

Auckland Region

Junior Youth Empowerment Program

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Information Kit for Parents

For parents of children ages 11-14

The junior youth in the world today face challenges that are unique to their age group, and the degree of nurturing and encouragement given to them in this impressionable age determines who they will become as youth and adults. By providing junior youth programs that are firmly established on virtues, yet allowing enough latitude for personal expression, the true potential within these young people can be realised, thereby benefiting themselves and the community of which they are members.

SIGNIFICANCE OF JUNIOR YOUTH

Who are the Junior Youth? Junior youth are those who fall between the ages of 11 and 14 years old.

What is unique about this age group? This is the age:

- When fundamental concepts of individual-self and collective-society life are formulated, and
- When adolescents struggle to leave behind childhood and develop new capabilities as Junior Youth, as Youth and as Adults.

OBJECTIVES OF JUNIOR YOUTH COURSES

To develop those capabilities that will allow the junior youth to become active and effective participants in the construction of a new world order, as well as to cater to their unique needs, the junior youth programs focus on the following areas:

- 1. The development of spiritual qualities (virtues).**
- 2. The development of intellectual capabilities.**
- 3. The development of capabilities of service.**

In the development of each area, many capacities, such as reading and writing skills have to be developed. However, the most critical aspect of developing the above capabilities is to enable the junior youth to comprehend concepts, formulate opinions, think critically, build their confidence and **exercise their power of expression**, which will lead to the empowerment of the junior youth. Once the junior youth feel empowered, then they will be able to effectively contribute to the betterment of their life and the lives of those around them.

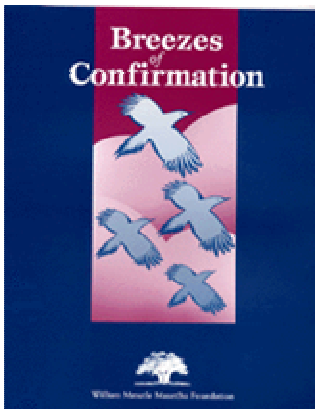
STRUCTURE OF JUNIOR YOUTH PROGRAMS

The structure of a Junior Youth course can vary slightly from group to group. However, the following are some suggested guidelines for how all junior youth programs are conducted:

- Members to be treated as friends not as students- utilizing the method of peer learning-sharing, not authoritative learning
- Important to meet regularly (i.e. once a week for approximately 2 hours)
- No homework
- A place where they can meet with their friends and have activities such as
memorization of quotations and poems, reading text, carrying out exercises, discussion, artistic expressions, singing, playing, storytelling, acts of community service and more.

JUNIOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM MATERIAL

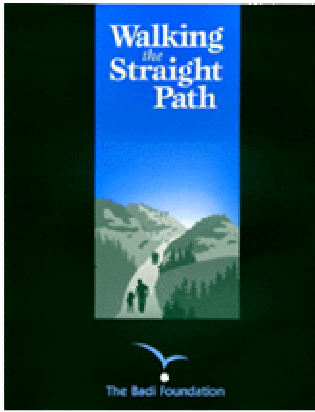
There are *three* main texts used as the basis of Junior Youth Groups, which are:



Breezes of Confirmation - this book is considered an entry-level text, designed for youth aged 11 or 12 who already possess basic literacy skills. It is hoped that this book will strengthen those skills in the young people who read it, will help them begin to articulate ideas with some degree of precision and clarity, and will ready them for the study of higher-level texts.

The developers of this book (the William Mmutle Masetlha Foundation) hold to a worldview cognizant of the material and spiritual dimensions of human existence. The educational materials they produce for junior youth in the area of language, at whatever level of proficiency, strive to create within them the moral structures that will underlie their decisions and guide their actions as they mature into young adults and active members of society. To this end, the materials seek to impart essential moral concepts and build certain attitudes required to live a fruitful and rewarding life.

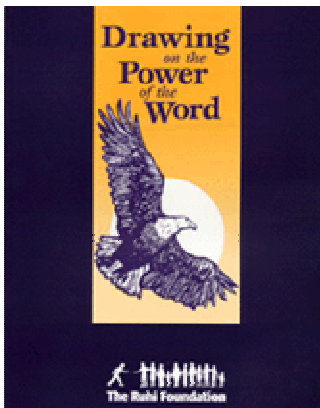
The book is made up of fourteen lessons. Each includes a short reading followed by a series of exercises designed to increase comprehension and to enhance language skills. Quotations for memorization, songs and discussion questions are interspersed throughout the various lessons. The lessons draw out the meaning of such words by placing them in different contexts, and through the use of exercises. By allowing for a rich vocabulary in this way, the story avoids the tendency of becoming childish and superficial.



Walking the Straight Path – Prepared by the Badi Foundation, assumes that the young people who study it, usually at the age of 13 or 14, have mastered the mechanics of reading and writing, will be able to read with ease, and will have begun to acquire the mental skills needed to express ideas with some degree of clarity. The book is designed to reinforce that foundation.

To read with good comprehension and to use the power of expression effectively are capabilities that every young person should strive to develop. Further, if one is to live a productive and fruitful life in a world of increasing complexity, one must be able to translate high ideals and noble words into pure deeds. Specifically, youthful minds must be given the tools needed to recognize the moral issues underlying the choices they make.

This book 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. They are told here in a way that, while teaching concepts related to moral development, accommodates exercises in language skills.



Drawing on the Power of the Word – This book works best with 14-year-olds, and is concerned with the development of capabilities. Specifically, it focuses on the capability of exercising the power of expression. The content of the readings contribute to the development of another capability, that of identifying the moral implications of speech and action. The readings begin simply, but gradually increase in complexity both in terms of thought and language.

Who facilitates a Junior Youth Group?

Junior Youth Groups are facilitated by Baha'i volunteers who have received training as Junior Youth 'animators'.

What happens in a Junior Youth Group?

The participant will read together, carry out exercises and discuss issues arising from the well developed text syllabus. In addition, artistic expression, singing, story-telling, acts of service and time for cooperative games is also an integral part of the program.

Where are these groups held?

Junior Youth Gatherings are held in either a suitable home or a public venue in many parts of the Auckland region.