

5 Lesson Planning

(Note that the timing given for the parts of this programme are very approximate indeed. If your group moves through more quickly don't worry -- the final exercise is quite lengthy and will fill all the remaining time.)

A Points to consider

Ask someone to read the passage, and explain that it is good to have this reminder at the beginning of the session. 10 mins.

“The Prophets and Messengers of God have been sent down for the sole purpose of guiding mankind to the straight Path of Truth. The purpose underlying Their revelation hath been to educate all men, that they may, at the hour of death, ascend, in the utmost purity and sanctity and with absolute detachment, to the throne of the Most High.”

(Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, pages 156-157)

Ask the question: What is the purpose of God's Revelation?

Explain that we are going to look again at the Bahá'í curriculum.

Refer quickly to page 22 where it differentiates between a curriculum, a syllabus and a lesson. (Appendix 6)

Taking turns read through pages 80 - 82 about deriving syllabi from the curriculum. (Appendix 10)

It becomes obvious that several teachers following the same curriculum may organise their teaching in completely different ways.

This session we are going to draw up some lesson plans, but first we need to consider the following questions. Ask someone to read the questions, but don't allow time for comments or attempts to answer just now, as we'll be dealing with each one in detail.

- 1 What aspect of the Faith am I going to teach?
- 2 Can I incorporate several strands into one lesson, thereby achieving a broad balance?
- 3 How can I vary my approach to give the children variety and suit different tastes?
- 4 Are there some elements that I'd like to incorporate into every lesson?
- 5 Is the content of the lesson age-appropriate?
- 6 How can I allow each child to work at their own level when necessary?
- 7 Do the children want to come back next week?
- 8 Is there a 'transfer effect' from what we teach in the classroom to the behaviour of the children in their homes and in the community?

Ask people to take turns in reading through this section. Allow time for comments.

1 What to teach?

5 mins

Your best friend here is the Curriculum. It lists all the areas you should try to cover, and will help you to make sure your lessons are covering a broad spectrum of the necessary areas, without concentrating on a few to the exclusion of everything else.

Suppose for the sake of our practice lesson planning we choose: “Service” as the theme for a whole term. If we look at page 43 of the Curriculum we will see this is Strand (d) of Attainment Target 1 (Acquisition of a spiritual and moral character). (See Appendix 8)

2 Can we achieve a balance of elements from the curriculum?

10 - 15 mins

This theme is to last for 10 weeks, so we have lots of time. Ask everyone to look again at p43 (App 8) and fill in the table with specific ideas.

List here specific ideas from different strands: Theme: “Service”	
AT 1: Strand:	Ideas
AT 2: Strand:	Ideas:
AT 3: Strand:	Ideas:

When everyone has had enough time -- 5-10 mins, read together the list below. Explain that these elements from other strands of the curriculum can all be part of this theme:

The life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Key Figures

AT 2 Strand c

The Greatest Holy Leaf	Key Figures	AT 2 Strand c
The Visitation Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá	Sacred Scripture	AT 2 Strand e
Work as Worship	Social and Individual Skills	AT 3 Strand a & c
		AT 2 Strand b
Holy Days -- acts of service	Teachings	AT 2 Strand d
Areas of service in Bahá’í administration		AT 3 Strand d
Concept of sacrifice	Sacrifice	AT 1 Strand c
Memorisation of Hidden Word	Sacred scripture	AT 2 Strand e
Youth Year of Service		AT 3 Strand a & c

3 Varying the approach

20 mins

Lets look at our theme of service. Ask everyone to list as many activities and approaches to the subject as they can, and make a list on the flip-chart.

Together read through this list of suggestions. Stress that their own ideas are probably better than these.

In ‘Circle Time’:

- a) Games to do with helping each other -- cooperation.
- b) Discussions about what service is -- the concept of service as a joyful and voluntary act.
- c) Games miming acts of service, with others guessing what they are.
- d) Discussion about work as worship -- service occupations -- what will I do when I grow up?
- e) Discussion of concept of service to the Faith -- teaching, administration, helping with community activities etc.
- f) Stories from the lives of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and the Greatest Holy Leaf.

Art and crafts:

- a) Beautifully decorating and displaying photographs of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and the Greatest Holy Leaf - to take home at the end.
- b) Making a large frieze or collage illustrating different acts of service
- c) Illuminating the Visitation Tablet to take home at the end of the term
- d) In groups the children could produce some sort of craft work to illustrate each of the Holy Days.

Stories:

- a) Every lesson could include a story illustrating one of the many acts of service performed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.
- b) Stories of the Greatest Holy Leaf
- c) Stories of other great ‘servants’: Florence Nightingale, Mother Theresa, etc

Drama:

- a) The children could dramatise some of the stories.
- b) In groups they could act out scenarios of service enterprises, with the others guessing what they’re meant to be. E.g. -- digging an old lady’s garden, doing the shopping, washing up etc.

Memorisation:

- a) The children could work on memorising an appropriate Hidden Word e.g. "Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust?....." (Arabic No 68)

Dance:

- a) To help the memorising they could act the Hidden Word in American Indian sign language, and those who wished could build the movements into a dance with music.

Music:

- a) Singing: "Look at Me, follow Me, be as I am"....
- b) Small numbers could work on developing musical sound effects to accompany the dance or the drama.

4 Would some elements be included in every lesson?

10 mins

Ask someone to read these two passages, and then ask the question: What element should always be present in every session?

"The vitality of men's belief in God is dying out in every land; nothing short of His wholesome medicine can ever restore it. The corrosion of ungodliness is eating into the vitals of human society; what else but the Elixir of His potent Revelation can cleanse and revive it? Is it within human power, O Hakim, to effect in the constituent elements of any of the minute and indivisible particles of matter so complete a transformation as to transmute it into purest gold? Perplexing and difficult as this may appear, the still greater task of converting satanic strength into heavenly power is one that We have been empowered to accomplish. The Force capable of such a transformation transcendeth the potency of the Elixir itself. The Word of God, alone, can claim the distinction of being endowed with the capacity required for so great and far-reaching a change."

(Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 200)

"Naught but the celestial potency of the Word of God, which ruleth and transcendeth the realities of all things, is capable of harmonizing the divergent thoughts, sentiments, ideas, and convictions of the children of men. Verily, it is the penetrating power in all things, the mover of souls and the binder and regulator in the world of humanity."

(`Abdu'l-Baha: Selections ... `Abdu'l-Baha, page 292)

How could the Word of God always be included in a meaningful way?

Ask the group to give ideas how each of these could be used as a vehicle for the Word of God:

singing

meditation

choral speech

reading accompanied by music

dance drama

any other ideas?

5&6 Is the content of the lesson age-appropriate?

15 mins

How can each child be allowed to work at their own level when necessary?

In our Bahá'í classes we face a bigger challenge than do most teachers of every-day classes.

- a) Very rarely does a class have only one age group; more often there are children of many ages in the same class.
- b) Children of similar age will have very different levels of knowledge and capacity.
- c) As we have entry by troops we must expect that children with no background knowledge whatever will be joining the classes at all age levels. Thus, in any one class there may be a child of very high intelligence who has been taught about the Faith from birth, sitting beside a child whose parent has just declared, and who has no knowledge or experience whatever of the Bahá'í Faith.

How can the work be made appropriate to everyone?

'Abdu'l-Bahá recommended dividing the class into groups according to their capacity:

“...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-Baha: Education p43, CofC page 280)

Ask someone to read the following passage, and explain this also illustrates that it is not always appropriate to treat everyone the same way.

“The Manifestations of God are likewise in agreement with the view that education exerteth the strongest possible influence on humankind. They affirm, however, that differences in the level of intelligence are innate; and this fact is obvious, and not worth debating. For we see that children of the same age, the same country, the same race, indeed of the same family, and trained by the same individual, still are different as to the degree of their comprehension and intelligence. One will make rapid progress, one will receive instruction only gradually, one will remain at the lowest stage of all. For no matter how much you may polish a shell, it will not turn into a gleaming pearl, nor can you change a dull pebble into a gem whose pure rays will light the world.”

(`Abdu'l-Baha: Selections ... `Abdu'l-Baha, pages 131-132)

What strategies can we use when faced with these challenges? Ask everyone to give suggestions they may have, and allow time for everyone to comment and ask questions. When everyone has finished, take turns reading out the following ideas. Stress that these are ideas only -- nothing authoritative:

- a) There could be an initial circle time introduction, with games that everyone enjoys.
- b) During this time, when the plan is to introduce a new topic, the children could take turns to tell what they already know about it. This way the knowledgeable child finds himself in a 'teaching' role (this is partly our aim - to make the children teachers of the Faith), and he does not suffer the understandably frustrating feeling that the teacher has made a false assumption that he knows less than he does.

This need only be a brief account by each child, and will also inform the teacher of how best to group the children if this seems to be appropriate.

- c) Discussion / consultation can follow, allowing everyone to participate at their own level.
- d) Stories of the Central Figures are appropriate to everyone, and all can participate in prayers and readings.
- e) After the talking part of the lesson, the children could be split into groups. There is no reason why everyone in the room has to do the same thing. While one group is cutting, sticking and painting a collage, another group could be practising a dance with quiet music in another corner. Still another group could be very carefully copying a prayer, and at the same time an individual child may be assembling his own project work on 'service' in his own folder, at his own rate of progress.
This way children can be given an element of choice, giving them a feeling of 'ownership' of their efforts, and their work can be at the level of their own particular capacity.

The lesson could conclude with everyone coming together to show or tell what they've done, if appropriate, and to finish with a few games and a prayer.

The key to the success of this type of teaching is for the teacher to have the materials organised ahead of time, then once the children are happily occupied, the lesson is relatively easy, and teachers and assistants can move between the groups, helping, advising and joining in.

7 Evaluation

15 mins

We should ask the question:

"Do the children want to come back next week?"

This may be the most important question of all. We should always try to evaluate how the children have enjoyed their experience. If children have an unpleasant experience of Bahá'í classes, it will affect their future in the Faith, and unlike state school, attendance is in no way compulsory.

If you use an approach that caters for different needs and different levels, with plenty of variety, the children will almost certainly want to come again. The games play a very important part -- lifting the mood, and encouraging full participation by everyone.

How can we bring about a 'transfer effect': from what we teach in the classroom to the behaviour of the children in their homes and in the community?

Ask everyone to note down any ideas they may have, then compare notes together:

When everyone is ready, read these few ideas together:

- a) Homework could be in the form of acts of service being carried out at home and in the Community.
- b) Good communication is needed between the teacher and the parents. Could the children

have a 'home / school' book? Messages could be written from the teacher to the parent, and vice versa. Children could develop a plan in class to do service in the community, but unless this is communicated home, it won't really happen. The 'home / school' book could include a chart to show things done at home arising from the class, and notes of praise passed back and forth. A superb esteem-booster for the child!

- c) Communication between the school and the Spiritual Assembly, so that initiatives coming from the children at the Feast will be encouraged and facilitated.

B

Making plans

remaining time

For the remaining time the group can practise making their own lesson plans.

Together, read through lesson 1 which has been done already to give an example.

Stress that this is only an example. If anyone in the group has other ideas completely, that is all the better.

Allow the group to work in twos or individually.

After a suitable interval, ask everyone who wishes to share their plan with the rest.

Exercise:

Suppose the theme of 'service' has been chosen for the whole term of 10 lessons.

We are going to develop the first three lesson plans of the term. The first has been done for you.

Fill in the next 2 lesson plans. Remember to use as many strands as are appropriate from the curriculum.

Theme:	“Service”	Key Stage 2 Age 7 - 11
Lesson 1:	10.15 - 11.00 and 11.30 - 12.30	
Equipment:		
Prepared print-outs, on sheets of paper, of the first line of the Visitation Tablet.		
Colouring and drawing materials.		
A noisy object, e.g. tambourine or bunch of keys.		
Reference material on the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.		
Folders to contain project work and illuminated prayers.		
Home/school notebook for each child, with a note to the parents on the first page explaining that the child will be doing acts of service this term.		
10.15 - 10.45		
1. Circle games: Introductions, fruit salad, Its good to meet you, islands		
2. Circle consultations:		
What is service?		
What acts of service do we see around us in the greater community?		
3. 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the 'Servant of the servants'.		
Discussion and consultation about this.		
4. Story to illustrate the servitude of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.		
5. Reading of the Tablet of Visitation		
10.45 - 11.00		
Children move to tables and are each given a printed paper with one line: "He is the All-Glorious!" Teacher explains that over the weeks they will each make their own illuminated book of this Tablet. This is the first page.		
Discussion about how it might be enhanced with decoration. Colouring material provided for the decorations. There will just be time to make a small start.		
11.30 - 12.15		
Children are given a choice of activity:		
Continue illuminated book		
Work in a small group dramatising a few acts of service		
Begin own individual project about 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Servant of the Servants.		
12.15		
Clear away.		
Reassemble in circle.		
Drama group present their role plays.		
Circle games: wink murder, passing a noisy object silently.		
Closing prayer.		
Home / school books		
Give these out and explain the children are to think of an act of service they can do at home. Ask them to ask a parent to enter a comment about this for next week.		

Theme: "Service"
Lesson 2: 10.15 - 11.00 and 11.30 - 12.30

Key Stage 2 Age 7 - 11

Equipment:

10.15 - 10.45

10.45 - 11.00

12.15

Home / school books

Theme: "Service"
Lesson 3: 10.15 - 11.00 and 11.30 - 12.30

Key Stage 2 Age 7 - 11

Equipment:

10.15 - 10.45

10.45 - 11.00

12.15

Home / school books