of clusters, a model of coherence in lines of action has been put in place and is already producing welcome results. Worldwide application of this model, we feel confident, holds immense possibilities for the progress of the Cause in years ahead.

Purpose:

Understand ways to plan a curriculum sequence to balance systematization with open inclusion of all children

2. In light of this encouragement of the Universal House of Justice for us to organize Bahá'í children's classes open to all children, let's explore this important line of action. Keeping in mind that the vast majority of Bahá'í children's classes have always been open to all, please share examples from your own experiences with seekers in the children's classes you teach.
3. Discuss:
 - How many of us have children of non-Bahá'í backgrounds in our classrooms?
 - How are they invited?
 - How do we make them welcome?
 - Are there simple ways that we can build inclusion so that they feel welcome, even if we don't know ahead of time that they are coming?
 - Do we understand the reasons that they come?
 - Could we schedule the time and place of our Bahá'í classes to make them more accommodating?
 - What other factors will assist us to create a welcoming and open class?
 - Please share an example of a positive contribution that a non-Bahá'í child has made in your classes.

4. In the whole group, read aloud the letter on p. 143, written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a local Spiritual Assembly, 25 September 2001. Highlight key points as you read.

Discuss the following questions:

- Why is it important for Bahá'í classes that are open to all to address the complete spiritual education of Bahá'ís?
 - What might be the relationship between your Bahá'í classes open to all and a Bahá'í-inspired development project that addresses the needs of children in your community?
5. In some countries, campaigns to invite large numbers of new children into Bahá'í classes open to all are timed to coincide with topics especially appealing to seekers. **Refer to the Scope and Sequence in Module 3, pp. 96-97, and identify a possible sequence of strands, themes, and topics** to assure that the spiritual education classes “address the complete spiritual education of the Bahá'ís” (9/2001) while also fostering the “increasing participation of seekers” (4/2002). Discuss:
 - What community resources or networking possibilities available to you could assist you to increasingly open your Bahá'í classes to seekers? What obstacles might you face in this important service? How could you overcome these obstacles?
 6. After allowing time to work, share your group's sequences and plans with the whole group. Identify common and diverse elements in these plans.
 7. Note that this activity represents the response of the United States National Bahá'í Education Task Force to the suggestions of the Universal House of Justice (9/2001) that a national committee consult on promising approaches to increasing open Bahá'í children's classes to the community at large. We return to this topic in a Teacher Development Workshop.

Process the Activity

How might these plans evolve over time? What is the advantage of carefully planning for increasing numbers of seekers in our Bahá'í children's classes?

CLARIFICATION ABOUT CHILDREN'S CLASSES

The National Spiritual Assembly has received permission to publish the following letter dated 25 September 2001 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a Spiritual Assembly. This guidance will be especially helpful to efforts at the cluster level to arrange a growing number of Bahá'í children's classes open to all the residents of the locality. These classes, together with study circles and devotional gatherings, comprise three core activities to be pursued during the Five Year Plan.

From the Department of the Secretariat of the Universal House of Justice to a Local Spiritual Assembly, 25 September 2001:

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The Universal House of Justice received your email message dated 30 July 2001 seeking clarification regarding children's classes which include non-Bahá'í children.

It is possible, of course, to create a programme for children which is inspired by the Bahá'í teachings and conveys such topics as moral education, comparative religion, peace, concern for the environment, service to humanity, or world citizenship. Such programmes might also convey practical subjects such as literacy, academic tutoring, or vocational training.

In its messaged dated 9 January 2001, however, the House of Justice refers specifically to Bahá'í children's classes as also being open to non-Bahá'í children. In the case of these classes, which are intended to address the complete spiritual education of Bahá'ís, it would not be possible to eliminate Bahá'í religious teachings, and topics such as Bahá'í history, Bahá'í laws, and the Covenant would be an integral part of these classes.

While Bahá'í religious teachings are part of the programme of child education in Bahá'í classes, the design of the programme, particularly the sequencing of content, may make it more attractive to non-Bahá'ís. For example, . . . emphasis is placed initially on character development, and only later are specific aspects related to the life of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb introduced. . . . Thus a non-Bahá'í can feel welcome to participate and is not overwhelmed by new, purely religious teachings. Then, if attracted by the principles and general spiritual teachings, the non-Bahá'ís would not hesitate to engage in the full programme; alternatively, they are free to withdraw or not participate in some segments.

Of course, Bahá'ís would always be clear about the nature of the curriculum when describing it to their friends and acquaintances. In some areas, many of the non-Bahá'í parents may be happy to have their children participate in a full programme of Bahá'í child education; in others, however, a national community may find it advantageous to complement its Bahá'í children's classes with a Bahá'í inspired programme for children because it results in attracting larger numbers.

Clearly, one set of instructions about how to structure a programme, or an integrated combination of programmes, would not meet the needs of all communities. Your National Institute and/or Child Education Committee will need to consult on the specific conditions and interests in the general population and the Bahá'í community, select the most promising alternative, and then modify and improve the approach over time based on your practical experience.

Reprinted from *Bahá'í Canada* – September, 2002

Exploring and Applying Roles and Responsibilities

Jigsaw Activity

Purpose:

Distinguish the unique role and responsibilities of Spiritual Assemblies, parents, teachers, and others in the community in the spiritual development of children and youth.

Learn how to consult and work with Spiritual Assemblies, communities, and parents in the development of children and youth as teachers of the Cause and servants of humanity.

In this activity we explore the various roles within the Bahá'í community and use our understanding to solve some realistic problems concerning the children and junior youth in the community. There are two steps to this process.

Step 1: Exploring and Identifying Roles and Responsibilities

1. Organize your group into six small teams. Each team represents one of the following roles:
 - Spiritual Assembly members
 - Assistants to Auxiliary Board members
 - Members of the community
 - Teachers of children and youth
 - Parents
 - Children and youth
2. Study the quotations on Roles and Responsibilities from Section E (pp. 173–86) of *Foundations for a Spiritual Education* that pertain to your group. Define your responsibilities within this particular role.
3. Reconvene as a whole group.

Step 2: Consultative Problem Solving

4. Create new consultative groups consisting of representatives from each of the previous six groups. Some sample challenges are described on the following page. Assign each group a different situation to address through consultation. In the consultations, individuals remain in the role they previously studied. Each group should have a chairperson and a recorder.
5. Regroup and share the results of your consultations with each other. Briefly discuss:
 - How was your consultation influenced by a deeper understanding of the roles and responsibilities of different community members?
 - If your community does not yet have a local Spiritual Assembly, how can other community members help to compensate for that lack?

Process the Activity

How can role-playing assist our understanding of roles and responsibilities?

What is the value of role-playing as a learning tool?

SITUATIONS TO RESOLVE THROUGH CONSULTATION

- Situation No. 1** Mass teaching has been underway during the past six months among the Latino community, resulting in a flood of new Bahá'í children, and many seekers, who speak more Spanish than English, and who have little knowledge but much enthusiasm for their children's classes. These new children outnumber the children of deepened Bahá'ís in this community. How can you organize a spiritual education program to serve all of the children in your vibrant, growing community?
- Situation No. 2** Your cluster includes several towns but no local Spiritual Assembly. A total of ten Bahá'í children, ages 5–14, currently reside in your cluster. These children are spread throughout the cluster. How can you organize children's classes to provide spiritual education for your Bahá'í children while also promoting the growth of your cluster?
- Situation No. 3** In your community several parents are complaining that their children are more advanced than others and are not having enough challenge in the Bahá'í children's classes. All of the 10 children, ages 4–13, in this community are taught by one teacher. What can be done to provide an effective Bahá'í children's program in this community?
- Situation No. 4** Your community has a well-established weekly Bahá'í school serving over 50 children, with trained teachers and carefully planned lessons. Several community members say that they're afraid that children who are not from Bahá'í families wouldn't understand the classes or behave properly. Some of the parents and teachers also say that they don't know anyone to invite. How can these Bahá'í classes be made open to all?
- Situation No. 5** In a large community, where mass teaching took place several years ago, several pioneer families have moved to develop and strengthen the Spiritual Assembly. The children of the pioneers are finding it difficult to relate to the children their ages in the children's classes because of their long experience in the Faith and many travels. The children of local believers feel intimidated by them and consider them arrogant and foreign. Each group tends to associate with its own members at community events, adding to the feelings of estrangement between them. The Local Spiritual Assembly has called a meeting of representatives to construct an adequate children's program and to help resolve the problem, which seems to get worse as the children become adolescents.

From Here to There: Vision to Reality

Purpose:

Explore how best to take this new concept back to their communities.

This cooperative game requires working together (interdependence) rather than competition (independence) to be successful.

1. Working in pairs, stand back to back and lock arms at the elbows. Try squatting together and then standing up without unlocking your arms.
2. After enjoying the game, briefly discuss the cooperative principles involved. How does cooperation promote success?
3. Then, consult in your large group about the creative tension between the vision of a child-development centered community and what may be the actual conditions that exist in many communities at the present time. List comments on chart paper.
 - How can we be sensitive to the varying levels of receptivity and ability to embrace this new way of viewing the children and youth?
 - How can we present these concepts in a loving, consultative way in our communities?
 - Share success stories and provide encouraging feedback to your fellow participants regarding concerns and issues.
4. Take a few minutes for personal reflection and journal time on this topic:
 - Reflect on your own Bahá'í community: In what ways does it already manifest the attributes of a child development centered community? Where is there room for growth towards this ideal, and what steps can you take to initiate or assist with this process?

Process the Activity

How did using the cooperative game to introduce this question affect the quality of your consultation?

Appreciating and Celebrating Diversity in the Classroom and the Community

Read the following quotations to guide your discussion on the importance of unity in diversity in your classes and in your community.

Consider the flowers of a garden: Though differing in kind, color, form and shape, yet inasmuch as they are refreshed by the waters of one spring, revived by the breath of one wind, invigorated by the rays of one sun, this diversity increaseth their charm, and addeth unto their beauty. Thus when that unifying force, the penetrating influence of the Word of God, taketh effect, the difference of customs, manners, habits, ideas, opinions and dispositions embellisheth the world of humanity . . . difference reinforceth harmony, diversity strengtheneth love, and multiplicity is the greatest factor for coordination.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ*,
REV. ED. 1982, NO. 225, P. 291

O ye beloved of the Lord! This day is the day of union, the day of the ingathering of all mankind. “Verily God loveth those who, as though they were a solid wall, do battle for His Cause in serried lines!” [Qur’án] Note that He saith “in serried lines”—meaning crowded and pressed together, one locked to the next, each supporting his fellows. . .

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ*,
REV. ED. 1982, NO. 207, P. 260

Focus questions for consultation:

The following questions are designed to open up these topics for consultation. Reflect on their implications and begin to set goals and develop resources to more fully appreciate diversity in the classroom.

- What kinds of diversity are found in a class of children or a community?
- How can teachers make use of diversity to enhance learning and spiritual growth?
- How can instruction be adjusted to provide for this diversity?
- How can multi-age activities assist us to accommodate a variety of skill levels?
- How does our understanding of diverse roles and responsibilities and children assist us to celebrate the unified diversity of children in our classes and our communities?

We return to this far-reaching topic in a Teacher Development Workshop.

Purpose:

Incorporate an appreciation of diversity into all activities. Perceive and appreciate the diversity that exists within our homes, classrooms and communities.

Summary of Module Four: Mining the Gems

Purpose:

Develop appreciation of the diversity existing within our communities and classrooms.

1. Organize yourselves into groups with 4–6 people, so that each group is as diverse as possible. Acknowledge the types of diversity in each group before continuing.
2. Focus your attention on the “mountain” created by your facilitator. Consider that the mountain may be compared to our own selves and the children we teach without the benefit of a spiritual education. Share this quote of Bahá’u’lláh:

Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures.

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ’U’LLÁH*, CXXII, p. 260

3. You are now going to “mine” some of the “gems” within each member of your group. Consider the members of your group, one at a time, identifying characteristics, virtues, talents, experiences, etc. which make the person a unique, special individual. Record and then share your reflections as suggested by your facilitator.

Process the Activity

How did this activity affect your appreciation of yourself and of others?

How might you use this activity with children, youth, or your Bahá’í community?

Concluding the Training

Using an activity led by your facilitator, take time to reflect upon and share with others your learning in this training for teachers of children and junior youth.

Purpose:

Reflect upon and synthesize learnings regarding the Core Curriculum.

Evaluation of the Training

Please take a few minutes to evaluate the training using the evaluation form on the next page before returning to the process of ongoing personal development.

Purpose:

Bring personal meaning to the training experience through the evaluation process.

Share suggestions for refinement in the training process.

Core Curriculum for Spiritual Education

held on _____

Training for Teachers

in _____

of Children and Junior Youth

facilitated by _____

Evaluation

sponsored by _____

This opportunity to work with you has truly been a pleasure. Please candidly share your feelings and reactions. This information will be invaluable to us in planning future workshops.

	Exceptional	Very good	Fair	Poor
The presenters were organized and clear in their presentation.				
The purpose of the training and the individual modules was made clear.				
The materials were supportive of the presentations.				
Adequate time was provided for reflection upon and recording of your observations.				
The training demonstrated the use of different teaching methods, teaching tools and modalities of learning.				
The Sacred Writings were sufficiently utilized to elevate the spirit of the participants and lay the foundation for the work before them?				
The expectations and directions for your role as a teacher was made clear and seems sufficient?				

Please take time to expand on any of the items listed above, particularly if any ate rated fair or poor so that we might improve the delivery of the training.

What was most helpful to you?

What was least helpful to you?

What would you recommend for future workshops?

1. Reflect on the qualities of love and patience that you have developed in this training, and the love and patience that will be needed as you proceed with your next steps in this process. We have been promised ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s assistance in the process, and His love for the children will inspire us. He reminds us, “Know ye the value of these children for they are all my children,” (*THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, p. 54).
2. Consider the following steps as you plan your ongoing personal development:
 - Continue diagnosing the spiritual education needs of the children and the community you serve.
 - Begin to consciously build your personal spiritual education library.
 - Begin to familiarize yourself with available resources for use with spiritual education.
 - Continue working with fellow teachers for support and encouragement.
 - Continue to develop your personal plan for the systematic study of the Writings, child development, community service, and personal transformation.
3. Plan a time and place for your first Core Curriculum Teacher Development Workshop. These important workshops sustain the ongoing development of knowledge, spiritual insights, and skills for teaching children and junior youth. Teacher Development Workshops address such topics as outreach to the community at large; addressing individual students’ capacities, capabilities, interests, and needs; setting and maintaining standards in the classroom; planning lessons; storytelling; and other learning tools to enrich the learning experience.
4. **Conclude the training** with prayers for success and encouragement for your very important work, so praised by the Master.

Be assured of constant prayers by the National Spiritual Assembly and the National Bahá’í Education Task Force.



Suggested Clean-up Activity. Each participant draws a slip of paper from a basket with a chore written on it. This way everyone helps a little for a fast clean up.

Purpose:

Evaluate the training experience.

Focus on continuing personal growth and preparing for the next training session.

List of Books Referenced in the Training

- ADJ *The Advent of Divine Justice*, Shoghi Effendi, Wilmette, Illinois, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1939, rev. ed. 1991.
- AHW *Arabic Hidden Words* revealed in Arabic in *The Hidden Word*, Bahá'u'lláh, translated by Shoghi Effendi with the assistance of some English friends, Wilmette, Illinois, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, rev. ed. 1975, reprinted in 1994.
- ASC *A Synopsis and Codification of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, The Universal House of Justice, (Passages from the Kitáb-i-Aqdas translated by Shoghi Effendi.), Haifa, Bahá'í World Center, 1973.
- BA *Bahá'í Administration*, Shoghi Effendi, Wilmette, Illinois, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1968, rev. ed. 1974, reprinted 1998.
- BE *Bahá'í Education (A Compilation of Extracts from the Bahá'í Writings)*, compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, London, UK, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1987.
- BEC *Bahá'í Education: A Compilation*, Compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, Wilmette, Illinois, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1977.
- BEF *Bahá'í World Faith*, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Wilmette, Illinois, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1943, 1956.
- CB *The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*, Adib Taherzadeh, Oxford, George Ronald, 1992.
- CC *The Compilation of Compilations, Volumes I and II*, prepared by the Universal House of Justice, 1963-1990, Maryborough, Victoria, Australia, Bahá'í Publications Australia, 1991.
- DAL *The Divine Art of Living (Selections from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá)*, compiled by Mabel Hyde Paine, Wilmette, Illinois, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1944.
- FV "The Four Valleys" in *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valley*, Bahá'u'lláh, translated by Ali-Kuli Khan (Nabilu'd-Dawlih) assisted by Marzieh Gail, Wilmette, Illinois, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1945, rev. ed. 1975.
- FWU *Foundations of World Unity*, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Wilmette, Illinois, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1972
- FWU *Foundations of World Unity (Compiled Addresses and Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá)*, Wilmette, Illinois, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1945.
- G *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, translated by Shoghi Effendi, Wilmette, Illinois, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1939, rev. ed. 1976.
- IDK *The Importance of Deepening our Knowledge and Understanding of the Faith (Extracts from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi)*, compiled by the Universal House of Justice, printed in Canada, Wilmette, Illinois, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1983.
- IT *The Individual and teaching (Extracts from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi)*, compiled by the Universal House of Justice, Wilmette, Illinois, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1977.
- KI *Kitáb-i-Íqán, The Book of Certitude*, Bahá'u'lláh, translated by Shoghi Effendi, Wilmette, Illinois, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1931, rev. ed. 1974.
- PF *Portals to Freedom*, Howard Colby Ives, Oxford, George Ronald, 1983.

- PHW *Persian Hidden Words*, revealed in Persian in *The Hidden Words*, Bahá'u'lláh, translated by Shoghi Effendi with the assistance of some English friends, Wilmette, Illinois, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, rev. ed. 1975, reprinted in 1994.
- PT *Paris Talks (Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris 1911-12)*, London Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 11th ed. 1969, reprinted in 1972.
- PUP *The Promulgation of Universal Peace (Discourses by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912)*, Chicago, 1922, rev. ed. 1982.
- SAB *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, translated by a Committee at the Bahá'í World Center and by Marzieh Gail, Haifa, Bahá'í World Center, 1978.
- SAQ *Some Answered Questions*, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Wilmette, Illinois, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1930, 1954, 1964, 1981.
- SV *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, Bahá'u'lláh, translated by Ali-Kuli Khan (Nabilu'd-Dawlih) assisted by Marzieh Gail. Wilmette, Illinois, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1945, 1975.
- SW *Star of the West*, The Bahá'í News Service, Chicago, 1910-33, Vols. I-XIV reprinted in *Star of the West*, Oxford, George Ronald, 1978.
- TAB *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í Publishing Committee, New York, 1930, Vols. I-III.
- TB *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, translated by Habib Taherzadeh with the assistance of a Committee at the Bahá'í World Center, Haifa, Bahá'í World Center, 1978.
- WT *Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Wilmette, Illinois, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1971.
- TDP *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Wilmette, Illinois, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1977.