

Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program

School Prospectus





Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program

Enkindled Ltd

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Dear _____,

Thank you for your interest in collaborating with us to establish the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program in your school and community. We are excited by this possibility and eagerly look forward to learning alongside you.

Across the world, education is seen as an indispensable tool for individual and collective progress. True education is two-fold; it consists of material education related to all intellectual fields of human endeavour, as well as education concerned with refining character and qualities of the human spirit which enable people to make sound moral choices. When both these elements come together, the result is light upon light. At this time when new challenges effect our communities on a daily basis, it seems necessary that parents, communities, governments and educators reflect on how we can work together to collectively empower young people to realise their true potential to be builders of a just and peaceful world.

The Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program is an educational process which seeks to engage ever-growing contingents of people in an advancing conversation about the intellectual and moral empowerment of young adolescents – those aged roughly 11 to 15. The program is dependent upon the voluntary service of older youth – usually aged 17 to 25 – who act as true friends and wise advisers to their younger peers. The program seeks to assist young people in navigating a crucial stage of life, one in which they shall encounter both tremendous opportunities and challenges as they investigate the world and develop their sense of identity. The Program is founded upon the belief that those in their early adolescence possess altruism, a sense of justice and a desire to contribute to the construction of a better world.

We look forward to exploring the possibilities before us and invite you to consider how the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program can benefit the students of your school and complement the school's aims and vision.

Please find enclosed more information on the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program.

Sincerely,



Background

Deep seated social and economic problems in our communities effect young people most severely. At this time when our young face new and serious challenges, it seems necessary that parents, community leaders and educators reflect on how we can work together to collectively empower young people to defend themselves against harmful forces and to realise their true potential as builders of a just and peaceful world.

The Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program (JYSEP) is a global educational process which seeks to develop the intellectual and moral capabilities of 'junior youth' - those between the ages of 11 and 15. The program is conceived of as a 'spiritual' empowerment program in that it places emphasis on developing the qualities of the human spirit such as truthfulness, hope, generosity, compassion and excellence, as well as intellectual powers, such as scientific reasoning, analysis, creative thinking, expression and comprehension.

Community development is not something which one group carries out on behalf of another. Social transformation requires the active participation of the community itself. The establishment, growth and development of the junior youth program depends on the wholehearted commitment of staff, parents and, in particular, senior students and other youth who receive training and support to serve as mentors for their younger peers. The junior youth program is a framework for establishing a system of mutual support between 11 to 15 year olds who participate in the program and 17 to 25 year olds who deliver the program with the close support of experienced friends.

The program curriculum is organized globally by the Ruhi Training Institute - an international non-government organisation concerned with developing educational material for the training of human resources engaged in community development. The Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program is one program offered by the Ruhi Institute as a contribution to the discourse on the moral empowerment of young people.

Nature of the program

The program is organised around the concept of a junior youth group which meets regularly to engage in the various activities of the program. The nature of the group is one in which the junior youth take ownership as they consult with one another, build unity and support one another. The atmosphere of the group meetings is joyous, friendly, intimate and free of censure or ridicule.

The group is guided by a trained mentor, known as an 'animator'. The animator is a true friend who helps the junior youth to create this environment and accompanies them throughout the duration of the program. In most cases, those who volunteer as animators are between the ages of 17 to 25. However, anyone 16 or older is encouraged to offer their services as an animator. In an increasing number of communities, secondary schools collaborate with intermediates within the same Community of Learning to establish the program. In this case, a pool of animators are recruited from the senior students each year to work with junior youth groups for year 7 to 10 students.

A junior youth group will meet once or twice weekly during or after school, depending on local circumstances. Some of the activities that the group will participate in include the exploration of moral concepts through the study of texts which make up the program curriculum, complimentary arts and crafts, sporting activities and recreation, and the designing and implementing of community service projects.

Aims

The Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program aims to provide junior youth with a profound understanding of their own potential and how it can be channelled towards selfless service to society. It seeks to:

- Enhance participant's power of expression, use of language, and comprehension of written and verbal communication.
- Develop the capacity of participants to make positive decisions by identifying and applying relevant moral principles to real life situations.
- Provide an environment in which junior youth feel comfortable to express themselves openly, explore complex questions which challenge them and draw on the support of true friends.
- Develop in participants a passion for learning and a strong sense of purpose to fulfil their own potential in order to help contribute to improving the conditions of their community.

Why junior youth?

The period of junior youth – the years from 12 to 15 - represents a unique and pivotal time in one's life. It is a transitional period during which rapid physical, intellectual, emotional and moral changes occur. Junior youth are no longer children and should not be treated as such, but they are also not yet in the fullness of youth. During these years, young people develop habits, attitudes and beliefs which are very difficult to alter once puberty is past. It is therefore essential that young people receive appropriate guidance and direction during these formative years.

Across the world, there is a growing awareness of the role of education in equipping young adolescents with the moral capabilities needed to live productive and fruitful lives and to be of service to society. Therefore, a pressing concern for parents, communities, governments and school administrators is how to empower the younger members of our society to release their true potential.

Junior youth texts

A curriculum of texts are a core element of the junior youth program. There are currently 8 texts available, each of which focus on the development of particular moral capabilities, for example, hope and excellence. The study of each text also stimulates the development of essential intellectual capabilities such as literacy, numeracy, and scientific reasoning. The exploration of concepts in the texts inspires meaningful service projects, artistic and cultural expression and equips young adolescents with the skills, attitudes and qualities necessary to deal with the complexities of life.

Service projects

Service projects provide opportunities for junior youth to channel their talents, energies and aspirations towards improving the community by putting into practice what they have learnt.

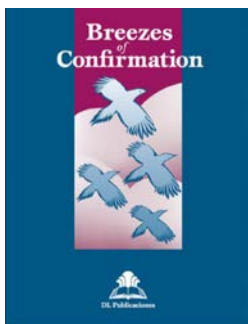
Throughout the program, animators will assist the junior youth to make observations about their environment, think of ways in which the group can serve others and combat issues facing them. Animators will support the group by helping them to devise projects, implement them and reflect on what they learn and how they can improve. The projects develop leadership, initiative, and creativity, build unity, and give junior youth the conviction that they can improve the conditions of the world around them.

Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program – Curriculum



Level 1 Material

Breezes of Confirmation



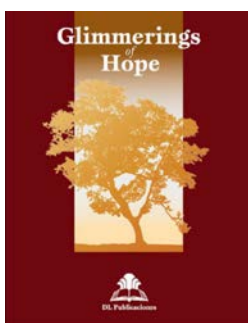
Description: Over the course of fourteen lessons, *Breezes of Confirmation* tells the story of Musonda, a young girl who has just turned 13, and her older cousin Rose, who has come to visit for the school holidays. Together with Musonda's brother Godwin and his friend Chishimba, the girls think about their future and discuss their hopes and possibilities. A theme that runs throughout the story is that of making an effort and expecting confirmations from on high—just

Category: Literacy

Age: 12-13

Duration: 10 weeks

Glimmerings of Hope:



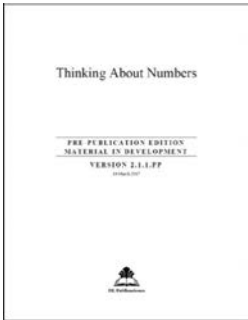
Description: Over the course of twelve readings, *Glimmerings of Hope* tells the story of Kibomi, a 12-year-old from a small village in Africa who sets out to find his sister in another city after their parents fall victim to violent civil strife. Throughout his journey, Kibomi is presented with a number of opportunities to analyze prevailing social tides and begins to see the implications of the choices he makes. He comes to find that in facing new challenges he must choose to hold onto hope rather than give into despair.

Category: Literacy

Age: 12-13

Duration: 10 weeks

Thinking About Numbers



Description: Thinking About Numbers includes ten lessons, each of which consists of a reading and a few exercises. The readings follow the conversation of a group of classmates living in a rural village in the Philippines who, with the help of their teacher, explore concepts such as accuracy, one-to-one correspondence, sets, and negative and irrational numbers, as well as efficiency, technology, and time. Over the course of their discussions, the group considers some of the applications of these concepts to day-to-day life, investigating, as they do so, the meaning of justice, discipline, service, and progress. In this way the text seeks to help young people not only to further their capability of making numerical statements about reality around them but also to think about the social dimension of those statements.

Category: Numeracy

Age: 12-13

Duration: 10-12 weeks

Observation and Insight



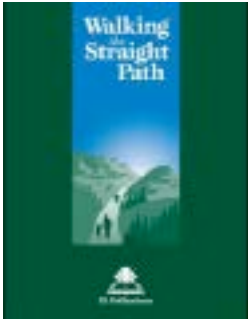
Description: Observation and Insight is set in Jalpura, an imaginary village in India, where twelve-year-old Nanda lives with her family. Over the course of eleven readings she is helped by Kalpana, who runs a nearby educational center for women, and Ramnik, her brother-in-law who is an ecologist, to organize the insights she is gaining as she observes the world around her. Nanda is at an age where she is starting to ask herself questions not only about physical reality but also about social reality. In this connection, she is helped to think about the kind of changes that will need to take place in her small village if it is to achieve enduring prosperity.

Category:
Scientific
reasoning

Age: 12-13

Duration: 10-12
weeks

Walking the Straight Path



Description: Stories have traditionally been used as a means of transmitting moral concepts from one generation to the next. Walking the Straight Path brings together twenty stories from several different cultures, each with a universal theme. Many of the stories are well known and have been recounted in numerous ways. In this sense, they belong to the heritage of humankind. Here they are told in a way that, while stimulating discussion on the moral implications of actions, accommodates exercises that help to build language skills.

Category: Literacy

Age: 13-14

Duration: 15 weeks

Learning About Excellence



Description: Learning About Excellence is one of the texts in the series designed for 12–13 year olds. It emerged out of the experience of a group working with young people in China, where rapid social change has resulted in many new and challenging situations. It tells the story of Ling Li, who goes to visit her grandparents in their village for the spring holidays. While spending time with her grandparents, she is able to explore questions that have been on her mind, for example, the love of parents and family, appreciating the beauty of the world around us, the meaning of intellectual excellence and the meaning of spiritual excellence. All of which

Category: Literacy

Age: 13-14

Duration: 20 weeks

The Human Temple



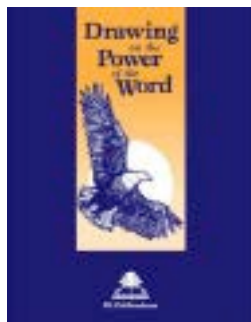
Description: Description: With The Human Temple, young people are given the opportunity to consider in some depth the powers of the human spirit. In a world where physical existence is given so much emphasis, the text explores with them those inner powers that distinguish the human being from all other things in creation. It undertakes this exploration by entering into the classroom of a teacher, Mr. Ian Scott, who, while considering with a group of students certain concepts related to language, helps them to think about, for example, the nature of spiritual perception and the power of human utterance. are explored through collaboration with her brother and relatives.

Category: Literacy

Age: 13-14

Duration: 20 weeks

Drawing on the Power of the Word



Description: Description: With *The Human Temple*, young people are given the opportunity to consider in some depth the powers of the human spirit. In a world where physical existence is given so much emphasis, the text explores with them those inner powers that distinguish the human being from all other things in creation. It undertakes this exploration by entering into the classroom of a teacher, Mr. Ian Scott, who, while considering with a group of students certain concepts related to language, helps them to think about, for example, the nature of spiritual perception and the power of human utterance. are explored through collaboration with her brother and relatives.

Category: Literacy

Age: 14-15

Duration: 20 weeks

Reflections from participants, families and animators



“Junior youth was one of the most memorable experiences for me, and that’s pure honesty. I loved the people there, the experiences we had, the content we went through and the stuff we did for the community. I really miss my junior youth group and I regret leaving in 2013. I should have stuck around for longer. But that is in the past. I really did enjoy it and I strong believe it made me a better person, more down to earth and caring for others.”

Former participant

“The junior youth program has significantly impacted my development, both socially and mentally, as it has taught me the importance of keeping relationships and why it is important to do everything from the heart and not just for the sake of doing it. I have been privileged to have been a part of the program as it has provided me with a good circle of friends that I can confidently share thoughts and problems with, hoping to seek the best advice and trusting that it will be kept confidential.”

Current participant



“Due to many family problems I faced at the age of 11, I started to fall into the wrong crowd. My values and moral started to deteriorate as I became victim to the destructive forces of society. At the time I thought about fighting, drugs and many things that an 11-year-old should not think of. When I was in year 6, I was invited to join the junior youth group and that’s when my life changed. The animators and the materials slowly influenced my life and helped me get through the hard times.”

Former participant



“When I first joined the junior youth program, I was 13, and I didn’t really pay attention to anything there. I only went because all my friends went. It was only when I started listening to the activities during the junior youth programs that my life started to change for the better. I felt as if I owed something to the world. It gave me hope about being able to improve my home environment as well as help others and this gave me immense joy. This group allowed me to build friendships with people who I now call my best-friends. It was the most amazing experience of my life.”

Former participant



“When I was around 12 years old, I joined my local junior youth group. As much as I didn’t realise it at the time, there was so much happening around me; new friends, changing attitudes and certain pressures from people my age. I am so glad that at a time when I was so vulnerable, I was surrounded by loving people, meaningful discussions and faith.”

Former participant

The junior youth spiritual empowerment program has allowed to recognise the forces with my schooling life and has helped me to understand the importance of a society working towards a better place.”

Former participant





“The junior youth program has changed me as a person in more ways than one. When I joined the junior youth group, I was a different person than I am now. Since then, I have been making new friends and learning new skills in a healthy and ecstatic environment. The junior youth program has enhanced my personality positively!”

Current participant



“I started the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program when I was 12 years old and honestly the program was the best time of my life. I met some really nice people. An example is my animator whom I, to this day, still consider my role model in life. He was really supportive and fun to hang around with. I also loved the fact that I was able to do social work in my junior years and this really helped to build the foundation of my future. As I love working with people, this program allowed me to really open up and develop as a person in ways that the school would not have been able to do. Finally, I really recommend this program to everyone and feel sorry for the people who miss out.”

Former participant

“I started in a junior youth group a few months ago and I had the best experiences of my life. Before I joined, I was misguiding myself towards the wrong path, like being rebellious, cold-hearted and hot-tempered. As soon as I joined the group my life turned around. I started to be productive and cared for my fellow peers. I also learned how to maintain my anger. The junior youth group was the best time of my life because I made many friends and loved working with my animator.”

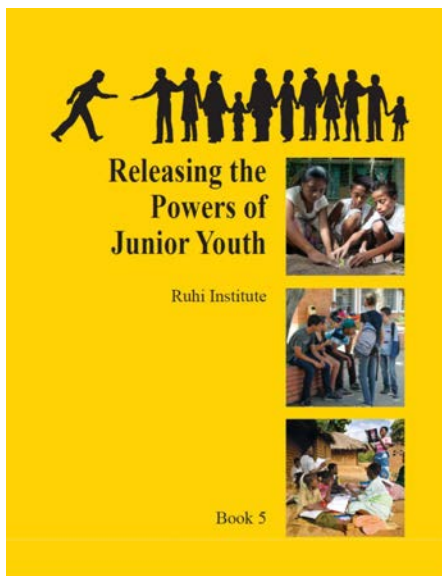
Current participant

Training youth to serve as animators

The Ruhi Institute

Since its inception in the early 1970s, the Ruhi Institute has striven to serve through its educational activities young people between the ages of 12 and 15, often referred to as 'junior youth', who represent a special segment of society. As it witnessed the idealism and energy of so many in this age range, the Institute became convinced of the importance of providing them with the opportunity to explore a number of themes and concepts that would enable them to deal with the complexities of life, combat the forces of moral decay gaining strength everywhere, and become active agents of social change.

Book 5: Releasing the Powers of Junior Youth



This book, the fifth in the Institute's main sequence of courses, is intended to assist those wishing to offer the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program in their villages, towns, neighbourhoods and schools. It is hoped that all will derive inspiration from the themes addressed and recognise the importance of giving due attention to the noble aspiration of junior youth.

Unit 1: Life's Springtime: The first unit of the book, 'Life's Springtime', focuses on the attributes that are to distinguish the period of youth in general. It seeks to clarify a number of concepts related to this stage of life, particularly the interplay between service, education and preparation for the future. From the analysis undertaken, a vision gradually emerges of the role played by each generation of youth within society, a vision that should give direction to efforts to engage junior youth in activities for their moral and intellectual empowerment.

Unit 2: An Age of Promise: The second unit is entitled 'An Age of Promise', and it is concerned with junior youth and their immense potentialities. To this end, the unit briefly examines the nature of early adolescence, the challenge of directing the growing awareness of young people in this age, the effects of their social environment on their lives, the concept of a 'junior youth group' as an environment of mutual support, and the posture to be assumed by all those arising to serve as 'animators' of such groups.

Unit 3: Serving as an Animator: The purpose of the third unit, 'Serving as an Animator', is to help participants become familiar with the various aspects of the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program. After first considering the nature of the group, the unit embarks on a discussion of the materials, the study of which represents the core of the Program.

The unit ends by discussing several matters related to the work of the animator, sharing insights into how to go about helping a number of young people form a group, how to conduct the first few meetings, and how to converse with parents about the nature of the program and the progress of their sons and daughters. The capabilities required to serve effectively as an animator will, of course, develop over time, and those pursuing this path of service need not feel compelled, at the beginning, to offer the program in all of its dimensions.

Frequently asked questions

◉ **Is this a religious program?**

The Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program is not a religious program. It does not seek to teach any religion or belief system. Rather, it seeks to provide young people with the opportunity to explore several themes and concepts that would enable them to deal with the complexities of life, combat the forces of moral decay gaining strength everywhere, and become active agents of social change.

The Ruhi Training Institute is an agency of the Baha'i community. The Program is described as 'Baha'i-inspired' – meaning that its pedagogy and approach is inspired by the way the Baha'i community has come to view this special age group and has taken on the responsibility to serve, through its educational programs, so many in this age range. The material reflects concepts and themes derived from science and religion as two complementary systems of knowledge, based on decades of action and reflection on worldwide experience in serving junior youth from a variety of backgrounds. Throughout the entire program there is no reference to the Baha'i Faith or to any matters of religious doctrine. It is open to all.

◉ **What does 'spiritual empowerment' mean?**

At the heart of the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program is the concept of 'spiritual empowerment'. Through its various facets, the Program seeks to release the intellectual and spiritual powers of young adolescents and direct them towards service to humanity. The conception of power employed here differs greatly from prevalent definitions of associate it with the intention to dominate others or to induce other to acquiesce to one's wishes and demands. The aim is, instead, to assist young people to become channels for the flow of the powers of the human spirit; the power of unity, of love, of humble service, of pure deeds.

◉ **What is the duration of the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program?**

The Program's duration is 4 years. A person enters the program at age 11 or 12 and graduates at age 15 or 16. In the school setting, this correlates to years 7, 8, 9 and 10.

◉ **Is the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program funded by any external organisations or sources?**

The Program is not funded by any external organisations or sources. The program is sustained by the communities and populations in which it is established and by those who volunteer as animators of junior youth groups.

◉ **What is the cost of the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program?**

The Program is voluntary and free. However, any in-kind contributions are welcome.

◉ **What training do animators of the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program receive?**

Animators of the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program receive training prior to forming a junior youth group and continue to participate in courses and reflection meetings for ongoing development and learning. All animators study the fifth course of the Ruhi Institute's community-building curriculum, titled, 'Releasing the Powers of Junior Youth'. This course develops an understanding of concepts, skills, qualities and attitudes experience has shown is required by those wishing to implement the Program.

Animators also benefit from practical training and accompaniment from more experienced individuals or coordinators while they serve, gradually being able to offer the Program in its entirety as they gain experience in interacting with junior youth.

▶ **Can students, teachers and parents be involved hands-on with the Program?**

There are many opportunities for students, teachers and parents to be involved with the Program in unique ways. Some of the ways in which various people can support the junior youth include helping with service projects, teaching arts or crafts, helping with pick-ups and drop-offs, attending periodic reflection spaces to discuss the progress of the groups and the junior youth, and supporting or running a group.

The Program belongs to the school community and the opportunities to engage the community in rallying around the needs of young people are limitless.

▶ **If senior students from our school begin to facilitate junior youth groups as animators, how will they be supported?**

Senior students wishing to serve as animators for the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program will be firstly be trained as animators, and then be supported to work with junior youth in various ways until they build the confidence and experience required to run a group independently, either by themselves, or with a peer.

The training is offered in two modes: either intensively in the school holiday breaks, or as weekly sessions during the school term. During the training and in the period after, experienced animators or coordinators will work closely with new animators and provide practical support and accompaniment. Initially, those accompanying may be from outside the school, however, the vision is that over time animators from within the school can begin accompanying each other as experience develops.

Animators work in small teams and together decide on practical ways in which they would like to work together and support each other in their service.

*“The betterment of the world
can be accomplished through
pure and goodly deeds,
through commendable and
seemly conduct.”*

Quote from a text of the program