NEW WORLD ORDER GAMES MANUAL

By Linden Qualls (Revised Dec. 24th, 2018)

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INTRO AND IMPORTANT TIPS

Do you ever need joyful, cooperative, uplifting, creative, educational and really fun games to play with your students or children? Teachers, parents, and caregivers of children and youth will discover a rich repertoire of games to promote unity in diversity, an awareness of our interdependence, many virtues, Baha'i concepts and so much more in this manual.

Just imagine the venues: children and youth classes, gym time, Ayyam-i-Ha parties, Holy day gatherings, family fun nights, birthday parties, scout meetings, camps, conferences, unit convention, summer schools, social portion of feast, and any party that has 4 or more people! Here are games that are appropriate for large and small groups, for Baha'i sponsored events with the public and games that are most suitable for Baha'is or near-Baha'is only. (Like games which teach the importance of teaching others about Baha'u'llah). Some of the games are wild, with lots of running and chasing, great for outdoors or a gym. Others are suitable for smaller spaces with less physical movement. Some are very loud and some are quiet. (For those of you who hold children's classes in a library). Some are suspenseful and intense, others are silly and goofy, some are cerebral and thought provoking. Many are metaphors for Baha'i teachings, complete with supporting quotes. Here are over 150 games for all kinds of kids and adults—young and old, wiggley and shy.

Most of the games can be used for a wide age range of children and adults and youth love them too. All the games selected are child tested and have high enthusiasm ratings, (i.e. kids ask to play them again and again). Written by a teacher of Baha'i children's classes for over 28 years—I've made most of the mistakes for you and picked out only the winners for this manual. These games have been used in numerous Baha'i and non-Baha'i settings with a huge variety of kids in many different countries.

You will notice 5 reoccurring themes in most of the games: Acquisition of virtues, Seeking/hunting, rescuing/freeing/helping, avoidance of or triumphing over the lower nature, and of course cooperation and interdependence.

Acquisition of power, things, fame, etc. is overemphasized in most cultures. Many of the games in this manual reinforce that the most important acquisitions of our lives are spiritual qualities, the virtues--and that it takes willful effort to do so. The desire to seek and search is implanted in every soul and this trait is so very valuable in spiritual growth and in our journey towards the Divine. One will find reference to seekers throughout all religious scripture, especially in the Baha'i writings. Thus, I feel it is important to encourage this inborn tendency in children. Many games also have rules that encourage players to rescue or help prevent others from being frozen by the lower nature, from the "prison of self", etc. I believe we should instill in our kids that even if they are safe, possess the sought after objects, etc., they should not rest until all are safe, all have what is needed. I think this not only relates to economic & social justice, but also to sharing God's sacred teachings with others. Many games also involve shunning, avoiding, or triumphing over a person(s) wearing an ugly mask that represents the lower nature or aspects of the lower nature such as greed, dishonesty, selfishness, disunity, ignorance, etc. This is a metaphor for what we should teach our kids--to recognize how ugly, unpleasant, and destructive the lower nature is to all of our well being and to shun those lower nature impulses. And finally, the dire need for humanity to cooperate and recognize our interdependence is undeniable. This theme is explored more thoroughly later in this introduction under the heading The Rationale for a Paradigm Shift in the Games We Play.

***Tips about using this manual**:*

- The games children love the most, of course, are the highly active and medium active ones. A good formula is to intersperse low activity games with the high/medium ones.

- Many of the games have numerous quotes which relate to the theme of the game. I do not recommend using all of them when explaining the game—the kids will shut down. For many of the games I go into rather long elaborate discussions/speeches that explain the metaphor of the game. (The games were often designed to support a theme we were studying in Baha'i children's classes). While these verbal lessons can promote thought and insight, they can also be too much to absorb in one session. Always intersperse these metaphorical elaborations with action-- and be expressive and ask questions if you want kids to stay engaged and grasp the significance of what you are trying to convey. See the Creative Dramatics Manual introduction (under *More Tips*, 6th bulleted item) for more detailed guidance on how to use a lot of quotes with kids in ways that maintain interest and are enjoyable. Be aware that public parties are not good occasions to go into great detail or depth. I always provide an educational bent at parties, but avoid the feel of a lesson plan. Children's party audiences are there to celebrate and have fun. They will not want to ponder deep issues and hold discussions.

- It always helps to have children sit down and be relatively still before you explain the game. They will absorb your words much better.

- And if you want their full attention, wait until after you are done with the explanation and quotes before handing out any supplies. Insist on quiet while you are talking. Refuse to continue explaining unless kids are quiet.

- It's always best to demonstrate the rules physically or least give a trial run of a game before beginning in earnest, unless the game is very simple. Also, don't take questions until after you have explained the rules—you will have covered most.

- It's important to really know and understand the rules of a game *before* explaining them to players. You will hold their attention much better if you come off confident and enthusiastic, rather than perplexed and bumbling!

- I have to confess that some of the games are competitive and involve attempting to be first or get the most resources (for example water or points) for your team or yourself. I think these types of games have the potential to reinforce a materialistic, individualistic, prideful, and self-centered attitude. In order to counteract some of this, I always proclaim the no gloating or exulting rule and never praise or reward the winners. When I play these types of games with children I emphasize teamwork. Kids really can enjoy them unless there is obsessive keeping track of who is ahead or has more. Like sugar, use competitive games sparingly, knowing that they can create an unhealthy state--disunity.

- It is important to read your group and be sensitive to differences in cultural standards of touching and of public demeanor. If you are working with the public, and do not know your players well, go easy on games that involve a lot of close physical contact and silliness. Especially if the players don't know each other very well or at all, they can be really threatened by some of the physical closeness or levels of uninhibited-ness that some of the games require. If you are working with teenagers or adults, know that many of them are not used to being playful and uninhibited or silly. Never force people to let down their shields. With more reserved groups, choose games that do not require them to be goofy or do unusual things. And always be aware of the whole sexual awareness thing in kids 10 and up—don't pair boys and girls in physically intimate games unless they are really good buddies and know each other. Even then, remember standards of modesty. Being able to read your group and prescribe the appropriate game takes experience and a willingness to take risks and make mistakes!

- If possible, it is always best to have a mature person play the lower nature. Otherwise, the kid playing the lower nature does not learn the positive messages in the game, or how to cooperate, and they can get an ego trip from trying to dominate the others. Also, and this is very important, a less mature person focusing on winning or showing off, does not know when to pull back to equalize the competition and can totally sabotage the game. For example, in *Flower Virtue Rescue*, the person playing the lower nature needs to play the part in such a way that the players get plenty of opportunity to snatch flowers—like lunging onto his stomach and lingering there for a few seconds so kids on the other side can grab the flowers. Also, with kids under 6 or 7, monster masks should **NEVER** be used.

Equipment Frequently Used in the Games:

Hula Hoops
Tuba Ruba connectable tubes (Available only on Ebay)
Monster Masks (Should not be gruesome or bloody. A goofy devil mask is also good for the lower nature.)
Inflatable Earth Ball
Parachute—24-30 foot (6-12 foot ones are only good for very small groups, and none of my games)
Foam Balls—small and large
Beamos—(basically giant frizbees made out of colorful stretchy fabric instead of plastic. Best to use 2 hands to throw.)
Round Balloons—(Most balloon games require 11 inch round, (27.9 cm), blown up to maximum diameter. Adjust size, which correlates to speed of falling, to age level. Over 12 year olds can usually handle smaller diameters.)
Goal cones for marking boundaries, safety zones, and goal areas

To purchase items referred to in this compilation, see Resources. It has board games, game equipment, and game books.

In this manual, the games are organized by categories. It was difficult sometimes to rate them, it is a subjective exercise. But generally any game that involves running or chasing of course was put in the Highly Active category. Medium Active games were ones that may involve large motor movement, but not as fast paced or wild. Low Activity, Partner, and Mainly Cerebral can be played in small spaces. And of course you need a parachute for that category.

Since *parachutes* are pricey (over $100.00 for a large one), I gave them their own category. That way if you don't have one you can just skip that category. (However, for some of the parachute games, a very large sheet or light blanket will suffice.) The *Beamo* games I noted in the title, but did not give them their own category b/c they cost under $30.00 and *one can improvise and use other types of frizbees or even balls to play most of the Beamo games if one does not own any.* If you use Beamos, always give kids practice time with them before you start a game.

The categories are:

Highly Active games
Medium Active games
Low Activity games
Partner games
Mainly Cerebral games
Parachute games

This symbol # means it works best if you have at least 8 kids to play
This ## means 12 or more is ideal
This ### means 20 or more is ideal
No symbol means game can be played with fewer than 8

The numbers ratings are not absolute. You can try if you have fewer kids than the specified rating. Often times, 6 kids can play a game rated #, its just not as exciting. Sometimes, for your particular group the # rating may be too low and your kids would enjoy it more with greater numbers. Also, use your own judgment if you have large numbers of kids—there are games that really won't work well if you have too many kids, but I did not want to put limits on each game as well. The size of the space, the amount of equipment, the time allotted, if you have adult assistants, if turns are involved, expectations and energy level of the group--- all these factors need to be taken into consideration in judging whether a game will work for your group. It just takes experience to be able to assess accurately.

About ages: For most cooperative games, a huge age range is workable b/c kids are supporting and helping each other. Competitive games limit the age range more. Use your judgment when it comes to age ranges—often the only limiting factor in a cooperative game is the physical ability of a young child or their mental ability to be able to understand the rules—or its too easy or childish for older kids. Many of these games involve tagging and hiding and seeking. Even 3 year olds understand those concepts. Most of the tagging and chase games involve pairing up—just pair up older and younger for each team and that can balance the abilities. It also tests the detachment and forbearance of the older kids who may be attached to showing off or excelling.

If there is an ***** after a game, that means that the basic structure of the game was found in one of my many cooperative games books. Most come from one of Terry Orlick's 2 books (see resources). I often changed the name and altered the rules a bit to accommodate a metaphor, or to create a more spiritual education climate. However, sometimes the game was fine the way it was designed, and I would just insert a metaphor into it, or just forgo the metaphor thing. If you are confused with my explanations or have any questions, feel free to call me at 937-767-7079.

I have dreaded typing up this manual for years—but after so many phone and verbal trainings I succumbed—it was my big sacrifice during a fast. However, most of the games were extracted from parent letters which I wrote to inform them of what we did in class. Since I also have been asked for my lesson plans, I decided to use the parent letters to describe in great detail everything we did—knowing that these could someday be converted into a teacher's curriculum. *Thus, many of the games are written in past tense,* describing playing with my students. But they get the rules across. Some were written for Brilliant Star Children's magazine so they are written to children. It's my compromise. I just could not bring myself, after weeks of typing, to go in and change all the verb tenses, etc. If I ever publish this, I will have to, but for now this will have to do! Thanks to Judy Baker for being the one who finally nudged me over the edge to do it.

Here's 3 quotes that apply to most of the games. All Baha'i children should eventually deeply understand and appreciate the truths embodied in these quotes. By children living their lives in accordance with these verities, they will bring healing, wisdom, and strength to every sphere of their lives and to the lives of those who are fortunate enough to know them. Whether it be at the workplace or in a marriage, those that know the beauty and power of unity, cooperation and mutual helpfulness, will be blessed.

No power can exist except through unity. ~Baha'u'llah: Consultation, page 93

Be ye as the fingers of one hand, the members of one body. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 140

.....mutual helpfulness and cooperation are the two necessary principles underlying human welfare. ~`Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 150

A request: I would love for these games to be shared freely and with as many people as possible. Feel free to do so. But after printing your own copy**--please do not then copy this manual and send it to others w/o my permission.** It is my experience with this and other documents that I continually and frequently revise, update, and improve them. If someone wants a copy just send them to this website https://publiclcq.wixsite.com/linden-qualls-- or if that does not work for some

reason, email me at l.qualls@earthlink.net and I will send the latest version via email. Its OK to copy and share a few games from it—but not the entire thing or even large sections. Another reason I would like some control over its dissemination is b/c I would like to get some feedback from those using it. If you call or email me, then I can find out how the games and instructions are working for you. **And please always include the tips when sharing individual games, b/c following them can make a big difference in the quality of the experience.** Also, if you have questions about any of the material that requires more than a brief typed message, I would rather that you phone me at 937-767-7079. Typing at the computer already claims far too much of my life, and at least with the phone I can do dishes, fold the laundry, and move around a bit!

Most of the games in this manual can be shared and played with members of the wider community. Even the explicitly Baha'i oriented games can be used in non-Baha'i settings if you remove the quotes, and/or adjust or delete the metaphor. Indeed, many of them originally were secular until I molded them into a Baha'i context. (The ones with a * all had their origins in cooperative games books which had no direct spiritual or religious content). Also, I have found that most of the metaphors are fine even for public school settings b/c they reflect universally recognized truths and principles, like unity in diversity, the danger of materialism, the need for international cooperation, etc. Just use wisdom when deciding what games, quotes and metaphors to use in each setting.

In all settings, remember to always say prayers for Divine assistance before playing the games.

"For in essence, peace stems from an inner state supported by a moral or spiritual attitude, and it is chiefly in evoking this attitude that the possibility of enduring solutions can be found."---The Universal House of Justice from The Promise of World Peace. I pray that these games help evoke this spiritual or moral attitude in the players.

THE RATIONALE FOR A PARADIGM SHIFT IN THE GAMES WE PLAY

Games are extremely popular and ubiquitous. They play a large role in the life of most children. They can be and are played in a multitude of settings: Stadiums, back yards, parks, schools, birthday parties, religious holidays, homes, and within families. We must be very attentive to the types of games we play because when you have a group of children, perhaps diverse, in a social interchange such as a game, the rules and goals of the game define the nature and quality of that interchange, the nature and quality of their relationship to each other. Therefore, games can reinforce a pattern or paradigm for all other social relationships. I have witnessed in my own classes and also read social experiments that provide evidence that this is true. The social dynamic reinforced in games fosters attitudes and behaviors that carry over in to other social exchanges. When kids are competing on a regular basis this fosters alienation, one-upmanship, feelings of threat and dislike, lack of compassion and disunity. On the other hand, when kids are primarily engaged in cooperative play, the opposite happens. When they work together for a common goal whether in a game or class lesson, it promotes fellowship, friendship, altruism, unity, dialogue, and caring. Not that kids can't get annoyed or frustrated with team mates, but those very feelings and the expression of them undermine their chances of succeeding, and they know it. Actually, built into most cooperative games is the fact that if you don't work in unity with your partner or team, you will definitely fail. There is an element of this in traditional sports too, of course, but cooperative games do not promote ill will between teams and do not produce super stars.

Essentially, games are a form of socialization, and it is no accident that cultures all over the world use them to teach values and cultural standards.

To this end, most of the games in this manual are cooperative in nature. Relatively very few pit kids against each other. If there is competition, its usually with a person or persons who represent the lower nature or some aspect of it. In this case, they would wear an ugly mask. This really adds to the thrill and is a good metaphor of how ugly the lower nature can be--- which our higher nature should always compete against in real life. Students very rarely get to play the bad guy because I want them to practice engaging in cooperative endeavors, as opposed to getting an ego trip because they get to wear the mask and chase everybody else. There is another form of competition: kids vie to be the first to serve humanity or to acquire the most virtues. I think this is acceptable because there are quotes by Abdu'l-Baha encouraging vying in this context. (These quotes are used with those games and are in this manual). I explain to the kids that being first or having the most is not spiritually praiseworthy, but being the first to serve others, to show a virtue, or acquiring the most virtues is.

I highly encourage teachers to not play the traditional sports in Baha'i children's classes. Most kids get plenty of exposure to these types of games in school and out. These games can teach discipline, teamwork, loyalty, good sportsmanship, commitment, responsibility, endurance, etc., but they also teach undesirable characteristics as well, such as vainglory, domination, attachment to winning above all else, and the desire for others to fail. I think we can be more creative in our play.

I would like to share this quote by the Universal House of Justice again to assist in explaining the need for a change in the games we play:

"For in essence, peace stems from an inner state supported by a moral or spiritual attitude, and it is chiefly in evoking this attitude that the possibility of enduring solutions can be found."---The Universal House of Justice from The Promise of World Peace

Think about most of the games and sports our children play through organized sports teams and school gym class. Do they create or nurture an inner state of joy, affinity, unity, respect, oneness, or spiritual and moral attitudes conducive to peace? Do they awaken the spiritual or moral instincts in children? Or do they stimulate feelings, values, and attitudes which undermine an inner state of joy and affinity, or which interfere with the development of noble virtues?

Children's understanding of oneness derives from concrete activities which promote synergy, cooperation, unity, and an experience of interdependence---all of which are inherent properties of cooperative games. Cooperative games are a concrete metaphor in action for unity in diversity and oneness.

My personal opinion is that under most circumstances, most competitive games tend to promote values and attitudes that directly undermine unity and the oneness of humanity paradigm. Children can't learn oneness and unity when they are being taught to dominate, to control, to be superior, to succeed at the expense of others. Think of the themes found in typical competitive American board and group/team games:

Us versus them
Play to overcome and beat others
Were number one, we're the best
Exulting in other's failures, depending on it for own success, feeling good when others have faults, weaknesses, or make mistakes
Yay winners, boo losers—lack of respect and exclusion of the weaker and less coordinated. (Think of "last one there is a rotten egg")
Being first, or having the most is the criteria that establishes the winner

Remember, the themes in games influence formation of our social attitudes. And it is easy to see how the themes described above have played out in our social and international relationships:

Us versus them: It used to be the Americans versus the Russians, now its USA versus the United Nations, Liberals vs the Conservatives, citizens vs the immigrants, West vs the East, rich vs the poor, Christianity vs Islam, etc.

Play to overcome and beat others: This is how governments currently try to resolve challenges. The world is full of power hungry leaders who thrive on dominating, controlling and overcoming targeted populations. Any expression of forced domination over another human being reflects this theme on some level.

Were number one, we're the best: Nationalism, excessive patriotism, ethnocentrism, racism, and superiority complexes abound in political groups and individuals.

Exulting in other's failures, depending on it for own success, feeling good when others have faults, weaknesses, or make mistakes: We have a system of economics and privilege that benefits and rewards a relatively few elite, at the expense of the less fortunate. And few in power seems to be bothered by the inherent immorality of this. Could it be b/c we are socialized that this is just the natural order of things?

This attitude of exulting in other's failures and faults probably also contributes to the epidemic of back-biting and gossip in our culture.

Yay winners, boo losers—lack of respect and exclusion of the weaker and less coordinated: It seems that it is always the powerful and rich who get respect, get their way, and are included in big decisions. In many cultures the clumsy, the disabled, the ones who lose, are devalued. When we devalue people enough, it is easy to abuse and oppress them. Children learn early that winning earns them respect, popularity, and attention, and as they grow older, money and other rewards. Children who are raised with excessive competition feel and equate happiness and security with being better than others, getting ahead of others. What kind of society does that lead to? This can easily translate into the desire for superiority in general, which of course endangers unity.

Being first, or having the most wins criteria establishes the winner. If that is not a recipe for excessive consumerism and materialism, I don't know what is. Games in our culture can really reinforce the whole "Me first" attitude. Getting to the finish line or the end of path on a board game first is often the criteria for winning. We see this self-centered orientation

flagrantly demonstrated in the putting of a country's interests (especially economic) ahead of the welfare of the whole planet.

In the pursuit of being first or having the most, (as well as of superiority and dominance, which typical games also reinforce) people will belittle others, step on them, be unconcerned for their welfare, and become alienated to make it easier to ignore their rights. This process greatly undermines unity and justice, and we can see how it has infiltrated the world's national and international politics.

How many games do our children play in which the goal is to get the most for themselves? Monopoly is only one among thousands. This attitude of desiring the most for oneself breeds a value system where things or resources are more important than people. Of course this obstructs peace, justice, and unity. Think of the well known American game "King of the Mountain". It is really just a simplified version of the sad world scene: The purpose is to possess and control a resource and prevent others from having access to it. "Musical Chairs" is the same. Why not play cooperative versions like "People of the Mountain" or "Chair Island"? (Both are in this games manual). If one reads the rules and goals of these cooperative games and ponders the dynamic that these rules and goals will produce on the relationships, as opposed to the traditional versions, it is so easy to see how cooperative games promote Baha'i principles and how many traditional competitive games undermine them.

Although competitive games may not directly cause injustice and wars, I would venture to say that they contribute to these evils on a very basic level: Governments are composed of individuals with personal values, beliefs, and attitudes-which were developed as children on the playground, in the backyard, and in the family room. It is not inconceivable that these values, beliefs and attitudes will eventually find expression in the political arena.

Negative themes and aspects, such as being first, "us versus them" and "we're number one" are intrinsic to most competitive games. On the other hand, cooperative games have a wholly different set of themes:

Playing together with one another for common ends rather than against each other for mutually exclusive ends. The values inherent in these games the world needs desperately---mainly cooperation for the good of the whole.

In cooperative games, one person's strengths affect everyone's and one person's weakness or mistake is everyone's weakness or mistake. There is a theme of interdependence so all strive for everyone to do well. There are no losers or all lose. Is this not the situation of our planet with the threats of nuclear war and environmental destruction? If we do not work together in unity to prevent these disasters, eventually, even the most advantaged few will go down with the rest of us. We are all interconnected, all on one planet only.

The world is, in truth, moving on towards its destiny. The interdependence of the peoples and nations of the earth, whatever the leaders of the divisive forces of the world may say or do, is already an accomplished fact. Its unity in the economic sphere is now understood and recognized. The welfare of the part means the welfare of the whole, and the distress of the part brings distress to the whole. ~Shoghi Effendi, The Promised Day is Come, p. 122

If one reads the quote above and the ones below, it is easy to ascertain what types of games could best convey the perspective, wisdom, attitudes, beliefs and values they contain. Don't they all suggest the well being of one is dependent on the well being of all, that we should teach our children to play together in unity for the benefit of all?

He Who is your Lord, the All-Merciful, cherisheth in His heart the desire of beholding the entire human race as one soul and one body. ~Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, p. 213

Beware lest the desires of the flesh and of a corrupt inclination provoke divisions among you. Be ye as the fingers of one hand, the members of one body. ~Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, p. 140

It is obvious that all created things are connected one to another by a linkage complete and perfect, even, for example, as are the members of the human body. Note how all the members and component parts of the human body are connected one to another. In the same way, all the members of this endless universe are linked one to another. ~Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 47

.....this limitless universe is like the human body, all the members of which are connected and linked with one another with the greatest strength. How much the organs, the members and the parts of the body of man are intermingled and connected for mutual aid and help, and how much they influence

one another! In the same way, the parts of this infinite universe have their members and elements connected with one another, and influence one another spiritually and materially.
For example, the eye sees, and all the body is affected; the ear hears, and all the members of the body are moved. Of this there is no doubt; and the universe is like a living person. Moreover, the connection which exists between the members of beings must necessarily have an effect and impression, whether it be material or spiritual. ~Abdu'l-Baha, Some Answered Questions, p. 245

Were one to observe with an eye that discovereth the realities of all things, it would become clear that the greatest relationship that bindeth the world of being together lieth in the range of created things themselves, and that co-operation, mutual aid and reciprocity are essential characteristics in the unified body of the world of being, inasmuch as all created things are closely related together and each is influenced by the other or deriveth benefit therefrom, either directly or indirectly. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Compilations of Compilations, Vol. 1, page 71

For all beings are connected together like a chain, and reciprocal help, assistance, and influence belonging to the properties of things, are the causes of the existence, development, and growth of created beings. ~Abdu'l-Baha, Baha'i World Faith, p. 302)

The body politic may be likened to the human organism. As long as the various members and parts of that organism are coordinated and cooperating in harmony, we have as a result the expression of life in its fullest degree. When these members lack coordination and harmony, we have the reverse, which in the human organism is disease, dissolution, death. Similarly, in the body politic of humanity dissension, discord and warfare are always destructive and inevitably fatal. All created beings are dependent upon peace and coordination, for every contingent and phenomenal being is a composition of distinct elements. As long as there is affinity and cohesion among these constituent elements, strength and life are manifest; but when dissension and repulsion arise among them, disintegration follows. This is proof that peace and amity, which God has willed for His children, are the saving factors of human society, whereas war and strife, which violate His ordinances, are the cause of death and destruction. ~Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 98

So, if the nature of life and of human civilization is fundamentally connected & interdependent like the human body and

No power can exist except through unity. ~Baha'u'llah: Consultation, page 93

and *.....mutual helpfulness and cooperation are the two necessary principles underlying human welfare. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 150

and *The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established. ~Baha'u'llah*, Gleanings, p. 286

.....then why wouldn't we use every possible medium to teach these concepts to our children? Given how influential games are in socializing children, and given how humanity seems so resistant to learn and apply the principles of unity and oneness, why on earth would we play games that encourage kids to develop values and attitudes that directly undermine unity and oneness?

Whether its over a ball on a football field or over land on a battle field, aren't the goals fundamentally the same? Both sides are desperately trying to obtain control over a coveted resource and prevent the opposing side from having it. Are sports these days really capable of nurturing the nobility of the human spirit? I am sure there are teams whose coaches and players value integrity and team spirit. There may even be teams that out of altruism and kindness would be willing to risk losing so that even their worst player can participate. Let us honor and support them.

I am not calling for the abolition of traditional sports; just a new type of game in Baha'i education. A critical concept that all teachers and parents should learn is that what children learn and experience in the microcosm of the family and community, will eventually play out in the macrocosm of the world. How children are treated and allowed to treat others become the blueprints for larger settings later in life. In a cooperative game, where everyone is supporting each other for a common goal, even the most overweight, underweight, disabled, weakest, shortest, slowest and loneliest of children can

feel valued and play their part. They are like the poor and disadvantaged of our world; they need to be allowed to play a role in a common vision, a unified endeavor--the healing of the world. We need to include and respect them and listen to them and do our best to help them succeed in life. We need to realize that ultimately, their afflictions are our afflictions, their triumphs are our triumphs. And the athletically gifted are like the privileged elite-they need to sacrifice some of their advantage to uplift and include the weaker ones. They need to make a noble effort to assist their less fortunate brethren so that all will prosper. We are all one family, and we need to play games that train us to promote our brothers' and sisters' well being, not just our own.

Regarding reciprocity and cooperation: each member of the body politic should live in the utmost comfort and welfare because each individual member of humanity is a member of the body politic and if one member of the members be in distress or be afflicted with some disease all the other members must necessarily suffer.....Although the body politic is one family yet because of lack of harmonious relations some members are comfortable and some in direst misery, some members are satisfied and some are hungry, some members are clothed in most costly garments and some families are in need of food and shelter..... ~Abdu'l-Baha', Foundations of World Unity p. 38

The second attribute of perfection is justice and impartiality..... This means to have no regard for one's own personal benefits and selfish advantages..... It means to see one's self as only one of the servants of God..... It means to consider the welfare of the community as one's own. It means, in brief, to regard humanity as a single individual, and one's own self as a member of that corporeal form, and to know of a certainty that if pain or injury afflicts any member of that body, it must inevitably result in suffering for all the rest. ~Abdu'l-Baha, The Secret of Divine Civilization, p. 38

The body politic today is greatly in need of a physician. It is similar to a human body afflicted with severe ailments.....The disease which afflicts the body politic is lack of love and absence of altruism. In the hearts of men no real love is found, and the condition is such that, unless their susceptibilities are quickened by some power so that unity, love and accord may develop within them, there can be no healing, no agreement among mankind. Love and unity are the needs of the body politic today. Without these there can be no progress or prosperity attained. Therefore, the friends of God must adhere to the power which will create this love and unity in the hearts of the sons of men.
~Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 171

The rich among you must show compassion toward the poor, and the well-to-do must look after those in distress. ~Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 215

.....man was created to be a man - to be fair, to be just, to be merciful, to be kind to all his species, never to be willing that he himself be well off while others are in misery and distress - this is an attribute of the animal and not of man. Nay, rather, man should be willing to accept hardships for himself in order that others may enjoy wealth; he should enjoy trouble for himself that others may enjoy happiness and well-being. This is the attribute of man. This is becoming of man. Otherwise man is not man - he is less than the animal.

The man who thinks only of himself and is thoughtless of others is undoubtedly inferior to the animal because the animal is not possessed of the reasoning faculty. The animal is excused; but in man there is reason, the faculty of justice, the faculty of mercifulness. Possessing all these faculties he must not leave them unused. He who is so hard-hearted as to think only of his own comfort, such an one will not be called man. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Foundations of World Unity, page 42

The supreme need of humanity is cooperation and reciprocity. The stronger the ties of fellowship and solidarity amongst men, the greater will be the power of constructiveness and accomplishment in all the planes of human activity. Without cooperation and reciprocal attitude the individual member of human society remains self-centered, uninspired by altruistic purposes, limited and solitary in development like the animal and plant organisms of the lower kingdoms.
~Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 337

HIGHLY ACTIVE GAMES

Unity Chase #
We talked about how when people are disunified, bad/evil things happen like war, violence, hurt, anger, and racism. These were the evils they were going to try and avoid. We discussed the idea that in order to escape evil in real life, we must be unified. Evil is ugly like a monster, so I was going to play the role of evil using a monster mask. This game involved tying pairs of children's inside legs together with a cloth strip—not tightly. I told them to link elbows for more stability and cohesion. They were also encouraged to chant "inside/outside" as they walked to cue each other when to move the inside legs or the outside legs. I gave them a practice period. Those pairs that mastered walking or running in unity (if they didn't they went really slow or fell down) were able to escape me. To make it fair, I tied my legs together so I could only jump with 2 feet. If kids were unified in their movements there was no way I could catch them. If I caught a disunified pair, they were frozen and yelled for help until a unified pair "healed" them by tagging them. It is important to emphasize that there is no unity if you are dragging or hurting your partner in trying to escape me, and I will certainly catch you in this situation. To discourage being too forceful in running, I tell the players that if one or both of the partners fall, that is an automatic freezing, even if not touched by the bad guy. For older groups, like over 10 years old, those playing evil just tie their legs together in pairs just like the kids. This is b/c for this age group, they can be mighty fast and coordinated, and its therefore a more even competition. 6 pairs per bad guy is about the right ratio.

Also, once the cloth strips are used, they are quite impossible to untie. I have found that leaving them in a loop is fine, kids can just slip their feet in. The loops should be plenty big if the legs were not bound tight. Bigger feet may require shoe removal first. Also, never use rope—it will be too uncomfortable. Wide strips of a soft cotton cloth are best. For this game, it is best to pair children of similar size together.

I emphasize that the virtues of cooperation, respect, and courtesy are absolutely necessary to unity and to escape! You can not run in the opposite direction or too fast or you may hurt your partner. Point out the importance of unity and being aware of your teammate's pace and comfort. If you run too fast and make your partner fall you would be caught anyway--only by being totally unified and synchronized could they escape being tagged. And yes, it can be a bit uncomfortable and challenging---but creating & maintaining unity can also be that way! For both the version above and below, my assistant and I demonstrate the effects of unity and disunity in our movement as a connected team in a funny and exaggerated way so the players can understand how they are to move.

Variations: If you feel the kids are likely to hurt themselves being bound together, especially if they are playing on a hard floor, give each pair 2 feet of a crepe paper streamer and follow the guidelines under *Streamer Tag.* This works great.

With younger children, describe evil as hurtful things like hitting, fighting, mean words, hate, etc. Also, for kids under 8 years old, tying legs together is too hard and they hurt themselves. So here are some alternatives—which older children enjoy as well. The metaphor is the same (but you will need to dispense with the mask with kids under 7). 2 Kids can be placed inside a hula hoop and have to run that way. They can have a lead runner or both run side by side instead—which is safer and easier. 3 kids inside one is much harder. If this is too challenging, the rule can be that teams fast-walk, instead of run. Or, they run holding onto the outside of the hoop, with no one inside. Another option: 2-3 kids can ride on poles about the length of broom sticks and have to run holding the sticks between their legs—teach them not to yank up on the sticks! The taggers can do the same to make it fair, but if the taggers are adults they will have no trouble catching the little ones, so what I do is stand back to back with another adult or youth, link elbows, and we have to gallop sideways—that really slows us down and makes it harder to tag since our arms are considerably shortened this way. If that is too uncomfortable, a youth or adult tagger can gallop sideways or skip alone. This really slows down the gait.

Or, if the kids are 4-7 years old, I have found that the above method of putting my 2 legs in a loop and jumping or doing baby steps in the loop is just about an even match. (And its easier than the back to back version with another adult). Chasers can also squat jump like a frog. As in the harder leg-tying version, the taggers would freeze those who they touched, but they could be unfrozen by others who were untagged. Those frozen should yell for help. (I practically always avoid elimination elements in my games b/c then once the child is tagged, the rest of the game is a drag and they only get to watch the fun from the sidelines. Those kind of games do not foster joy and unity).

Also, for most young kids under 7, metaphors are completely incomprehensible. Just have the kids strive for courtesy and cooperation to avoid a chaser. If in the practice session, they constantly fall (which can actually be somewhat fun) you can dispense with the chaser altogether and just have them endeavor to get from point A to point B in a large open area.

A few more tips: Only one member of the stick or hoop group needs to be tagged to be frozen or freed. If anybody falls or goes off the stick, that equals disunity and they are automatically frozen, even if not touched by the bad guys. Encourage kids to communicate to their partners about direction, speed, etc. Tell them communication promotes unity and peace.

United We Stand, Divided We Fall #*

This game comes from Angola. So I asked where Angola was. It is originally called *Numbers Safety* but I renamed it. Being the metaphorically inclined teacher that I am, I added a lot of meaning to the game: I explained that unity is beautiful and pleasing to God in all its forms, but organized unity is the most powerful. For example, if one has a large picnic and every one is laughing and talking and having a good time and feel good about each other, or if you have thousands of people in a country who care about and love each other—that is fantastic. But if you take those same people and ask them to focus on a common goal, ask them to become organized into a work force or project, they will accomplish great things. (In the Baha'i faith, systematic implementation of Baha'u'llah's spiritual principles and teachings is done through the local, national and international administrative order He designed—i.e. His teachings are expressed through organizations with goals as well as individually.) So I said, in this game you all each stand for a nation. Kids were asked to name a nation they would like to represent. (Some need work on the difference between nations, continents, and states!)

I then explained that I would call out numbers and the "nations" (individual kids) were to form a group of that number as fast as possible. The numbered groups represented organization. Every one in a group must be connected by linking elbows or holding hands or touching hands to shoulders. This stands for the unity of the organization. I also told them that I would not always call out numbers that the group was divisible by, so someone might never be able to escape the chaser unless one kid saw that a fellow nation was tiring and give up their position so that nation could rest with the group. The chaser would be me, and I explained that I would be wearing a monster mask. I showed them the mask and explained that it is very ugly b/c it stands for evil, disunity, greed, selfishness, violence, and most relevantly, terrorism. I emphasized that organized unity protects us from these destructive forces. I also told them to really work together and not run off by yourself or climb a tree, b/c you may be ruining the chances of a group who needs you. I pointed out the boundaries of the play area and urged them to be aware of how your actions affect others.

I also explained that if I touched an individual or any one in a group of the wrong number, they were all frozen and only a group of the correct number could rescue and unfreeze them. It is basically, a "united we stand, divided we fall" concept. So if I call out a "3" then only those in groups of 3 are safe. At the beginning of each round, the kids have to spread out, so there is suspense in getting together as the chaser closes in. I told them that the nations are spread out all over the world, so they must be too! I also shared with them this quote by Baha'u'llah:

The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 286.

I told the kids that Baha'u'llah goes on to explain in this quote that only by obeying the teachings He has given us can humanity achieve international unity. The whole purpose of His mission was to guide humanity to world unity.

We had a blast with this game, and they got better and better at working together at each session of number calling. The higher numbers were the hardest.

Snakes in the Grass *

The quote that goes with this game is:

Characterize yourselves with the characteristics of the people of divine morality. Shun all manner of vices as you shun a poisonous snake..... ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Excellence in All Things, page 376

First I demonstrate the act of shunning. Then I explain that we are all on a journey towards God, but it is easy to become addicted to things or pick up habits that can interfere with and sidetrack that journey. I called these things vices and we talked about the meaning of vice. I explain that vices poison our souls, as a venomous snake would poison your body. I asked the kids for examples, which they readily and accurately supplied, such as addiction to material things, drug abuse, backbiting, gambling, the habit of putting one's self first, resort to violence when angry, cheating, lying, alcohol, etc. The snakes in the game represent these vices. I hissed at them like this to make the point: Visssssssssssssssse Sssssssssnakes. They naturally mimicked me. I also explained that one of the purposes of religion is to warn and protect us from vices and guide us safely through life. This game goes great with a unit on backbiting and gossip—the snakes represent those vices—which must be passionately avoided according to Baha'i teachings. You can then say that the game now consists of avoiding gosssssip ssssssnakes in the sand and backbiting bugzzzzzs in the bog!

Children took off their socks so they would not slip and one child laid down in the middle of the room on his/her belly. That child was the snake and she could not get up on her knees or leave a certain defined corridor. The goal is to leap, jig jag, run, etc. past the snake w/o getting touched (poisoned—addicted to vice). I explain that the distance between the

starting point and the safe zone past the snakes is a year in your life and the goal is to get through each year w/o being poisoned by a vice-snake. If you get touched you have come in contact with the vice and gotten poisoned and you become a snake too and join the first one in the snake corridor. I emphasize that the snakes can't grab, pinch or scratch and the runners must be careful not to step or jump on the snakes. The kids had to learn to work together and run as a group b/c then the snakes were not all focused on one person. They learned to take advantage of a snake being distracted. Obviously, the game gets harder as the number of snakes grows, and the winner is the last one to become a snake. But as with all my games, I never exalt a winner or make a big deal out of it.

Also, it is important to explain that you wait until all have gone through to run again. When all children have either reached the safe side or have become snakes, a new round begins and kids run back again the opposite way. The snakes rotate to face the new direction from which kids will be coming each time. It does not work if kids are running back and forth from different sides, unless you are playing outside and have enough snakes to face both directions. I prefer to have everybody wait to run back until all have crossed, otherwise chaos can easily ensue. It also inspires kids to go quickly if they know that if they wait they may be the last one running and all snakes will be focused on them alone. The width of the corridor will depend on how many kids you have starting as snakes and running. You can also adjust the width as more snakes arrive so that it does not become impossible to cross too soon. Just experiment.

For a unit on *trustworthiness,* I altered the metaphor to fit the theme of trustworthiness. The rules are the same. The snakes represent deceit, lying, cheating, stealing, breaking promises, etc.—everything that poisons trustworthiness. (And in reality, these negative behaviors can become vices.) The goal is to get through a month at a time w/o being poisoned (touched) by a snake. The idea is that each time one runs through the corridor of snakes w/o being touched, they have succeeded in being trustworthy for that month. If one is touched, they become a snake. Also going outside the boundaries to avoid being touched is cheating, and trustworthy people don't cheat, so that also means one becomes a snake. When all were on one side, instead of simply saying "Go!", I shouted a name of a month. January began the first round, Feb., the next and so on.

Sacred Rain

First we discussed how one's environment effects how we feel and can uplift or depress us. For ex., a beautiful, clean and well-kept garden would cheer one's soul and remind us of the beauty of God and inspire one to pray and give thanks. A polluted, filthy, chaotic, and messy environment makes us feel uncomfortable and we want to leave. If we can't, we will begin to feel depressed and anxious. Likewise, having the pollution of lower nature traits in our hearts makes us feel crummy and purification of our souls is incredibly uplifting. We know how to clean up a room or a yard, but how do we clean up our souls? So I asked kids what is one of the most powerful ways to cleanse and purify the human heart or soul? The answer comes from the following quote:

This is why, in Holy Scriptures, the counsels of heaven are likened to water, even as the Qur'an saith: `And pure water send We down from Heaven,'..... the Teachings which come from God are heavenly outpourings of grace; they are rain-showers of divine mercy, and they cleanse the human heart.
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha*: Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 146

I emphasized with the students that the teachings from God are like pure rain showers from heaven and they cleanse our hearts when we study and obey them. We talked about how real rain refreshes and cleanses the earth and living things.

Then I showed them some extraordinarily beautiful giant rain drops (4-5 inches tall and about 3 inches wide) which I had made. I had used sticky backed holographic foil sheets which I bought from Nasco Arts and Crafts Catalog. (800-558-9595, www.eNasco.com , item #s 9706595 & 9714401. They come in packs of 12 & 6, and are about $1.00 per sheet.) (Also, I had stuck them onto cardboard and then cut them out so they would be more firm.) There are several patterns in each pack, and I chose the ones that reminded me of water. They are amazingly lovely in light—reflecting multitudes of colors and the patterns change depending on one's angle. They really do look somewhat mystical! The kids "oohed" and "aahed" over them, so I knew they were cool. I told the kids that these drops represented the teachings of God and that's why they were so beautiful.

I told them that one of the most important tasks they have in life is to find the teachings of God & cleanse their hearts with them. This will protect them from the defilement, corruption & materialistic pollution of the world and of our lower nature.

Cleanse yourselves thoroughly, O people of Baha, from the defilement of the world, and of all that pertaineth unto it. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 304

I explained that I was going to hide these lovely raindrops outside in the commons and in the acre of woods included in the commons. They would not be under anything, they would be in plain sight, but you would still have to look closely to

notice them since we were playing in a large area. They may be tucked in a branch, or behind a tree trunk or laid among vegetation on the ground. I was going to wear an ugly monster mask, and I stood for materialism, greed, selfishness, ignorance, etc.--all those forces in the world that pollute our souls, corrupt us and that are manifestations of the lower nature.

I would count to 10 and give them a head start. They were to run outside and locate the Divine Teachings (raindrops) as fast as possible. I would chase them and I could freeze them if they did not have one of the drops. This symbolized how the lower nature can stifle spiritual progress w/o the influence of God's Word. But all was not lost. If you got frozen you should yell for help. Another soul could find another drop and unfreeze you by giving it to you. But one could not give up their own raindrop—they had to find an extra one.

I had hidden several more drops than children, so in case some were not found, at some point, the game would still be able to end b/c every child would have one. Since the game will end when everyone has a raindrop (and is steadfastly holding it over their heart), it is important to not give them too much of a head start or to hide the drops in too obvious locations.

The other rule was that in order to be safe from me, you had to hold the drop over your heart, to symbolize that you had God's teachings "in your heart". If I saw you gesticulating with it in the air or holding it to your side, I could grab it away from you and freeze you—the lesson being: Never let the teachings of God out of your heart b/c the corruption of the world and the lower nature are very powerful and can pollute your soul so easily. This is one of the reasons why Baha'u'llah exhorts us to read His Writings 2x a day. It was fun to sneak up from behind a child who was distracted and grab the raindrop. (I then put it out of play by putting in my pocket). But it was also heartwarming to see how eagerly all the students came to the rescue and searched for more divine teachings (i.e. raindrops) to liberate that child. (This is also another reason to have a few extras hidden.)

I also tried to tempt them to surrender their raindrop with promises of fame, fortune, swimming pools, horses, etc., just like the devil (which is a metaphor for the lower nature in the Baha'i teachings) would tempt a person to sell their soul. But even though they teased me by stepping away and removing the drop away from their hearts, they never handed it over for material gain.

Variations: If you are doing a unit on prayer or obligatory prayer, this game can also be used, except the idea is that the sacred rain is prayer instead. Explain that when we pray, it is as if we are drawing down rain showers from heaven, which are the bounties of God. When we engage in communion with God, the Divine Spirit, this prayer cleanses & revitalizes our hearts and souls, enables us to grow and thrive spiritually, and protects us from our lower natures, represented by the person wearing the mask. Children would then hold the water drop between two hands, as in prayer position to be safe.

Sacred Rain can also become a symbol for Baha'u'llah's laws and exhortations. Use the quotes below for prayer, and the last one for laws.

Thou hast written concerning the Obligatory Prayer. Such prayer is mandatory and necessary for everyone. .....it is the cause of ascent for the souls. It is .....living waters from the gardens of paradise. It is a clear duty prescribed by the All-Merciful. In no wise is it permissible to postpone or neglect it.
~Abdu'l-Baha: The Importance of Obligatory Prayer and Fasting, page 17

Obligatory prayers and supplications are the very water of life.....Take great care with this...
~Abdu'l-Baha: The Importance of Obligatory Prayer and Fasting, page 19

These children are even as young plants, and teaching them the prayers is as letting the rain pour down upon them, that they may wax tender and fresh.....
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 139

Remembrance of God is like the rain and dew which bestow freshness and grace on flowers and hyacinths, revive them and cause them to acquire fragrance.....and renewed charm.....Strive thou, then, to praise and glorify God by night and by day, that thou mayest attain infinite freshness and beauty. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Prayer, Meditation and the Devotional Attitude, page 232

The sincere among His servants will regard the precepts set forth by God as the Water of Life to the followers of every faith..... ~Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 29

Sacred Light
This game would be played exactly like *Sacred Rain*, except that light symbols would be used instead of rain drops. (See description under *Trustworthiness Tag* for idea on an attractive light symbol.) Prayer is the theme for this version. The symbol should be held up to the heart for protection from the lower nature bad guy. Use the same rules as *Sacred Rain,* except use the intro below and replace references to "the divine teachings" in the *Sacred Rain* version with "prayer" when explaining the rules. Here is the variation in the intro to go with the new metaphor:

I told the students that one of the most important habits we need to develop in life is to practice regular _____? (prayer) so that we can grow closer to _____? (God) and become more spiritually radiant. This will also protect us from our _____? (lower natures) and from the corruption and unspiritual forces in the world. I explained that I was going to hide these lovely prayer light symbols outside in the commons and in the acre of woods included in the commons. They would not be under anything, they would be in plain sight, but you would still have to look closely to notice them. I was going to wear an ugly monster mask, and I stood for materialism, greed, selfishness, the darkness of ignorance, etc.--all those forces in the world that corrupt us and that are manifestations of the lower nature. If we don't have the light of prayer in our hearts, these forces can halt our progression towards God. This is why I can freeze you if you don't have the prayer symbol on your heart.

The following quotes using the light metaphor would then be used instead of the water metaphor:

Remembrance of Me is a healing medicine to the souls and a light to the hearts of men.
~Baha'u'llah: Prayer, Meditation, and the Devotional Attitude, page 228

Verily, by His remembrance the eye is cheered and the heart is filled with light.
~Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, pages 29-30

I beseech Thee…. to make of my prayer….. a light that will lead me unto the ocean of Thy Presence.
~Baha'u'llah, Prayers and Meditations, p. 317

When one supplicates to his Lord, turns to Him and seeks bounty from His Ocean, this supplication brings light to his heart, illumination to his sight, life to his soul and exaltation to his being.
~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Prayer, Meditation, and the Devotional Attitude, page 235

Loyal Lips
This game is really just another version of *Sacred Rain*, which I altered a bit to go with our study of the virtue of loyalty or faithfulness. Also, either version is a good game to play for lessons teaching the importance of reading the Writings. First I reminded them, using the same quote from *Sacred Rain,* that the verses of God are like cleansing rain:

This is why, in Holy Scriptures, the counsels of heaven are likened to water, even as the Qur'an saith: `And pure water send We down from Heaven,'..... the Teachings which come from God are heavenly outpourings of grace; they are rain-showers of divine mercy, and they cleanse the human heart.
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha*: Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 146

Then I read them the following quote:

Recite ye the verses of God every morn and eventide. Whoso faileth to recite them hath not been ***faithful*** *to the Covenant of God and His Testament, and whoso turneth away from these holy verses in this Day is of those who throughout eternity have turned away from God.*
~Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 73

This verse makes it clear that to be truly faithful/loyal to the Covenant of God, one has to recite His verses regularly.

So, I told them that I would again wear a mask, and represent the lower nature. This time I chose a devil mask, since in the Baha'i Writings it says that the devil is a metaphor for our lower natures.

The new rule was that in order to be safe from me, you had to hold the drop up to your *mouth*, (as opposed to your heart as in Sacred Rain) to symbolize that you were reciting the verses of God daily. If you did not hold the drop up to your mouth, I could freeze you. This symbolized how the lower nature can stifle spiritual progress w/o the influence of God's Word. All the other rules/tips are exactly the same as in *Sacred Rain*. If you don't have rain drops, skip the water

metaphor and have kids find strips of pretty card stock or paper with Baha'i quotes on them instead. Cover them with clear contact paper or laminate for protection.

Pearl Power
This is very similar to *Sacred Rain*, but was inspired by the verses below.

Immerse yourselves in the ocean of My words, that ye may unravel its secrets, and discover all the pearls of wisdom that lie hid in its depths. ~Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 85

O My servants! Through the might of God and His power, and out of the treasury of His knowledge and wisdom, I have brought forth and revealed unto you the pearls that lay concealed in the depths of His everlasting ocean. ..... ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, pages 327-328

Glory be unto Thee, O Lord of the world and Desire of the nations, O Thou Who hast become manifest in the Greatest Name whereby the pearls of wisdom and utterance have appeared from the shells of the great sea of Thy knowledge..... ~Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, pages 33-34

I first asked the kids what ignorance meant. We defined it as unawareness, being uneducated, not knowledgeable. Then I shared the following quote:

The root cause of wrongdoing is ignorance.....
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of`Abdu'l-Baha, p. 136

We discussed what "root cause" means. We talked about how the roots of a tree are often unseen, but they are what nourishes the tree, keep it alive. Kids gave examples of wrongdoing. Then I asked: "What is the opposite of ignorance?" They got it---wisdom. So if we want to avoid being ignorant, we should strive to gain_____? (wisdom) "Where do we get wisdom?" They got it: From the ocean of God's Words. We find pearls of wisdom in them to enlighten us and make us wise. "And where is this ocean found?" In the Writings of God's Manifestations. "And Who is His Manifestation for today?" Baha'u'llah. I then re-emphasized that all evil, wrongdoing, and bad things come from ignorance of God's truths and will for us. If people really knew about how important spiritual behavior is to human happiness and the effect of wrongdoing on the soul, our world would be filled with peace and love.

Then I showed them a monster mask, and told them I would be wearing it b/c I was going to be the wrong-doing that comes from ignorance. It is ugly, just as ignorant wrongdoing is. I explained that while they stayed in the classroom, I was going to hide pearls of wisdom out in the commons, one for each child. They would not be under anything, they would be in plain sight, but you would still have to look closely to notice them, for example behind a tree. I told them that I would not show them what they were looking for ahead of time b/c I wanted it to be a challenge—and we often find pearls of wisdom in the Writings w/o knowing what we are looking for ahead of time. But as in the quotes read earlier, we have to strive, to exert effort to find these pearls. They don't just pop out of their shells onto the shore! I reassured them that they would recognize them b/c it would be obvious that mother nature did not make it. I also exhorted them to treat the pearls of wisdom with respect, to be gentle with them and avoid getting them dirty. I also explained the boundaries of the game playing space, so they would not waste time looking in areas not relevant.

I would count to 10 and give them a head start. They were to run outside and locate the pearls of wisdom as fast as possible. I would chase them and I could freeze them if they did not have a pearl of wisdom. But all was not lost. If you got frozen you should yell for help. Another soul can find another pearl of wisdom and unfreeze you by giving it to you. But one could not give up their own pearl of wisdom—you had to find an extra one to be able to rescue others.

One can hide several more pearls of wisdom than children, so in case some are not found, at some point, the game can still end b/c every child would have one. Since the game will end when everyone has obtained a pearl of wisdom, it is important to not give them too much of a head start or to hide the pearls of wisdom in too obvious locations. I stuck them in branches and laid them on the ground, but one still had to look a little bit to notice them, since we were playing on an acre of wooded land. I encouraged the students to study their pearl of wisdom, and then to get busy rescuing those who are frozen. This way all are active to the very end. Some students really loved being the rescuers and worked very hard to liberate others. I explained that this was like sharing the teachings of Baha'u'llah with others, i.e. teaching.

After I hid the pearls of wisdom, to make sure they got the meaning of the game, I asked the following questions, urging them to answer as a group: "What is the root cause of wrongdoing? (ignorance) What is the opposite of ignorance? (wisdom) Where do we find wisdom? (In the ocean of God's Words). And they are like? (pearls). And where do we find the ocean of God's Words?" (in the Writings of His Messengers, or Baha'u'llah's Writings.)

Then I let them loose and we all had great fun with this game—with me chasing them and them fleeing and searching and rescuing. It is ideal that at the end of the game students take their pearls of wisdom inside and share what they think the meaning is with the rest of the class. Other students can offer ideas if the student is baffled by their particular pearl of wisdom. In our class, after all the students had thoughtfully shared the meaning of their pearl of wisdom, I gave each one a huge pearl on a gold string necklace. (Fake pearls and thin gold string are available at craft stores.)

Here is a description of the pearls of wisdom: I had some gorgeous mylar sheets called "Shimmer Sheetz" They really do shimmer and have different colors layered on top of each other and look very mystical and unique. The pattern that seems most appropriate for deep water is called "Black Iris" and it is really lovely. It is not really black but has blues, purples, greens, and fuchsia. It reminds me of the layers of colors in deep water more than the other colors, which are equally beautiful. B/c the quotes mention depths, I felt the darker was more appropriate. Two other color patterns that would work equally well are "Turquoise Gemstone" & "Amethyst Gemstone". One can obtain these shimmer sheets from www.franticstamper.com. Click on their search page and type "shimmer sheetz" in the box. Or you can find them at other locations by doing a Google search. There are 3 5"X12" sheets per package, each package is about $6.50 Or one can just use pretty blue paper. I just like to make anything having to do with God's Words look really outstandingly beautiful.

Anyway, I found 12 quotes that I thought were key pearls of wisdom in the Baha'i Writings that were relatively easy to understand. (That was a real exercise in detachment—there are so many to choose from!) Some were longer than others, so instead of cutting the sheets in equal sizes, I first wrote each quote with a metallic gold paint marker—3 to each sheet. (If you make a mistake, a solvent such as OOPS wipes it right off.) When they had dried, I cut out the right size for each quote with at least an inch at the top of each quote. This was so I could cut out waves along the top of each quote. Then I glued the quote on to a blue mat-board and using a paper cutter, cut the board to fit the mylar sheet, with about ¼ inch boarder around the entire sheet. Then I used iridescent white pearl fabric paint to make different sized pearls on the mylar, under and around the quote, in the curl of a wave, etc. (One can also use pearl 3D stickers that are flat on the bottom and come in different sizes. They are found in scrap booking sections of arts & crafts stores like Michael's). I must say, they looked really pretty. When they were dry, I put them in a satin covered container that had pearls on it, and told the curious students that the pearls of wisdom were in this container. Again, b/c the container was to hold God's pearls of wisdom, it had to look elegant and special. A blue container would be best, to represent water.

Here are the pearls of wisdom I chose for the game: (I did not put the book titles and pages on the pearls of wisdom cards.)

1. *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. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 260

2. *Be ye trustworthy on earth, and withhold not from the poor the things given unto you by God through His grace. ~Baha'u'llah:* Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 55

3. *Select ye a single language for the use of all on earth, and adopt ye likewise a common script. ~Baha'u'llah:* The Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 88

4. *It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world. The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, p. 250

5. *Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 288

6. *Women and men have been and will always be equal in the sight of God. ~Baha'u'llah:* Women, page 379

7. *Man's merit lieth in service and virtue and not in the pageantry of wealth and riches. ~Baha'u'llah:* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 138

8. *The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established. This unity can never be achieved so long as the counsels which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed are suffered to pass unheeded. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 286

9. *Know thou assuredly that the essence of all the Prophets of God is one and the same. Their unity is absolute. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 78

10. *.... regard backbiting as grievous error,..... as backbiting quencheth the light of the heart, and extinguisheth the life of the soul. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 265

11. *Whoso keepeth the commandments of God shall attain everlasting felicity. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, p. 289

12. *We have ordained obligatory prayer and fasting so that all may by these means draw nigh unto God, the Most Powerful, the Well-Beloved. ~Baha'u'llah:* The Importance of Obligatory Prayer and Fasting, page 2

True VS False ## *

This game is a great way to review concepts and challenge kids to think quickly. Every statement is based on scripture that has been shared with the kids. Two teams of equal numbers line up facing each other--fairly close. One team are the "falses" and one team are the "trues". If I make a statement that is true such as "Baha'u'llah came to create world unity", the trues chase the falses and try to tag them. If I make a statement that is false, the falses chase the trues and try to tag them. If one is tagged they have to go over to that side. Posters with a large red "T" or "F" can be propped up on the corresponding side so players can remember what side they are on. Cones are set up which indicate the safety area where you can no longer be tagged. These cones are set up equal distance from each team. The game ends when all or the majority are on one team, but I usually stall that until all the statements are done by choosing the side with the fewest players next so they will be chasing and can get more teammates by tagging. You may want to suggest that the players wait for the last word of the statement—as this is often what determines the truth or falsity of it. For a unit on God, one could make the following statements: "There is only one God" or "There are 3 Gods", or "God has sent us only one Messenger" or "Christ is a Messenger from God" etc.

Variation: At a large public indoor Ayyam-i-Ha party that had over 50 kids ages 3-12, we played a less confusing and safer version. We wanted the younger ones to be able to understand and were concerned that if big kids were chasing little ones, they may knock them down when tagging them. The theme of the party was "Inner Beauty" and we did "L.O.V.E.", "Digging for Diamonds" (from the Creative Dramatics Manual) and "Chair Island". We wanted one more game that we could play in this situation that could be related to virtues. So this is what we did:

Make a large "T" and "F" on opposite sides of the room using tape on the floor, (or have 2 people hold up posters with the letters). Ask the players to stand in the middle between the "T" & "F". Here is one way to explain this version:

"One of the reasons there is so much suffering and problems in the world is b/c too many people follow leaders that are not wise, leaders who do not know truth from falsehood, right from wrong, good from bad. In this game, we are going to follow only wise leaders, leaders who know what is true and false, and they are so wise that they are able to know this very quickly. One of the goals of your parents and teachers is to raise children who will someday know right away was is true and false and be wise and good leaders of others.

All the players start in the middle of the room by crouching down, knees bent, ready to jump and lead others. Spread out just a little so you don't bump others as you leap up. I will read a statement. The first child to jump up and shout whether it is true or false—and is correct---gets to lead others to a big sign that says in a big red letter either "T" for true or "F" for false. "T" will be over on this side of the room, and "F" will be over here on this side.

Once a person has led the group, they need to show detachment and generosity and let another child lead next time. In other words, no one gets to lead twice. Sometimes many will jump up at the same time with the correct answer. I will then call on one person to lead.

There is also another requirement: The leader must lead others to the correct sign by moving in a way other than walking or running. This shows the virtues of courage and creativity, and a willingness to lead in new ways. Please do not jump up if you are too shy to lead others in a fun or creative way." (Give a few examples of ways one can move across the room other than walking or running).

For our theme of inner beauty, simple statements about virtues were made, such as: "It makes us feel happy when we are kind to others," "we are showing patience when we whine", "courtesy is shown when we race to be first to the refreshment table", "virtues bring happiness and peace to the world", "we are showing the virtues of obedience & respect when we do what our parents ask", "we are being trustworthy when we lie", "God wants us to show virtues."

Endeavour to the utmost of thy powers to establish the word of truth with eloquence and wisdom and to dispel falsehood from the face of the earth. ~Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 139

They whose sight is keen, whose ears are retentive, whose hearts are enlightened, and whose breasts are dilated, recognize both truth and falsehood, and distinguish the one from the other. ~Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 9

Get Faith #

This game teaches the importance of having faith and/or spirituality in protecting ourselves from our lower natures. To represent the lower nature, I usually use rubber masks, but they are hot and do not stay centered during running so vision is constantly lost. So this time my assistant and I wore little ugly plastic children's masks which just cover the face with an elastic band in the back, as opposed to a full hooded mask. I explained that one of us is pride, ego, and selfishness, and the other is greed, materialism, prejudice, cruelty, (aspects of the lower nature, etc). (When there are over 10 kids, one needs 2 people to play the "bad guys"). Then I presented tongue depressors with 9 pointed stars made out of foam glued to them with a gem in the center of the stars. (One can also use 2 notary seals stuck together over the top of the stick). I explained that the sticks represent the teachings of Baha'u'llah, firmness of faith, and spirituality. If you have this we cannot imprison you, we can not chase you. But if you do not, we can invade your soul and imprison you. The Baha'i teachings often refer to the ego-self and lower nature as a prison, and explain how materialism, the absence of virtues, etc., degrade and capture and imprison the human soul. For example:

O MY SERVANT! Free thyself from the fetters of this world, and loose thy soul from the prison of self. Seize thy chance, for it will come to thee no more. ~Baha'u'llah: Persian Hidden Words, # 40

The "prison" was a sewer cover. If you don't happen to have a sewer cover handy, use a rope, cones, or hose to delineate the prison space. So next all the children except my bad guy helper line up at one end of a rectangular playing field. Then my helper and I stick the "faith sticks" in the ground at various distances throughout the playing field, some are a little over the half way mark in the direction of the lined up kids, and some are almost 2/3rds the way up to the other end where we will be stationed. Then my helper and I stand at this other end, masks in place on our faces, and I shout "GO!" And we run towards the children as they run toward the sticks, frantically trying to get one before we get to them. Thus, the goal is to get Baha'u'llah's teachings, faith and spirituality (represented by the sticks) before we poison and imprison you.

I always make sure there are at least 2 or 3 less sticks than players so that the game stays lively. (Because once everyone has the sticks, the game would end b/c we can't chase them. With little kids, like under 6, you may want to play with the same number of sticks b/c there will always be kids caught before they can get a stick even if there is a stick for every child. A round would end when all have sticks—i.e. every one has successfully been freed from prison by the delivering of a stick w/o getting caught. Also remember that younger kids can be really scared of masks, so allow them to look at and touch the masks before playing and do not use really scary realistic ones. Generally speaking, chase games with masks for kids under 6 is not a good idea.)

So if we tag anybody without a stick, they go to prison. Those that have sticks are safe. One of us guards the prison—remember we can not chase the others with sticks (=teachings of God, faith and spirituality) --but I explained that even those people of strong faith can fall by getting "too palsy with, too close to bad things" that they become corrupted, that they can lose their faith and spirituality. Baha'u'llah alludes to this in several passages such as these two:

Beware! Walk not with the ungodly and seek not fellowship with him, for such companionship turneth the radiance of the heart into infernal fire. ~Baha'u'llah: Persian Hidden Words, # 57

Watch over yourselves, for the Evil One is lying in wait, ready to entrap you. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 94

(Abdu'l-Baha has explained that we do not believe in the devil—it is a metaphor for our lower natures. See Promulgation of Universal Peace pages 287 & 294).

So--I told them that if they get too close to one of us bad guys, even though we can not pursue them, we can touch and poison them and take their faith away--in which case they have to drop their sticks and go into the prison (of ego-self and the lower nature) with the others. (Also, without this component, the game would not be nearly as challenging, b/c all the kids would have to do is hand sticks to those in prison. It makes it much more exciting if they have to avoid being touched.) So the only way to rescue those who are in prison is to avoid being touched when attempting to deliver a stick. Once a person receives a stick they can run away—but they better move fast b/c the lower nature monster can nab them if they are close and do not need to be chased.

Some helpful tips: Before the game, I encouraged them to cooperate so that they work as a team—it is much harder for the guard to prevent rescues if rescuers are coming at him/her as a group. I also encouraged them to notice when a "faithless" person is being closed in on during pursuit and to run beside that person and give them faith and spirituality (i.e. a stick) before I touch them. *To add interest and make sure that the prison population is constant, I tell players they can't rescue anyone on the way to prison, only once they have got there*. *And tossing sticks to those in prison is not allowed. They must be handed—this is more risky*. You can make a rule that if a player with a faith stick gets touched, that stick is out of the game for good—I put them in my pocket. Or you can say they just have to drop it on the spot and others can try to get to it and pick it up off the ground-- which means there will be less kids to chase b/c more will have the protection of faith and spirituality.

Another good and fun way to handle the stick population is this: I did not remove tagged player's sticks from the game, but did not just drop them on the ground where the player was tagged either. I put them next to the prison on the ground, and said that the rescuers had to get to them (while avoiding being touched themselves by the bad-guy guard) and hand them to the prisoners. The prisoners could not pick them up themselves. Once a prisoner got one, they had to escape before the guard touched them. It is key that the group work together to keep the guard busy and distracted. (2 guards make it too hard to rescue anybody unless the group is huge.) I like this version b/c I never have felt comfortable with the idea that one gives up their own faith stick to give faith to others. This way, the rescuers don't have to become faithless (by giving away their stick) to rescue those in the prison of self and faithlessness. However, there is a down side to this version: Doing it this way means that only those who grab the few extra sticks can rescue the imprisoned. Others can help by distracting, but if they can't give away their own sticks, then it reduces their participation—and many just love being chased—which they won't be if they have a stick. So....I play the version I feel moved to at the time.

I think this quote by Shoghi Effendi goes well with this game, especially the rescuing part:

"Now is the time,.... for the American believers, ...to proclaim ..... their capacity and readiness to rescue a fallen and sore-tried generation that has rebelled against its God and ignored His warnings, and to offer it that complete security which only the strongholds of their Faith can provide." ~Shoghi Effendi: The Advent of Divine Justice, page 48

For a unit on life after death, the following quotes about being a true believer would work well with *Get Faith*:

....Such is the station ordained for the true believer that if to an extent smaller than a needle's eye the glory of that station were to be unveiled to mankind, every beholder would be consumed away in his longing to attain it. ~Baha'u'llah, as quoted by Shoghi Effendi: The Advent of Divine Justice, pages 76-77

We dare not, in this Day, lift the veil that concealeth the exalted station which every true believer can attain, for the joy which such a revelation must provoke might well cause a few to faint away and die. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, pages 9-10

..... the true believer (will) eternally live and endure. His spirit will everlastingly circle round the Will of God. He will last as long as God, Himself, will last. .....It is evident that the loftiest mansions in the Realm of Immortality have been ordained as the habitation of them that have truly believed in God and in His signs. Death can never invade that holy seat.....~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, pages 140-1

Death proffereth unto every confident believer the cup that is life indeed. It bestoweth joy, and is the bearer of gladness. It conferreth the gift of everlasting life.
As to those that have tasted of the fruit of man's earthly existence, which is the recognition of the one true God, exalted be His glory, their life hereafter is such as We are unable to describe. The knowledge thereof is with God, alone, the Lord of all worlds. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, pages 345-346

Love VS Hate #
This game is played exactly as the one above, but is geared towards non-religious settings. Instead of 9 pointed stars, you use cardboard hearts glued to tongue depressor size craft sticks. They represent love. Any helpers and myself wear monster masks and we represent hatred. You tell the players that they have to possess love to ward off hate. Tell kids that if hate gets you before you have love, you go to misery motel—b/c when we feel hatred we make ourselves and others miserable. Other team members try to rescue those in misery by giving them love. But as in the above game, even though hatred can't chase you if you have love, if you get too close to hatred, it can destroy your love. In real life, if we hang around people full of hatred and anger—it will rub off on us and eventually poison us too. So if you get too close to hatred while trying to free someone in misery motel—or you just aren't paying attention and back into one of us monsters

of hate, we poison you and take away your love and into misery motel you go. That heart symbol is then removed for the rest of the game—which means there are always victims to chase b/c at no time does every one have love. As in the Faith version, we start off with fewer heart sticks than players just to keep things lively. Scatter the heart-sticks on the gym floor or stick in the soil if playing outside as you would the faith sticks. Then the monsters dash towards the kids who are dashing towards the heart sticks. If you have more than 10 kids, you will need 2 monsters of hate, and after the initial ambush, one will primarily guard the captives in the misery motel.

*.....love is light, no matter in what abode it dwelleth; and hate is darkness, no matter where it may make its nest. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 3

Loving Service VS Corrupt and Selfish Desires #
This game was inspired by these 3 quotes:

Concern yourselves with the things that benefit mankind, and not with your corrupt and selfish desires. ~Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 29

Know that nothing will benefit thee in this life save supplication and invocation unto God, service in His vineyard, and, with a heart full of love, be in constant servitude unto Him.
~ `Abdu'l-Baha, Baha'i World Faith, page 375

For service in love for mankind is unity with God. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha, Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 186

This game is also a version of the *Get Faith* game, and can also be played in non-religious settings, but is more righteous sounding than the *Love VS Hate* version—so choose your version carefully. In this game, a helper and I wore ugly monster masks and we represented corrupt and selfish desires—that which inhibits selfless and loving service. We stood at one end of the yard. The kids lined up at the other end. Stuck in the ground and placed in between us at many various spots, were tongue depressor sized sticks which had large cardboard hearts glued on top of them, and these represented loving service. When I said "Go!" kids raced to grab a loving service heart stick before corrupt and selfish desires poisoned them by tagging them. If we tagged someone before they protected themselves with loving service, they had to go stand on a sewer, which represented the prison of selfishness. Once a child had a loving service stick, we could not chase them---but if someone with loving service got too close to us, we could poison them by touching them, in which case they have to drop their sticks and go into the prison with the others. I explained that even if we are practicing selfless loving service, if we get too close selfishness, we can be corrupted and lose our spiritual protection. There were enough heart sticks for everyone, (that is optional) and one of the goals of the game is to rescue others from the prison of selfishness by giving them a stick without getting poisoned yourself. In other words, one of us guarded the prison, while those with heart sticks tried to slip one to those in prison with out being tagged. One could entice us to leave the prison area to chase them if they dropped their heart stick, and others could run along beside them and hand it to them if they really cooperated. This game was a lot of fun and the kids really worked well together.

See *Get Faith* for more details on the rules and the section "Some helpful tips".

For a unit on life after death, one could employ the following quotes and play the same game:

I swear by God! That which hath been destined for him who aideth My Cause excelleth the treasures of the earth. ~Baha'u'llah, as quoted by Shoghi Effendi: The Advent of Divine Justice, page 84

*The fleeting hours of man's life on earth pass swiftly by and the little that still remaineth shall come to an end, but that which endureth and lasteth for evermore is the fruit that man reapeth from his servitude at the Divine Threshold. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha,* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 234

Save the Sleepers #
This yet another variation or incarnation of the *Get Faith* Game. This one was created specifically for our day camp on teaching the Faith. The game is one big metaphor for the reason for sharing God's teachings with humanity. First, I read the students the following quotes and explained that it is the obligation of every Baha'i to not only spiritualize themselves but also to assist others in this process. Those who are unaware of God's will, of spiritual truths and of God's loving teachings for this Day and Age, are as spiritually asleep. The spiritual teacher should lovingly attempt to waken them.

Is there any excuse left for anyone in this Revelation? No, by God, the Lord of the Mighty Throne! My signs have encompassed the earth, and My power enveloped all mankind, and yet the people are wrapped in a strange sleep! ~Baha'u'llah as quoted by Shoghi Effendi: The Promised Day is Come, page 6

Many a day hath passed over thee whilst thou hast busied thyself with thy fancies and idle imaginings. How long art thou to slumber on thy bed? Lift up thy head from slumber, for the Sun hath risen to the zenith, haply it may shine upon thee with the light of beauty. ~Baha'u'llah: Arabic Hidden Words, # 62

O BOND SLAVE OF THE WORLD! Many a dawn hath the breeze of My loving-kindness wafted over thee and found thee upon the bed of heedlessness fast asleep. Bewailing then thy plight it returned whence it came. ~Baha'u'llah: Persian Hidden Words, #30

*Strive ye then, with all your hearts and souls, to awaken those who slumber, to cause the blind to see, and the dead to rise. ~`Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 112

Teach the Cause! Teach! Teach! Convey the Message! Awaken the souls!
~`Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i Meetings and the 19 Day Feast, page 9

In this version, the sticks represent the teachings of Baha'u'llah. It differs from *Get Faith* only in what the sticks represent and in the start of the game:

I appoint a Baha'i teacher and give him/her the sticks (a few short of the same # as there are children) with 9 pointed stars on them. Next all the children lie down in a line, pretending to be asleep spiritually. The teacher with the sticks is a medium-distance run away. I am on the opposite side, the same distance away, wearing an ugly mask representing the lower nature. (See *Get Faith* for more details about the masked bad guy). When I shout "GO" we both make a dash for the sleeping souls. If I get to any before she does, they go to prison. Those that have sticks are safe. Then the game proceeds exactly like *Get Faith.* You can also use this game for a class on the coming of The Bab, and the sticks represent recognition of Him. The teacher with the sticks is then a Dawnbreaker. Use this quote in that case:

These are the glorious days on the like of which the sun hath never risen in the past. These are the days which the people in bygone times eagerly expected. What hath then befallen you that ye are fast asleep? ~The Bab, Selections from the Writings of the Bab, p. 161

Trustworthiness Tag #
This is yet another incarnation of *Get Faith*: I showed the kids a devil mask and explained that I will wear it and I will stand for deceit, untrustworthiness, lying, cheating, stealing, etc. Then I showed them "sun sticks". (I had bought wooden sun shapes, double coated both sides of them with yellow paint markers specifically for wood, stuck a sun sticker in the center for extra pizazz, and glued flat blue craft sticks to the back side—the side w/o the sticker.) If the students have already been exposed to the quote below, I ask what it might represent. If they have not, I explain that the sun-sticks represent trustworthiness.

....trustworthiness is the sun of the heaven of My commandments....~ Baha'u'llah: Trustworthiness Compilation, #22 pages 5-6

If you have this sun-stick, I cannot imprison you, I can not chase you. But if you do not, I can catch and imprison you.

I also walked the boundaries, and said that if someone ran out of bounds while being chased, that was cheating—which is a sign of untrustworthiness. That meant they then had to go to prison.

The "prison" was a area marked off by 4 cones. So next all the children line up at one end of a rectangular playing field. Then I stick the "sun-sticks" in the ground at various distances throughout the playing field, some are a little over the half way mark in the direction of the lined up kids, and some are almost 2/3rds the way up to the other end where we will be stationed. Then I stand at this other end, put the mask on shout "GO!" And I ran towards the children as they run toward the sticks, frantically trying to get one before I get to them. Thus, the goal is to get trustworthiness (represented by the sticks) before I catch and imprison you.

I always make sure there are at least 2 or 3 less sticks than players so that the game stays lively. (Because once everyone has the sticks, the game would end b/c I can't chase them). So if I tag anybody without a stick, they go to prison. Those that have sticks are safe. Then I focus on keeping the prisoners in the prison. (However, if the group is over 10

players, I need another bad guy to start with me in the beginning. Then one of us will guard the prison). Remember we can not chase the others with sticks (=trustworthiness) --but I explained that even trustworthy people can become corrupted and dishonest by getting too palsy with, too close to bad things and immoral people. Baha'u'llah alludes to this in several passages such as these two:

Beware! Walk not with the ungodly and seek not fellowship with him, for such companionship turneth the radiance of the heart into infernal fire. ~Baha'u'llah: Persian Hidden Words, # 57

So--I told them that if they get too close to one of us bad guys, even though we can not pursue them, we can touch them and take their trustworthiness away--in which case they have to drop their sticks and go into the prison (of ego-self and the lower nature) with the others. (Also, without this component, the game would not be nearly as challenging, b/c all the kids would have to do is hand sticks to those in prison. It makes it much more exciting if they have to avoid being touched.) So the only way to rescue those who are in prison is to avoid being touched when attempting to deliver a stick. Once a person receives a stick they can run away—but they better move fast b/c the lower nature bad guy can nab them if they are close and do not need to be chased. Before the game, I encouraged them to cooperate so that they work as a team—it is much harder for the guard to prevent rescues if rescuers are coming at him/her as a group. For dramatic effect, whenever someone escaped, I snarled, stomped my feet and had a mini-tantrum. The kids were amused by that.

I also encouraged them to notice when an "untrustworthy" person is being closed in on during pursuit and to run beside that person and give them trustworthiness (i.e. a stick) before I touch them. To add interest and make sure that the prison population is constant, I tell players they can't rescue anyone on the way to prison, only once they have got there. You can make a rule that if a player with a sun-stick gets touched, that stick is out of the game for good—I put them in my pocket. Or you can say they just have to drop it on the spot and others can try to get to it and pick it up off the ground--which means there will be less kids to chase b/c more will have the protection of trustworthiness. *And tossing sticks to those in prison is not allowed. They must be handed—this is more risky*.

The following way to deal with sun-sticks belonging to those who got touched by a bad guy worked really well: I did not remove sticks from the game, but did not just drop them on the ground where they were tagged either. The persons touched went into the prison. The confiscated sticks were put on the ground next to the prison, and the rescuers could retrieve them (while avoiding being touched themselves by the bad-guy guard) and hand them to the prisoners. *The prisoners could not pick the sticks up themselves*. Once a prisoner got one, they had to escape before a bad guy guard touched them. Chances are they are rather close to a guard, so they would not have to be chased, (which was not allowed if one had a stick.) It is key that the group work together to keep the guard busy and distracted. (2 guards make it too hard to rescue anybody unless the group is huge.) I like this version b/c then rescuers don't have to give up their sticks—which ruins the metaphor—b/c then they become w/o trustworthiness. It doesn't make sense that one becomes untrustworthy when they help others to become trustworthy. However, there is a down side to this version: Doing it this way means that only those who grab the few extra sticks can rescue the imprisoned. Others can help by distracting, but if they can't give away their own sticks, then it reduces their participation--- and many just love being chased, which they won't be if they have a stick. So....I play the version I feel moved to at the time.

Armed with the Power of Thy Name

Armed with the power of Thy name nothing can ever hurt me, and with Thy love in my heart all the world's afflictions can in no wise alarm me. ~Baha'u'llah: Prayers and Meditations, page 208

This game was created to illustrate the above quote in our unit on courage. First I explained that humanity needs rescuing from our lower natures. It is the expression of the lower nature which causes most of the trouble and suffering in the world. It takes moral courage to confront the expression of the lower nature in others and ourselves. I gave examples of saying no when one's peers are urging one to cheat or lie, or when someone is bullying another, when one has to admit a wrong-doing to one's teacher or parent, etc. So I told the kids that when they are armed with the power of God's name and have His love in their heart, spiritual harm will not befall them and the world's afflictions will be a lot less alarming. Then I presented a gold tray that contained red wooden hearts, each with a bright yellow cardboard sun shape glued in the center. On each sun the word "God" was written in gold. I explained that these represented the name of God and having His love in one's heart. Here is how the game is played—and it has to evolve and be played in 2 stages as the kids get better at it. They really loved this game a whole lot.

All students except for one are placed in the "prison of the lower self"—we used 4 large cones in a square, with rope around the bottom. (Baha'u'llah warns of the prison of self: ....*loose thy soul from the prison of self*..... Persian Hidden Words #40. And He refers to the *prison-cage of self and desire*....The Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 52.) The prisoners can also be referred to as seekers b/c they are seeking God's love and wisdom. I wear my usual monster or devil mask and I represent the lower nature/self—greed, cruelty, selfishness, etc. The tray of hearts is placed a fair distance (depends on

how much running you want kids to do) from the prison. (A child that is too scared to play will enjoy staying next to the tray and being the distributor of the hearts—holding them out to those trying to get them.)

The only other child not in the prison is the Baha'i teacher, who has courage b/c she is armed with the power of God's Name and has His love in her heart. *(If playing with an inter-Faith group, you could call the Baha'i teacher the lover of God instead)*. She holds onto one of these hearts. She can not be imprisoned by the lower nature. She is immune, and she wants to rescue the others who are in prison with the love and teachings of God. So she runs up to the prison to try and touch someone and bring them back to the source of the hearts to get their own. She is to hold their hand (stands for guiding, nurturing, accompanying in the Baha'i Faith or in faith in general) all the way back to the tray. The lower nature (me in this case) can't leave the prison, so once a prisoner escapes, they are free. And once they have a heart, they too are immune from capture. The hard part is that I am watching the Baha'i teacher's every move, and as soon as she touches someone, I touch them back, and they then can't leave the prison. *Prisoners may not step outside the boundary of the prison until freed by the teacher*. And the liberator(s) can't go into the prison. Well eventually, someone does manage to escape, and once there are 2 teachers, the prisoners get released very rapidly b/c I can't guard 2 sides at once. This is a great metaphor for how the more folks we teach, the more rapidly humanity will escape from the prison of the lower self b/c they have the Word of God for today to transform them.

The secret to winning this game is that those in the prison can block me from reaching the one the teacher is trying to free—they can't hold me but they can become a human shield. If you want the game to go slower, have 2 lower natures to start with—then chances are somebody won't get free until they figure out the blocking technique. If you have more than 8 prisoners, 2 lower natures are a good idea.

The evolution of the game into phase 2 goes like this: Once they get the blocking/shielding technique down, it is too easy for them all to escape rather rapidly. So for the second version, I can leave the prison to chase the hand holding duo, and can recapture the newly released prisoner until they have their own heart in their hand—which symbolizes consecration—being steadfast in God's love. But even with this newly added feature, once there is more than one teacher, the prisoners escape too fast unless the group is very small. So it is best to have 2 lower natures—one to chase and one to guard the prison from the inside. That said, *until the first prisoner escapes and becomes the second teacher, both lower natures start inside the prison*. If you have a small group, such as under 8 kids, 2 lower natures will probably be overkill. And it's too hard to rescue if both lower natures can leave the prison to chase, so remind kids that one should stay in the prison. Also, unless the group is huge and the playing area is quite wide, if one of the lower natures stations himself less than ¾ the distance from the heart source, then all those being rescued are intercepted, so make sure the chasing lower nature does not do that. For huge groups, (over 15) 3 lower natures may be called for.

If the kids are young, you may want to cut them a break and eliminate the rule that they have to hold hands all the way to the heart tray—b/c of course that slows them down. But I like the idea of running in unity and being guided by another. In our games, even with this rule, they managed to get everybody free. I was very strict—if you released hands before the prisoner got his own heart, it was the same as being tagged. Again teamwork is essential—if there are several teachers, they can form a protective moving shield around the escaping prisoner and his teacher until they reach the source of hearts. Another rule—if tagged by the lower nature or hands are separated on the way to the tray, the child w/o the heart has to go back to the prison in order to be rescued. She can't be rescued by others in the space between the prison and the tray of hearts. Also, when chasing a pair, the lower nature has to tag the escaping prisoner, i.e. the child without the heart—not the one with the heart.

The end of the game also takes real teamwork—there is one prisoner left and 1 or 2 lower natures guarding him or her—and it is very easy to instantly tag the lone prisoner every time a free teacher touches him. One reason I don't allow the teachers into the prison is b/c they can all easily block the lower nature while another frees the prisoner. Blocking is a necessary and good technique among prisoners themselves in the early stages of the game, and for protecting the hand-holding duo in transit. But getting that last prisoner out is hard—but they have succeeded every time with creative maneuvers and cooperation. For fun and dramatic effect, when several kids or a fiercely guarded last few would escape, I would throw a tantrum and stomp my feet and shake my arms with my fists in the air and make silly angry sounds. After all, I represented the lower nature.

Another analogy, you may or may not want to bring up, is the fact that once those representing the forces of ignorance, fear, prejudice, fanaticism, indulgence, etc. become aware of the power of this Faith to capture the souls of humanity—they will literally go after us to get back what they perceive they need for their existence—the love and loyalty of humanity. This will be the clergy of every religion (Shoghi Effendi informs us that we will be persecuted here in the U.S, when we get large enough) the corporate representatives of alcohol, the pornography advocates, etc. The ability of the monster of lower nature to leave the prison to pursue those seeking God's name and love, represents this competition in the future. The Baha'i Faith is a threat to the life of all those businesses and organizations which thrive on appealing to the lower nature and to narrow minded allegiance to their religions' man-made doctrines and beliefs. Teens enjoy this game also, and the analogies and symbolism it contains are ripe for deep discussions.

Here are 3 more quotes that go nicely with this game:

The source of courage and power is the promotion of the Word of God, and steadfastness in His Love. ~Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 156

In spite of the gloom which man's disobedience to the Divine Laws is creating throughout the world, the Baha'is must be courageous, joyous and ever-active in spreading the Message of Baha'u'llah, for in the end it will triumph and dispel the evil and sadness engulfing mankind. ~Shoghi Effendi: Light of Divine Guidance Vol.2, p. 75

"Now is the time,.... for the American believers, ...to proclaim ..... their capacity and readiness to rescue a fallen and sore-tried generation that has rebelled against its God and ignored His warnings, and to offer it that complete security which only the strongholds of their Faith can provide." ~Shoghi Effendi: The Advent of Divine Justice, page 48

For the Love of God

This game is played exactly like *Armed with the Power of Thy Name* and uses the same game equipment except it relates to the quotes below and was used in our Life After Death Unit:

As to Paradise: It is a reality and there can be no doubt about it, and now in this world it is realized through love of Me and My good-pleasure. ~Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 189

O thou who art set aglow with the fire of the love of God! .....We beseech God to confirm thee in His love and in His good pleasure, to assist thee in the promotion of His Cause, and to number thee with such as have arisen for the triumph of His Faith. ~Baha'u'llah, The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, p. 152

Also, the intro to the game was varied slightly to fit our theme: First I explained that humanity needs rescuing from our lower natures and we all seek paradise. It is the expression of the lower nature which causes most of the trouble and suffering in the world and keeps us from attaining the good pleasure of God more consistently. It is the lower nature which barricades us from paradise. It takes the love of God (and courage) to confront the expression of the lower nature in others and ourselves. I gave examples of saying no when one's peers are urging one to cheat or lie, or when someone is bullying another, when one has to admit a wrong-doing to one's teacher or parent, etc. So I told the kids that when they are armed with God's love in their heart, they are able to begin to free themselves and others from the prison of the lower nature and win the good pleasure of God by doing so.

Key to the Heart

The Great Being saith: The Word is the master key for the whole world, inasmuch as through its potency the doors of the hearts of men, which in reality are the doors of heaven, are unlocked. ~Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 173

This game is played exactly like *Armed with the Power of Thy Name* except that keys are used instead of hearts and the introduction is different. This version was created for our unit on the power of the Creative Word. It also works great with a class on teaching the Faith.

First I ask the kids if it's true that humanity needs rescuing from our lower natures. Then I ask if it's true that it is the expression of the lower nature that causes most of the trouble and suffering in the world. I explain that this lower nature self can imprison us. Baha'u'llah warns of the prison of self: ....*loose thy soul from the prison of self*..... (Persian Hidden Words #40). And He refers to the *prison-cage of self and desire*....(The Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 52.)

Then I ask what can free us and protect us from our lower natures? What can unlock our hearts from the prison of self? The answer of course is the Word of God.

So I told the kids that when they possess the key to the human heart, the Word of God, they have the power to free others and to protect themselves from the powerful lower nature. Then I presented a gold tray that contained elegant antique looking 2 ½ inch long brass keys on different colored thin satin ribbon necklaces.

The keys were obtained from Van Dyke Supply Company, Inc. Item number 02256255. They are about $1.50 a piece if 12 or more are ordered. Their phone is 800-843-3320. Website: www.vandykes.com. This company also carries a set of 12 varied antique brass decorative keys that are cheaper. In 2004 they cost $12.99 for 12 keys. Item # 02008385. I was

told by customer service that they are about 3 inches in length. (But they were out of stock when I needed them, so I was forced to buy the more expensive ones—which are quite nice.)

Then I chose the student who would be the first Baha'i teacher and gave her a key necklace. I deliberately chose an older student so the game would go quicker. I also told the class that she was chosen to be the first b/c she had faithfully memorized all the memory verses so she clearly had the Word of God in her heart. She has the courage necessary b/c she is promoting the Word of God and is steadfast in His love.

The source of courage and power is the promotion of the Word of God, and steadfastness in His Love. ~Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 156

The rest of the players go into the prison of the lower self and the same rules and instructions as *Armed with the Power of Thy Name* are then shared with the students, just exchanging hearts for keys. They can be referred to as prisoners &/or seekers b/c they are seeking God's truth and guidance.

In spite of the gloom which man's disobedience to the Divine Laws is creating throughout the world, the Baha'is must be courageous, joyous and ever-active in spreading the Message of Baha'u'llah, for in the end it will triumph and dispel the evil and sadness engulfing mankind. ~Shoghi Effendi: Light of Divine Guidance Vol.2, p. 75

E.R. (Essential Rights) #

I explained that one of the most important jobs of the Baha'is or of any servant of humanity is to assist the people of the world to gain their E.R.'s---Essential Rights, and that the more we spread the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, the sooner everybody will have their E.R.'s. (We discussed what "essential" means, and I gave examples, such as flour is an essential ingredient in cookies, etc). We also talked about how essential needs are a subset of essential rights. Needs such as clean water and food and shelter people need to survive, and b/c we are all God's children, we all have a right to have these needs met. But we also have basic, essential rights to other things that make life worth living and enable us to realize our potential. When people do not have access to these things, they suffer and/or bring suffering to others. (These are things like education, religious freedom, etc).

Using a dry erase board for writing answers, I asked the kids to brainstorm what they thought are 9 Essential Rights (ERs), which include basic needs. They were able to come up with 4 of them—the basic needs: Food, clean water, healthcare, and shelter. I prodded them to think of the last 5: religious freedom, education, earning a living with decent wages, loving family, and a clean, safe, and healthy natural environment. The first 4 needed no elaboration. We went over the last 5 (religious freedom, education, job security, loving family, and good environment). We talked about how not having a right to those 5 hurts people. For example, we talked about the Baha'is in Iran in relation to religious freedom, how ignorance and inability to read and write contributes to poverty, prejudice and fanaticism and even illness, how people all over the world want to work but when there are no jobs available, they may be reduced to selling drugs or to crime to pay for food, how even if you have all 8 rights met but your family abuses or neglects you, you can become a cruel person, and how social scientists have shown how mammals and people in crowded filthy environments become violent and hurt each other—having access to fresh air, green grass, trees, etc., nourishes spirituality and happiness. I also explained how interdependent the rights are, for example: If one does not have an education, often one can't obtain a job, if one can't obtain wages, then one often can't get food or provide education for their children.

So I summed it up that no matter who you are, where you are born, or how rich or poor your parents are, you have the right to those rights. **Essential Rights are essential to peace and unity—if people do not have all of them, conflict and suffering are the result**.

Then I presented to the class objects that represented each ER, and they were to guess which one stood for which right. They were:

1) Food--a small sealed baggie with raw dried beans and brown rice. (Its a good idea to double bag this b/c there is quite a bit of wear and tear on the bag. I used small zip locks, and sealed the zipper seal with scotch tape to discourage opening).
2) Water--thick silver 3 inch high rain drops (cut from disposable platters which have a mirror like surface on both sides)
3) Healthcare--empty plastic vials of homeopathic medicines
4) Shelter—small flat wooden squares with a triangle roof glued on, with 2 small colored sticker squares for windows and a rectangular one for the door (I made sure to point out that houses around the world looked very different—some being of reeds or mud, round, etc.)
5) Education—unsharpened bright colored pencils

6) Religious freedom—small shiny cards, the size of business cards, with a lovely pattern that say “Baha’is Believe in” and list the basic principles (available from Special Ideas catalog)
7) Clean, safe, and healthy environment—silk flower heads
8) Ability to earn a living---fake one dollar bills
9) Loving Family—red cardboard or wooden hearts with the words “loving family” written on them. Or instead of words, stick 3 small smile faces with 2 larger smile faces on the hearts to represent a family of 2 parents and 3 children.

Then I explained the rules: Each student was given a gallon size ziplock bag, and told to unzip it. I told them that out in the commons and in the woods in my back yard, the ERs would be scattered about on 9 dark blue cloths (my dinner napkins). Dark blue is about the right color, not too camouflaged, not too easy to spot in foliage. They would not be hidden under anything, but one would have to locate their position. On each cloth, one ER for each member of the class would be placed. For example, on one blue cloth, since there were 14 kids in class that day, 14 pencils would be found. On another, 14 raindrops, and so on. The same ERs would always be found on the same cloth. While the students stayed in the classroom, I dispersed the cloths and their ERs about, placing them on a bench, next to a tree, off to one end of the commons, etc. (If there is rain, this game can be played indoors. Cloths can be placed in slightly obscured locations, like under a desk, tucked in a corner, etc. They should not be in closets, drawers, or cabinets.)

I told the kids that I would wear a mask and represent conflict and suffering—and I could freeze you—but only if you did not have all 9 ERs in your bag. Freezing represented that one’s ability to progress and grow was stilled b/c of lack of rights. I would give them about a 100 seconds head start (this head start time will depend on the number of students and size of area to be searched). They were to try and collect all 9 ERs as fast as possible. They could only take one of each (= not taking more than their fair share—as unfortunately happens all over the world). If I caught you w/o all 9 ERs, you could not lie (it is tedious for me to go through each bag), you had to admit whether you had all 9 or not. If you got frozen, you were to yell for help and others should come to your rescue and ask what rights you needed. (= Caring for the human family, promoting the well being of our sisters and brothers, working for human rights, etc).

The other rules were that a helper could not carry more than one ER at a time back to a frozen person. *A frozen child had to remain in the same place and could not be freed until he/she got all 9 ERs.* I encouraged kids to consult and communicate—so that 2 helpers weren’t retrieving the same right for you thereby depriving another member of a right. Also, and this is very important—students alerted each other where the ERs were located. So even as they were being chased, a kid would yell out, “where is education?” and another would shout “on the bench in the woods!” Or if I was closing in on someone, another student would run along side and ask what they needed to escape me. They held little meetings while I was busy harassing someone else and shared information. Give players these helpful strategies for success: Some free kids even gave frozen kids ERs from their own bags, even if they had all 9, to unfreeze them--and then went to replenish. Or frozen kids gave an item to a child at risk of being frozen so that he/she would have 9 and be immune from conflict and suffering, and then that immune child would then be free to bring ERs to the frozen child. It was wonderful to see the sharing, caring, negotiating, assisting, etc. that went on.

Near the end of the game, I gave a time out b/c several items were still left on a few cloths and some of the younger ones were unclear what they were missing. I called this meeting a United Nations summit, and appointed a mature girl to be the Secretary General. I told them they had 5 minutes to make sure everybody had all their rights. They were to be representatives of different nations. So the Secretary General went through her completed bag and asked each “nation” to raise up the object that represented the right she was holding up. So for example, when she asked, “does everybody have education?, ” she held up her pencil. During this time, I am circling the group wearing my scary mask. I was growling, saying that I’m conflict and suffering and I am going to get anyone that does not have their rights, taunting them with phrases like “who is ignorant b/c they have no education, who is thirsty b/c they have no clean water?” etc. At the conclusion of the meeting, students ran to complete their own or help others complete their bag. (They were not to leave during the meeting until all 9 rights had been showcased by the Secretary General b/c then the meeting would have to reconvene).

See more relevant quotes under *People of the Mountain, Fair Share, and Stand Up Games.*

This is an excellent game to teach in conjunction with promoting UNICEF, which our NSA asks us to do every Halloween. It is very clear from the UNICEF educational materials that their main focus is on providing many of the essential rights to children. And the kids on both class days asked to play it again, so I know it was a hit.

Preschool Version: (Ages 4-6)
First have a brief discussion with the kids about what all people need to live. Most preschoolers will be able to come up with shelter, food, water. Keep it at 3 needs due to their age. Explain that when people don’t have these things, fighting and suffering and sadness happens. There are millions that do not have enough of these 3 needs, and there are some that have far more than they need. There can’t be peace and unity until all have enough of these 3 needs. Those that

don't have enough will fight for these needs b/c they need them to live. And often those that have far more than they need will fight to keep it. Greed has taken over them.

Pass out bags or holders of some sort. You also need to have exactly 1 symbol of each of the 3 basic needs for each player. Then distribute symbols of the 3 basic needs to the little kids. But do so unevenly. Give some kids lots, some little, some none. Some will have 3 houses but no food, etc. If you think that some kids will freak out at receiving nothing (a distinct possibility with preschoolers) you can give each child at least one thing. You can use the symbols described in the older version above, or just draw pictures on cards. (One teacher color copied the diverse homes in Peter Spier's People book and cut them out and glued them to cards. She pointed out how different homes look all over the world. Its best to laminate or cover with clear contact for preservation).

Explain to the kids that they all can win the game if they show fairness. If the virtue of fairness is practiced then there can be peace and unity. (They should be able to figure out that they will need to share and distribute the items evenly. Before we did this game, the kids had a lesson on fairness, sharing, and generosity. They also played the game *Fair Share* described under "Low Activity Games".) Then tell them that they have only a short time (the time allotted will depend on the number of kids playing) to win. Explain that they must hurry b/c people can't live long w/o their basic needs. Explain that after the time is up the Greedy Green Goblin will come and freeze any child who does not have their 3 needs. The child that is frozen by the goblin has to lie down to show that they are not well and that their lives are in danger by not having their basic needs. (The threat of this gets the kids very motivated and excited). Only when the other children come to his or her rescue to supply the 3 basic needs, can that child get up and move again. (I chose this name for the villain b/c greed really is one of the root causes of injustice and the unfair distribution of wealth and resources in the world.)

After the right amount of time, an adult with a green cape and a half mask of green feathers or green fabric comes dashing out of a hiding place and demands to see the bags of each child. If a child does not have 1 of each of the 3 needs, the goblin touches their shoulder and orders them to lie down with an evil laugh. The goblin should appear only after at least some of the kids have the 3 basic needs so there are some available to rescue the others. Another adult can cue the goblin, or the goblin can be spying on the group. The game ends when all children have 1 of each of the 3 basic needs. Then the goblin exclaims that there is no greed to be found here, so he must run away. If you think the children won't get out of control, you can even tell them that when everybody has a home, water and food, they can chase the goblin away. They will love that.

The last time this game was played, the kids begged to play it again. That is always a good sign. Please note that the costume needs to be very low key and not scary or you may have tears and overly frightened children. I find that it helps to show the kids the costume off the person first before playing so the more sensitive ones don't freak out. For the best educational impact, there should be debriefing and discussion after the game about what happened and why. Then you can tie it into the world. But b/c these are preschoolers, dialogue should be simple and not lengthy.

Faithful Friends

This is basically an outdoor, more active, daylight version of the in the dark *"Dungeons and Dragons"* game we play during the summer camps. First I explained that faithfulness and loyalty are pretty much the same thing. Then I told them that in order to win this game, they had to show loyalty to each other in the face of danger. I would wear a mask and represent evil and the lower nature. They were to go outside in a defined area and hide. After about 30 seconds, I would begin hunting for them. If I caught (tagged) one of them, that person had to go willingly to the prison of the lower nature—my deck. I did not have to escort them, they just went—that way I could immediately resume hunting. The prisoners then would alert others that they needed rescuing by yelling "Help!" The only way a person could go free was to be tagged by a student still free from the lower nature. Also, those on their way to prison were not eligible for liberation until they were actually in prison—on the deck. But once tagged, they could leave immediately and/or tag others in the prison to free them. (You can make the game more challenging by insisting that newly tagged ---and therefore free—prisoners must leave the prison and then return before having the ability to free others).

I pointed out that there was risk in rescuing, but if no one showed faithfulness, the monster of the lower nature would win. I told them they would lose the game if I got more than half of them on the deck at one time. My deck happens to have two exits, one at each end, and it took the rescuers awhile to figure out that they should come to the rescue together and go to each end—that way I could not cover everybody. Also, those just freed and trying to leave the prison, were also game for me again, but if they worked together and chose opposite exits, I could not get them both. (If there are more than 10 kids, there needs to be 2 lower nature monsters. But if there are 2 monsters, there needs to be a rule that both monsters can't simultaneously go onto the deck/into the prison to re-tag recently freed captives—otherwise the monsters have too much advantage. Also, if there is only one exit from the prison, one monster can't continually guard it.)

For a unit on courage, just rename the game *Courageous Comrades* and explain that players must show courage to free their comrades in order to win. It often takes courage to triumph over the lower nature's power in this world. Especially when our friends and peers are popular or having fun responding to theirs and other's lower nature. This game was a blast. For a night-time version of this game, see *Dungeons and Dragons.*

For a unit on Life After Death, in which we explored numerous quotes linking the good pleasure of God with experiencing paradise (See quotes under *Admit My Soul* for examples), this game was re-named *Help the Helpless*.

Be a helper to every helpless one, and manifest kindness to your fellow creatures in order that ye may attain the good pleasure of God. ~Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 469

Save Beamo Peace #
We played 2 versions of this game. For both versions I wear an ugly monster mask and represent war, conflict, violence, materialism, injustice, racism, prejudice, terrorism, greedy weapon makers, etc.—all those nasty forces that destroy unity. The children represent individual nations. We use 2 Beamos for this version. The children have to work together to keep the Beamos away from me. The Beamos represent unity and love, which I can "destroy" by touching them. This game demands a lot of fast paced cooperation—I chase after kids who are holding the Beamos. They are not allowed to run with it—they must pass it on to prevent me from touching it. In the first version if I touch one in the air or on the ground or even if a child is holding it, it means I have ruined unity or love and the Beamo is removed from the game. If both Beamos are removed, disunity has conquered the world. With large groups (over 20), I use 3 beamos---one each for peace, love, & unity. This makes it more likely everyone will get a chance at catching & throwing a Beamo. We often play 3 rounds, and the winning side is the one that wins 2 of those. Rounds can be timed, so that there is a definite ending to it if I can't grab the Beamos.

The kids LOVE this game, but I had to several times ask those who had not thrown or caught a Beamo to raise their hands and then request that those students get more opportunities—otherwise the older, taller kids hog the Beamo. I realize that when a monster is closing in on them—kids don't have time to be selective in who they throw it to! Sometimes I even stop the game, ask kids to be honest and raise their hand if they have not had a chance throwing the Beamos. Then I give the Beamos to those kids, and ask the others who have not had a chance to spread out. All other players get around the edge of the playing area. Then the Beamos are thrown to those who still need a chance, before the dominant ones can join in.

A strategy that the teacher can point out is that when the monster is closing in on a Beamo, many can surround the Beamo like a barricade, especially if its on the ground. But it still needs to get tossed fast, b/c I will get to it eventually. Players are not allowed to tug at it with me or anybody else.

Version 2: The second version is basically the same as above, but is played with only one Beamo, and works better with groups under 15. With smaller groups, it is too easy for me to nab the Beamo, so I cut them a break: The difference is that I can only intercept it in mid flight or if it hits the ground and I get to it first. But those holding it have only to the count of 3 to release it, (otherwise they would just hold it indefinitely).

Metaphor Changes: For a camp that had as its theme of the day "Celebrating Differences" I used the same rules as above but said that the monster mask represented racism and prejudice, and the Beamos (which conveniently have several bands of different colors stitched together), represented unity in diversity. They were to save diversity from racism and prejudice by protecting the Beamos from the person wearing the mask.

This game can also be played with balls—and even indoors in a living room if you have foam balls. If necessary, everybody can play on their knees. We also played it indoors with different skin colored large soft pom poms glued together. They are soft and a good metaphor for unity in diversity.

For a class on the *role of women in abolishing war and promoting peace:* The beamo(s) can represent world peace and unity. The person wearing the mask represents war. I also made an extra rule that the Beamo had to be thrown to a girl at least every other time. In other words, no 2 boys in a row were to get it. If they did, that meant that I won that round also. This made the game harder, so I said that I would deliberately slow down if a girl had the Beamo, to represent how women will be an obstacle to war, a hindrance to it. Also, another rule to illustrate the teaching in the quote below can be that only girls can be assigned the task of barricading, to again represent being obstacles to war.

So it will come to pass that when women participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world, when they enter confidently and capably the great arena of laws and politics, war will cease; for woman will be the obstacle and hindrance to it. This is true and without doubt. ~`Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, pages 134-135

Flower Virtue Rescue

This game was designed to reinforce the notion that our hearts are like gardens, and we must protect the flowers (virtues) in them from our lower natures. Throughout the Baha'i Writings the heart is likened to a garden and flowers are likened to virtues. (See Hidden Words Persian #3 and # 33, and Gleanings page 303 for examples.) So for this game I wear a green monster mask with a vine coming out of the forehead, and vines (you can use silk or real ones) wrapped around my ankles and wrists. I represent the lower nature, filled with weeds (ego, selfishness, greed, materialism, prejudice, etc.) Each student is given 3 silk flower heads. (You can buy bunches for a dollar at a dollar store and pluck them off their stems). Those represent some of their virtues in the garden of their hearts.

Then I scatter 30 or so flowers around me, close by and stand guard over them. The goal is for the students to rescue as many of their virtues as possible from the lower nature-- w/o being captured by me. Before starting, each player chooses a storage spot nearby for the flowers they managed to secure from the lower nature so their hands are free to get more.

What is the purpose of our lives? To acquire virtues. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Paris Talks, page 177

Watch over yourselves, for the Evil One is lying in wait, ready to entrap you. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 94

(Abdu'l-Baha has explained that we do not believe in the devil—it is a metaphor for our lower natures. See Promulgation of Universal Peace pages 287 & 294).

So they all converge around me, trying to nab a flower w/o me touching them. They can grab only one flower at a time. If I touch them, they have to toss one of their previously acquired virtue flowers back into my collection, or return the one they nabbed as I was touching them. If I touch them 3 times they join me and become a lower nature monster also. The lower nature monsters do not go chasing after the kids—but stay within a defined area to guard the flowers. A radius of about 5 or 6 feet is about right—depending on the number of players and flowers you have. The mask helps block my peripheral vision and gives the kids a better chance. Anybody who plays the lower nature needs to play the part in such a way that the players get plenty of daring snatches—i.e. lingering facing one way, etc. The game ends when all the flowers are rescued or too many kids have been captured and the remaining kids can't possibly get any more flowers w/o being touched. The goal of course is to get as many virtue flowers as possible. Having the most of material things is not praiseworthy but having the most "virtues" is!

Version 2: The metaphor is basically the same, but this time 2 students are each given an open heart box which represents the human heart or soul. Each heart box is filled with silk flower heads. Each of these students positions themselves at opposite ends of a rectangular playing field or gym. Each of the other students is given 2-3 flowers to begin with. (This avoids any student getting 0 virtues if they are touched the first 3 crossings in a row.) I wear the same mask as above, and stand in the center of the rectangle. Students start at one end and try to run past me to get to the other side. If we are outside, they have clear boundaries on the sides so they can't just run way off. If they make it to the other side w/o getting touched (poisoned by the lower nature) the student holding the heart box gives them one flower. If they get touched but have not reached the maximum touches you set—they do not get a flower when they get to the other side. This rule is optional: for every time one is touched, he/she has to surrender a flower back into the heart box. (Kids have little bags to carry them in or they can have a location at the end of the playing field where they stash them. Their "storage area" should not be far from the end of the field, otherwise a lot of time will be spent waiting for kids to go to their areas to deliver their flowers. They can have a spot at either end, which means that they will have to carry only one flower across at a time.)

The idea is that you want to get through each month or year (the crossing of the rectangle) w/o being captured by the lower nature—and you want to acquire as many virtue-flowers as possible. I call out the month or year for each crossing. Once everybody has crossed, they turn and run back the other way. If I touch them 3X, they join me in the center. It then gets harder for the other kids to get through—and I explain this by saying, when your friends and peers are captivated by their lower nature, it gets harder for you to acquire more virtues and avoid getting dragged down with them. When the passageway is so full of lower nature kids, that it would be impossible not to get caught, those in the center are only allowed to step toward their prey. They must keep one foot stationary. This extends the game a bit more. Also, depending on the size of your playing area and number of players, you may require that the lower nature kids stay within a defined corridor in the very center, or they can be scattered throughout the length of the field.

You can make the game easier or harder depending on the following variables: width of the playing field, whether they start with some flowers before the first attempt to cross, whether one has to surrender a flower for each time touched, and the number of times you are allowed to be touched before joining the lower nature.

You can also play both these games with rhinestone gems, since gems are also metaphors in the Baha'i writings for virtues. (Gleanings 260 and 287). However, with the first version, they are kind of small to be able to grab quickly off the floor. The monster mask alone w/o the greenery will suffice for this version.

Faith and Firmness & Variations

(The basic rules of this game are very similar to *Sacred Rain* and *Loyal Lips*). I ask the kids that one of their main purposes in life is to _____? (acquire virtues—Paris Talks, p. 177). Using question and answer format, the following information is explored before playing: We all have 2 natures, the lower which expresses greed, cruelty, selfishness, materialism, anger, etc., and the higher which expresses the attributes of God, the virtues, which He deposited in our souls. One of our major goals in life is to have our higher dominate our lower natures, to be more virtuous than animalistic. If we don't develop or acquire virtues, our lower natures will take control of our personalities. Two of the most important virtues we can acquire that will assist us in the development of all our other virtues are religious faith and steadfastness. It is through the guidance of our religion (faith) and our obedience to that guidance in our religion (steadfastness) that we can acquire so many more virtues, and protect ourselves from our powerful lower natures. In keeping with the frequent metaphor we use that flowers represent virtues in the garden of our hearts, I used 2 varieties of large silk flower heads to represent these 2 virtues of faith and steadfastness. (We used sunflowers & zinnias).

I inform the players that there are 2 different flowers for each player distributed outside in the commons and wooded area. They are in plain view in that they are not under anything, but one does have to search b/c they are tucked in branches or propped in a crack on a log, behind a tree etc. I wear a monster mask and as usual, this represents the lower nature. I tell the kids that I will give them a head start of 10 seconds and that the goal is to acquire the 2 different virtues/flowers before the lower nature (me) takes over you, and freezes you. This represents the lower nature halting (freezing) your spiritual development. If I touch you before you have 2 different flowers, you have to stay frozen and yell for help until another player brings you the needed number of flowers (1 or 2) and thus liberates you. (This rescue can be likened to teaching the Faith and consolidation—b/c a soul is consolidated in the Faith when they are steadfast). A free player can't give up one of their own 2 flowers to the frozen kid, they must find new ones, and can *carry only one extra one at a time* in addition to their own 2. Otherwise some kids will just gather up bunches, thereby depriving others of finding them. (For this game, it is impractical to have the kids have more than 2 flowers, b/c its impossible to count as one is chasing, etc. If you want the game to go longer or be harder, hide the flowers more thoroughly). Kids can trade flowers if a player has 2 that are the same and needs one to be different, to represent the 2 aspects, faith and firmness. I also emphasize that it is not the Baha'i way to just relax once you have your faith and firmness, we need to rescue others and give them faith and firmness. So players should keep searching so they can liberate frozen souls or provide faith and/or firmness to those who are at risk of being frozen by the lower nature.

Related quotes to support the premise of the game: (I equate "*recognition of Him Who is the Eternal Truth"* with having faith).

The first and foremost duty prescribed unto men, next to the recognition of Him Who is the Eternal Truth, is the duty of steadfastness in His Cause. Cleave thou unto it, and be of them whose minds are firmly fixed and grounded in God. No act, however meritorious, did or can ever compare unto it. It is the king of all acts, and to this thy Lord, the All-Highest, the Most Powerful, will testify.... ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 290

Blessed are the steadfast; blessed are they that stand firm in His Faith.
~Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 123

O Lord, my God! Assist Thy loved ones to be firm in Thy Faith, to walk in Thy ways, to be steadfast in Thy Cause. Give them Thy grace to withstand the onslaught of self and passion, to follow the light of Divine Guidance. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Will and Testament, page 15

All the virtues of humankind are summed up in the one word `steadfastness', if we but act according to its laws. It draws to us as by a magnet the blessings and bestowals of Heaven, if we but rise up according to the obligations it implies. Shoghi Effendi: Bahiyyih Khanum, page 148

Variations:

For a unit on Firmness in the Covenant:

I altered the introduction to make it more about being faithful to and having firmness in the Covenant, as opposed to just about acquiring the virtues of faith and steadfastness in one's religion. It was thus re-named *Faithfulness and Firmness.*

Using question and answer format, the following information is explored before playing: We all have 2 natures, the lower which expresses greed, selfish ambition, arrogance, jealousy, etc, and the higher which expresses the attributes of God, the virtues, which He deposited in our souls. We need to acquire and express the virtues of *faithfulness* and *firmness* in relation to Baha'u'llah's covenant to overcome our lower nature, ----otherwise, our lower natures can cause us be unfaithful or weak in the covenant, to not do our part in fulfilling our obligations in this spiritual contract. In keeping with the frequent metaphor we use that flowers represent virtues in the garden of our hearts, 2 different varieties of large silk flower heads were used to represent these 2 virtues of faithfulness and firmness. (Though they are basically almost the same if one considers the attitudes and actions they demand).

I inform the players that there are 2 flowers for each student distributed outside in the commons and wooded area. They are in plain view in that they are not under anything, but one does have to search b/c they are tucked in branches or propped in a crack on a log, behind a tree etc. I wear a monster mask and as usual, this represents the lower nature. I tell the kids that I will give them a head start of 10 seconds and that the goal is to acquire the 2 different virtues/flowers before the lower nature (me) takes over you, and freezes you. This represents the lower nature halting (freezing) your spiritual development in the covenant. If I touch you before you have 2 different flowers, you have to stay frozen and yell for help until another player brings you the needed number of flowers (1 or 2) and thus liberates you. A free player can't give up one of their own 2 flowers to the frozen kid, they must find new ones, and can *carry only one extra one at a time* in addition to their own 2. Otherwise some kids will just gather up bunches, thereby depriving others of finding them. (If you want the game to go longer or be harder, hide the flowers more thoroughly). Kids can trade flowers if a player has 2 that are the same and needs one to be different, to represent the 2 aspects, faithfulness and firmness. I also emphasize that it is not the Baha'i way to just relax once you have your faithfulness and firmness, we need to rescue others and give them faithfulness and firmness. So players should keep searching so they can liberate frozen souls or provide faithfulness and/or firmness to those who are at risk of being frozen by the lower nature. Also, to make it even more fun, I said that b/c the lower nature is greedy and grabby, if they are not clinging firmly to their flowers, I can snatch one and thus freeze them. In this case, I would throw it on the ground far away, and another child would need to retrieve it to rescue the frozen child.

Blessed is he who hath remained faithful to My Covenant, and whom the things of the world have not kept back from attaining My Court of holiness. ~Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 17

The first condition is firmness in the Covenant of God.....
~Abdu'l-Baha, Tablets of the Divine Plan, p. 51

O my Lord and my Hope! Help Thou Thy loved ones to be steadfast in Thy mighty Covenant, to remain faithful to Thy manifest Cause, and to carry out the commandments Thou didst set down for them in Thy Book of Splendors.....~Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 259

.....ye must conduct yourselves in such a manner that ye may stand out distinguished and brilliant as the sun among other souls. Should any one of you enter a city, he should become a centre of attraction by reason of his sincerity, his faithfulness and love, his honesty and fidelity, his truthfulness and loving-kindness towards all the peoples of the world, so that the people of that city may cry out and say: 'This man is unquestionably a Bahá'í, for his manners, his behaviour, his conduct, his morals, his nature, and disposition reflect the attributes of the Bahá'ís.' Not until ye attain this station can ye be said to have been faithful to the Covenant and Testament of God. For He hath, through irrefutable Texts, entered into a binding Covenant with us all, requiring us to act in accordance with His sacred instructions and counsels. ~Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 70

For a unit on virtues: Hide sun, moon, and star objects (wooden, plastic, metal, whatever) and rename the game *Looking for Light*. Use the same rules, (except players need all 3, or you can say 2 of the 3 objects) to be safe from the lower nature. Share and discuss the following quotes:

Cleave thou to the fear of God and to whatsoever hath been revealed in His Book: thus biddeth thee He Who is the Word of Truth and the Knower of things unseen. Say: trustworthiness is the sun of

the heaven of My commandments, truthfulness is its moon, and praiseworthy attributes are its stars. Yet the people, for the most part, understand not. ~Baha'u'llah: Trustworthiness Compilation, #22 pages 5-6

.....man must strive that his reality may manifest virtues and perfections, the light whereof may shine upon everyone. ~Abdu'l-Baha: Will and Testament, page 13

If you want to focus just on trustworthiness and truthfulness (instead of faith and firmness) call the game Trustworthiness & Truthfulness. Hide activated glow sticks in 2 different colors, so kids have to have 1 of each color. (There are glow sticks/wands available that have stars at their tip. You can get them at a dollar store for $1 a piece). Use these quotes

..... in the sight of God, trustworthiness is the bedrock of His Faith and the foundation of all virtues and perfections. A man deprived of this quality is destitute of everything.
~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Trustworthiness Compilation, #47 page 13

We discussed the notion of bedrock and foundation. I emphasized that Abdu'l-Baha is saying something really serious about the importance of trustworthiness—and if we don't have this virtue we have nothing of value spiritually. We may have cars and toys, etc. so "destitute of everything" must mean we are lacking in spiritual things.

Blessed be the soul that shineth with the light of trustworthiness among the people..... ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Trustworthiness Compilation, #48 page 14

The most precious of all things in the estimation of Him Who is the Sovereign Truth is trustworthiness: thus hath it been recorded in the sacred Scroll of God. ...~Baha'u'llah: Trustworthiness Compilation, #35 page 9

Truthfulness is the foundation of all human virtues. Without truthfulness progress and success, in all the worlds of God, are impossible for any soul. When this holy attribute is established in man, all the divine qualities will also be acquired. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Trustworthiness, page 12

(In the quote below, for our purposes, honesty is the same as truthfulness)

O ye friends of God in His cities and His loved ones in His lands! This Wronged One enjoineth on you honesty and piety. Blessed the city that shineth by their light. Through them man is exalted, and the door of security is unlocked before the face of all creation. Happy the man that cleaveth fast unto them, and recognizeth their virtue, and woe betide him that denieth their station. ~Baha'u'llah: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 23

For a unit on life after death, one could employ any of the following quotes for the above *Faith and Firmness* game:

....Such is the station ordained for the true believer that if to an extent smaller than a needle's eye the glory of that station were to be unveiled to mankind, every beholder would be consumed away in his longing to attain it. ~Baha'u'llah, as quoted by Shoghi Effendi: The Advent of Divine Justice, pages 76-77
We dare not, in this Day, lift the veil that concealeth the exalted station which every true believer can attain, for the joy which such a revelation must provoke might well cause a few to faint away and die. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, pages 9-10

..... the true believer (will) eternally live and endure. His spirit will everlastingly circle round the Will of God. He will last as long as God, Himself, will last. .....It is evident that the loftiest mansions in the Realm of Immortality have been ordained as the habitation of them that have truly believed in God and in His signs. Death can never invade that holy seat.....~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, pgs. 140-1

Death proffereth unto every confident believer the cup that is life indeed. It bestoweth joy, and is the bearer of gladness. It conferreth the gift of everlasting life.

As to those that have tasted of the fruit of man's earthly existence, which is the recognition of the one true God, exalted be His glory, their life hereafter is such as We are unable to describe. The knowledge thereof is with God, alone, the Lord of all worlds. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, pages 345-346

I swear by God! So great are the things ordained for the steadfast that were they, so much as the eye of a needle, to be disclosed, all who are in heaven and on earth would be dumbfounded, except such as God, the Lord of all worlds, hath willed to exempt.
~Baha'u'llah, as quoted by Shoghi Effendi: The Advent of Divine Justice, page 84

Lofty is the station of man, were he to hold fast to righteousness and truth and to remain firm and steadfast in the Cause. ~Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 220

In considering the effect of obedience to the laws on individual lives, one must remember that the purpose of this life is to prepare the soul for the next. Here one must learn to control and direct one's animal impulses, not to be a slave to them. Life in this world is a succession of tests and achievements, of falling short and of making new spiritual advances. Sometimes the course may seem very hard, but one can witness, again and again, that the soul who steadfastly obeys the law of Baha'u'llah, however hard it may seem, grows spiritually, while the one who compromises with the law for the sake of his own apparent happiness is seen to have been following a chimera: he does not attain the happiness he sought, he retards his spiritual advance and often brings new problems upon himself. (From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, excerpts from a letter to all National Spiritual Assemblies, February 6, 1973, Lights of Guidance, page 361)

United We Serve
Three groups of three had their legs tied together with cloth strips. These are the "servers". (Groups can be as small as 2 or large as 4, depending on age and size of group. Children under 8 or 9 should stick with pairs only.) The inside kids of course had both legs tied, which makes moving in unity much harder. Kids got to practice walking for awhile, attempting to figure out some sort of rhythm. Advise kids to link elbows to promote stability and reduce strain on ankles, since that will help prevent too much yanking in opposite directions. Some kids were chosen or asked to be those in need of God's teachings, or the "seekers". They stood at the far end of the yard. A pitcher of water was placed at their feet. They each held a cup. The water represented the "water of life" which Baha'u'llah often uses to symbolize His Revelation, His teachings. The teams lined up across the yard from the cup holding children. The goal was to be the first team to reach the thirsty souls and give them the water of life by having one or more members pour it into their cups. I pointed out that we are serving God and humanity whenever we give others the beautiful teachings of Baha'u'llah. I also emphasized that being first is not important except when it comes to expressing virtues or serving—then it really is commendable. I read them these quotes to go with the game:

May you serve the Cause of God as one single, united force.
~ Abdu'l-Baha, Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 428

Vie ye with each other in the service of God and of His Cause. ~Baha'u'llah as quoted by Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 83

Happy the soul that shall forget his own good, and..... vie with his fellows in service to the good of all.....~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Secret of Divine Civilization, page 116

And here are some quotes to go with the water of life theme:

The sincere among His servants will regard the precepts set forth by God as the Water of Life to the followers of every faith.....~Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 29

This new Revelation has in reality been the water of life unto the thirsty.....~Shoghi Effendi: Bahiyyih Khanum, page 188

Spiritual success can be won today, only by teaching the Faith of God. The people are seeking, dying from spiritual thirst. The Baha'is must disseminate the Water of Life freely, so seeking souls may find eternal life. ~Shoghi Effendi: High Endeavors, page 42

A nice touch is to sweeten the water and put it in an especially attractive receptacle. We used a small lovely blue bottle with a golden cork lid. I decorated the bottle with sparkly wave stickers to symbolize the Ocean of God's Revelation, the Water of Life. It was placed on a light blue silk covered step stool. The receivers were given tiny fake gold champagne cups (I called them chalices). I got them at a party supply store (Factory Card Outlet). They come in packets of 6 and are used as party favors at weddings. They also come in silver. They hold about one sip of water. I explained that the power of God's Revelation is so great that only a dewdrop out of it can transform a person's awareness:

Wert thou to attain to but a dewdrop of the crystal waters of divine knowledge, thou wouldst readily realize that true life is not the life of the flesh but the life of the spirit.
~Baha'u'llah, The Kitab-i-Iqan, page 120

Surely such a precious gift is worthy of a more attractive receptacle than a paper cup! Thus, the "chalices". However, on a hot summer day, using large picnic type plastic cups and a large pitcher may be more appealing and memorable.

(See pages 84-85 and 343 Gleanings, and The Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 20 for references to the sweetness of Revelation.)

For a unit on life after death, one could employ the following quotes and play the same game:

Vie ye with each other in the service of God and of His Cause. This is indeed what profiteth you in this world, and in that which is to come. ~Baha'u'llah as quoted by Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 83

I swear by God! That which hath been destined for him who aideth My Cause excelleth the treasures of the earth. ~Baha'u'llah, as quoted by Shoghi Effendi: The Advent of Divine Justice, page 84

*The fleeting hours of man's life on earth pass swiftly by and the little that still remaineth shall come to an end, but that which endureth and lasteth for evermore is the fruit that man reapeth from his servitude at the Divine Threshold. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha,* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 234

Variation: For a lesson plan encouraging kids to collect for UNICEF, (which provides drinking water among many other needs), the water can just be pure clean drinking water for a village that has none. Those with their legs tied together can be UNICEF workers racing a monster masked person instead of each other. Whether using groups of 2 or 4 (or even more) tied together to race the monster, give them a practice round. Advise the UNICEF workers to link elbows to stabilize their group and prevent too much strain on the ankles. The monster, who is crawling or jumping with both legs tied together, (to make it fair) represents disease from polluted water or dehydration from thirst. The goal is to get to the villagers before the disease or dehydration does. Have several kids awaiting the water to represent the village. The villagers may enjoy utilizing their dramatic tendencies by acting terribly thirsty. They must remain behind a line marked by cones or sticks. Instead of the water being at the feet of the villagers in a pitcher, (as in the above version) one of those in the group with their legs tied together can be carrying a non-breakable sealed receptacle of water. As soon as one of the villagers touches it, they are safe from the monster masked person. But if the monster masked person gets there first and touches a villager.....alas.... Villagers should designate a person ahead of time to receive the container of water. I pointed out that serving in unity can indeed be very challenging, just like in this game.

*Be pleasing waters to all those who thirst..... be an abundant treasure to the poor. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha*: Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 245

Each one of you must have great consideration for the poor and render them assistance. Organize in an effort to help them and prevent increase of poverty. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 216

Let Me Refresh You #
First children get into their bathing suits. Before beginning to play this game, I ask: What metaphor does Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha very frequently use to refer to God's teachings? (Water--crystal streams, showers, ocean, etc.) I explained

that we often are afraid of and try to avoid these teachings b/c we are so attached to personal freedom and our own wills. But all of us are thirsty and need to be cleansed/refreshed by God's "Water of Life". And so the goal of this game is to refresh others with this Water.

Students lined up at one end of a rectangular playing field and one person with 2 giant cups of water was placed in the center. (If the playing area is huge, then allow 2 people to start in the center.) That person could only move along the center line across the width of the rectangle. Have cones to mark end zones and boundaries. When I said "Go!" all students made a dash to the other side trying to avoid getting wet. (There must be a rule to aim for the torso, avoid the face). If a person got a solid dousing on the front or back torso, they too acquired a large cup of water (we had a giant bucket and hose nearby for refills) and had to position themselves in the line with the first person in the center. (Once there are more than 2 in the center, allow only one cup per person, otherwise it will be impossible to cross w/o getting wet.) Then the group ran from the side they were on back to the starting side, and so on and so forth. Basically, it gets harder and harder to cross w/o getting wet as the center fills up with water cup wielding children. Children run back and forth at the same time, and wait until all have crossed over before running—on cue from me. Depending on the number of children playing and the width of the playing field, you can make a rule that those in the center can not run at all even along the center line but must pivot in place to get the others wet. Since water can be tossed pretty far using a cup, this does not make it too easy for the runners to escape.

I reminded the students not to be too hasty and toss the water before someone gets near you, or you will miss them. Be patient and wait for them to get closer as they are crossing. Conversely, you can tip off the runners to run up to someone holding a cup, but stop suddenly, tricking them into emptying their cup. The throwers are more careful if they are not allowed to refill until the next crossing of runners.

The sincere among His servants will regard the precepts set forth by God as the Water of Life to the followers of every faith.....~Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 29

This new Revelation has in reality been the water of life unto the thirsty.....~Shoghi Effendi: Bahiyyih Khanum, page 188

Spiritual success can be won today, only by teaching the Faith of God. The people are seeking, dying from spiritual thirst. The Baha'is must disseminate the Water of Life freely, so seeking souls may find eternal life. ~Shoghi Effendi: High Endeavors, page 42

For a unit on *prayer,* I told the children the following in a playful manner: One of you notices that your friends are too busy to pray, rushing back and forth through their day. You observe that they are wilting spiritually b/c their souls are thirsty from avoiding taking the time to pray. So, she decides to revive and refresh the friends with the water of prayer. Once they are refreshed too, they feel so good, they then decide to refresh others who are also rushing about—(=the crossing of the playing field). Rules are the same, but use these quotes instead:

Thou hast written concerning the Obligatory Prayer..... It is .....living waters from the gardens of paradise. It is a clear duty prescribed by the All-Merciful. In no wise is it permissible to postpone or neglect it. ~Abdu'l-Baha: The Importance of Obligatory Prayer and Fasting, page 17

Obligatory prayers and supplications are the very water of life.....Take great care with this, and call on others to recite the obligatory prayers and supplications.
~Abdu'l-Baha: The Importance of Obligatory Prayer and Fasting, page 19

These children are even as young plants, and teaching them the prayers is as letting the rain pour down upon them, that they may wax tender and fresh.....
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 139

Remembrance of God is like the rain and dew which bestow freshness and grace on flowers and hyacinths, revive them and cause them to acquire fragrance.....and renewed charm.....Strive thou, then, to praise and glorify God by night and by day, that thou mayest attain infinite freshness and beauty. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Prayer, Meditation and the Devotional Attitude, page 232

For a unit on *avoidance of backbiting and gossip*, the water stands for those odious activities, fault-finding in particular. This is the only time water represents something negative in my games. I much prefer to use it as a positive metaphor, but

we needed to play water games to cool off during this unit.... Kids then try to avoid coming in contact with the water b/c we are strongly exhorted to avoid any conversations that involve backbiting and gossip. The goal is to be the last child who has remained free from being dampened by the water of gossip and backbiting. One could call this version *Fleeing Fault-finding*. In this version, if its not warm enough outside, one can use light foam balls instead of water.

"It is obvious that if we listen to those who complain to us about the faults of others we are guilty of complicity in their backbiting....". (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, February 11, 1925, Lights of Guidance, p. 94)

For a unit on *purity of heart:*

This is why, in Holy Scriptures, the counsels of heaven are likened to water, even as the Qur'an saith: `And pure water send We down from Heaven,'..... the Teachings which come from God are heavenly outpourings of grace; they are rain-showers of divine mercy, and they cleanse the human heart.
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha*: Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 146

Quest for Contentment
This game was created to reinforce our lesson on contentment and goes with the following quote:

Put away all covetousness and seek contentment; for the covetous hath ever been deprived, and the contented hath ever been loved and praised. ~Baha'u'llah: Persian Hidden Words, # 50

We discussed the meanings of the words covetousness, covetous, and contentment. I had looked them up in a dictionary and this is what I shared with the kids: Covetousness: "To wish for enviously, or desire what belongs to another." I gave examples of enviously coveting—thinking negatively of someone b/c they have something you don't and which you crave. Covetous: "A strong craving or desire for wealth and possessions, or another's wealth and possessions". Contentment: "Feeling satisfied and happy with what you have or with your situation." We also talked about who is more pleasant to be around—a contented person or a covetous person, and how covetousness is the source of greed, which is a mighty destructive force on our planet—environmentally, spiritually, and socially.

I had found some plastic strips the size of a standard bookmark with lovely designs at an arts and crafts store. I forgot what their original purpose is for. But any pretty rectangular shape will do, as long as its more sturdy than just paper. I cut them up into about 3 inch long strips about a half inch wide. On the non-patterned side I wrote in gold metallic ink the word "contentment". On the other side I placed some removable correction tape which did not cover the entire side, but was framed by the pretty pattern. (Rectangular white stickers would also work.) I asked the kids to think of something or an activity which brings them contentment which they did not use in their pantomime skits earlier in the class. As each child shared what it was, that child then reached into a small pretty cloth sack containing the strips and some fine iridescent glitter, and pulled out one of the strips. The strips sparkled from the glitter—I wanted to emphasize that contentment is beautiful. Then the child wrote their name on the tape in metallic ink with an apostrophe. So for example, a strip would say *Anne's* on one side and *Contentment* on the other, thereby representing Anne's contentment.

I told them that I would wear my typical monster mask and that I would represent the Creature of _____? They got it—Covetousness. This game can be played outside (in which case one might want to make the strips larger) or inside. We played indoors. I told them the goal was to find their source of contentment—the strip—before I poisoned and froze them with covetousness. I explained that while they stayed in the classroom with the door shut, I would hide their contentment strips in the living room, dining room or play room. The strips would be in plain view, not behind, under, or inside anything, so there was no need to go looking in drawers, cabinets, or closets. The rules were as follows: You were to try and find your own source of contentment (the strip with your name on it) as quickly as possible and hold on to it. I like the message that each of us must individually seek and find what brings us contentment, and that is our responsibility—not our parent's or our friends'. I could freeze you if you did not have your own strip. You could only be immune from me if you had your own and you could not touch anybody else's. You could unfreeze another soul frozen with covetousness only if you had your own contentment strip. You should work together to inform each other where you saw their strips. I would give them a head start by counting to ten slowly. I exhorted them to not run each other over in their attempts to avoid me, but to always think of each other's well being. This game was really fun and made for some suspenseful moments when a child was informed of the location of his/her strip and I knew it and they had to make a dash for it with me hot on their heels. Others who already had their strips were there to help if the seeker got caught. They loved rescuing and informing each other. They quickly realize that it is in their own best interest to inform other's of their contentment locations b/c then that person can liberate them if they get frozen.

We also played this game outside in our acre of wooded commons. Each child wrote their name and one thing that makes them feel contented in large lettering on a bright lime green piece of paper. This was just about the right color to not be too easily seen but not too camouflaged either. While the students were inside the classroom with the door closed so they could not see outside, I hid these sheets of paper all over the commons. They were in plain view, but behind trees, tucked in flower beds, etc., so one had to look carefully to see them. Rules were the same as the indoor version. They really enjoyed this.

Version for lesson on avoiding fault-finding: This game is played exactly like the outdoor version of *Quest for Contentment,* except that instead of searching for their source of contentment, the kids are searching for a virtue. I was inspired by the quote below to have each child ponder privately a fault/imperfection that they think they have, then think of a virtue that would counteract or overcome that fault. Then each child was to write that virtue down and their name on bright green 8 ½ X 11 paper. Some students chose to decorate that paper with drawings. Those sheets of paper are then stashed in various locations around the acre of land behind our house. They are not super obvious, but not totally hidden. As in the Contentment version, they get a head start and dash outside to locate their virtue. Instead of the Creature of Covetousness chasing them, it is now the lower nature/self monster that is after them and can freeze any one who does not have their virtue to protect them. However, any one who has found their own virtue can unfreeze others. Kids can't touch another's virtue paper, but should and do inform other's where they have seen their virtue sheet hidden. It is thus important to have students write their name quite large on the sheet.

'Abdu'l-Bahá..... was asked 'How shall I overcome seeing the faults of others -- recognizing the wrong in others?', and He replied: *'I will tell you. Whenever you recognize the fault of another, think of yourself! What are my imperfections? -- and try to remove them. Do this whenever you are tried through the words or deeds of others. Thus you will grow, become more perfect. You will overcome self, you will not even have time to think of the faults of others...* '(Abdu'l-Baha, as quoted in 'Star of the West', Volume 8, No. 10, on page 138 in a reply given in a private interview in Paris in 1913. Quoted from a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, August 13, 1980, Lights of Guidance, p. 89)

Bucket Brigade # *
A relay game in which 2 teams line up a distance from a huge drum of water. Each team has a smaller drum bucket in front of the first person. The first person then runs to the huge drum and dips a bowl into it and runs with it to their team's drum and dumps it, then gives the bowl to the next in line. (Then they go to the end of the line). When the water level gets too low, they use cups that were placed next to the large drum. Team members keep running until all the water is gone from the main drum. The goal is to have the most water in your team's drum when all the water runs out of the central drum. We used a yard stick and each team always came within ¼ inch of the other. Or the goal can be to be the first team to fill their drum to the very top.

Version 2: Another version we played was also a passing rather than just a running game: The team buckets are placed at the end of the line. The first person in line runs to the large drum and dips the bowl, but instead of running to their teams' drum, they run to the new first person in line who would pass it down the line, and the last person would dump it, then that last person runs to the large drum, dips, then runs to front of the line, and starts passing. Again, the goal is to have the most water when the central drum runs out. You need teams of equal players, b/c a smaller team can pass the bowl quicker to the end bucket.

The quotes from *United We Serve* also go well with both versions of this game, if you relate the water to the Water of Life, which they must seek, obtain and share.

When we did this game for our day camp on the Oneness of Humanity, kids played in pairs. Instead of bowls, each pair used a bucket, and ran with its handle threaded through a stick, each carrying one end of the stick. When the water level got too low, they used the bowls to dip, and then finally the cups to fill their buckets.

Ver Ver Aras Lama # *
This is a game from Papua New Guinea and it means "taking coconuts." We play it with Koosh balls b/c I do not want to lug around and store coconuts! Maybe I should call this game *Hogs and Habitations* but then maybe kids won't volunteer to be hogs to play. Before playing this competitive game I read them the following quotes:

Say: Rejoice not in the things ye possess; tonight they are yours, tomorrow others will possess them. Thus warneth you He Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. ~Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, p 33

Others ere long will lay hands on what ye possess, and enter into your habitations. Incline your ears to My words, and be not numbered among the foolish. For every one of you his paramount duty is to choose for himself that on which no other may infringe and none usurp from him. Such a thing - and to this the Almighty is My witness - is the love of God, could ye but perceive it.
~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, p. 261

How many are the souls who with the utmost endeavour and effort, collect a handful of worldly goods and greatly rejoice in this act and yet in reality the Pen of the Most High hath decreed this wealth for others..... ~Baha'u'llah: Huqúqu'llah, page 505

(I always try to explain or get the kids to explain the meanings of the quotes I read, plus define the big words. I do not expect every student to understand every quote, and Baha'u'llah makes it very clear in numerous Writings that just exposing the human soul to the Creative Word has a spiritual impact and inspires growth and transformation, even if there is little comprehension. Of course comprehension is preferred, but these kids are young and the words and concepts are often very sophisticated.)

Anyway, 5 koosh balls are placed in the center of a square which has 4 hula hoops at a distance as its corners. The object is to get 3 balls at the same time into your habitation (hula hoop). Each child has a hoop that is theirs and they begin by standing in it then all rush for the balls at once. The rules are you can not toss and you can take only 1 ball at a time--from anyone's hoop. You also can't prevent anyone from taking from your hoop, so guarding what you do get is pointless. It is a hilarious game to watch and once in a while a child succeeds, but it is rare because as you are going for someone else's balls they are going for yours! If you want the game to go faster use 6 objects, but still require only 3 in the hoop at once to win. Also, the distance between the hoops can be shortened or lengthened depending on how much of a workout you want the kids to get.

You can use shoes or coconuts or whatever. If you want to make it more meaningful find 5 small things that people value as possessions: a large bulky necklace (a small one may get lost in the grass), a toy car to represent our real ones, a CD, DVD, cell phone, a shirt or shoe, a purse or wallet, a popular toy, a computer disk, etc. (It is best that whatever is used does not roll easily. Koosh balls are perfect—they are just balls of stringy rubber strips). Try to have objects that represent many areas of attachments for people, such as jewelry, money, toys, entertainment, electronics, vehicles, sweets, clothing or footwear.

Variation: Allow tossing into hoops. Hoops should be farther apart for this. The rule still stands that a player can hold only one ball at a time. Any objects must be completely inside the hoops to count.

Version for class on generosity, detachment, or sacrifice:

..... withhold not from the poor the things given unto you by God through His grace.
~Baha'u'llah: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 55

To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues. ~Baha'u'llah: Persian Hidden Words, # 49

"Be generous in prosperity....." ~Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 93

Blessed is he who preferreth his brother before himself. ~Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 71

It behoveth the people of Baha to die to the world and all that is therein, to be so detached from all earthly things that the inmates of Paradise may inhale from their garment the sweet smelling savor of sanctity.... ~Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 100

.....voluntary sharing, the freely-chosen expending of one's substance, leadeth to society's comfort and peace. It lighteth up the world; it bestoweth honour upon humankind.
~Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 114

And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is voluntary sharing of one's property with others among mankind. This voluntary sharing is greater than equality, and consists in this, that man should not prefer himself to others, but rather should sacrifice his life and property for others. ~Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 302

We must be like the fountain or spring that is continually emptying itself of all that it has and is continually being refilled from an invisible source. To be continually giving out for the good of our fellows undeterred by the fear of poverty and reliant on the unfailing bounty of the Source of all wealth and all good -- this is the secret of right living.
(Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, in Bahá'í Funds: Contributions and Administration, p. 11, Compilations, NSA USA - Developing Distinctive Baha'i Communities)

The goal in the generosity/reverse version is to keep giving away the items put in one's hoop, and to be constantly emptying it and putting the items in other's hoops. The winner is the one who is the first to have an empty hoop. This represents that they were very detached and generous in their life. The rules are: No tossing, you can remove only 1 item at a time from your hoop and deposit only one at a time in anyone's hoop. You also can't prevent anyone from depositing in your hoop, i.e. no guarding. We used objects such as these to symbolize possessions: A necklace, shoe, wallet, cell phone, candy bar, a DVD, and 2 toys. One needs 2 items per hoop for this to work, 8 items in all. Sometimes, if kids are really fast, 3 items per hoop are best, 12 in all.

Another version would be to simply have the least possessions in one's hoop when time is called. When the teacher calls time, she should not be looking at the hoops so that its chance who wins. She can blow a whistle, and all players immediately lie down, to represent death. This one works well with a lesson on life after death:

Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning; for death, unheralded, shall come upon thee and thou shalt be called to give account for thy deeds. ~Baha'u'llah, The Arabic Hidden Words, #31

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 from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 156

Indeed, the inscription on the Baha'i burial ring reminds us to be detached from all earthly things at the time of death:

"I came forth from God, and return unto Him, detached from all save Him, holding fast to His Name, the Merciful, the Compassionate" ~Baha'u'llah, Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 62

Rainbow Chase ###
I ask the group "How many of you have ever seen a rainbow? How many colors are there? What are they?" We talked about that's why a rainbow is so beautiful--the diversity of colors in a unified arc. Diversity also makes the world more interesting and beautiful. If everyone were the same how dreadful it would be. (If not doing the optional visualization exercise below, mention how a flower garden consisting of only one kind and color of flower and a rainbow of only one color would not be nearly as lovely and attractive). Diversity is not only beautiful—it is necessary. Our civilization could not survive if everybody had the same skills and talents. We need carpenters, doctors, farmers, etc.

Optional if time: I ask the kids to lie down, close their eyes and take them through a visualization exercise: (The following is a summary—I go into more dramatic detail when actually doing this) You are in a meadow which has a path that forks. You choose the left side and it takes you to a garden full of thousands of flowers that are all red and all tulips. In the sky is an arc of red. Further down the path you find hundreds of people in a group—all the same skin color, outfit, hair type, eye color, size, shape, etc. You head back down the path to the right fork, and come to a garden full of thousands of different types of flowers and colors (name colors and a variety of flowers) and a real rainbow is overhead. Near the garden are hundreds of people of all colors, costumes, sizes, shapes, hair styles, etc. Ask kids which path they would rather take.

Next I show the players a pretty bag of 12 inch ribbon strips. (Fray-stop is a good idea to apply to the ends, or the segments will eventually fray apart.) There are 10 sets of ribbons and each set has the 7 different colors of the rainbow in it. They are all mixed up. I explain that I am going to be the "Creature of Sameness" and the only way to be safe from me was to form groups of 7 people with 7 different colors of ribbons. To be safe in a group, members must show unity by touching or by holding hands or linked elbows. If a child or inadequate group is frozen, they should yell for help and only a group of diverse colors of the correct number can free (unfreeze) them by touching that child or any member of the group. This is important to emphasize so frozen kids can still have fun, and it encourages caring for others. I explain that this is the power of unity in diversity—it can free us from the dangers of sameness. Also, if a group is not adequate, the Creature of Sameness does not have to touch all in the group—if one is touched the whole group is frozen. But as stated before, this also works for freeing a group—only one need be touched. This encourages individuals to see their well being as linked to the well being of the group.

The costume is all white and consists of a ghost gown, white gloves, white pants, white shirt, and white shoes and socks and four white masks with long white ribbons flowing out from the forehead of each mask. My head is covered with a white granny cap. The masks are just plain white human face ones, often used for decorating, with elastic bands. They all fit on a head, one on each side. (With kids ages 5-7, let them see and touch the masks before you put them on. Kids under 5 will be too freaked out by the masks, but you can still play w/o them just using the clothing or a white ribbon wig.)

Also, depending on the age of the kids and the size of the group, you can say that groups of 4 or more of different colors are safe. If you are insisting on groups of 7, you must make sure you pass out the correct number of sets, to make sure they can eventually achieve the 7 member group. If the number of players is not divisible by 7, that's okay b/c its fun to always have a few "free radicals". After all, its usually impossible to know ahead of time how many players you will have unless you have a predictable class. Try to mix up the sets ahead of time so kids can't just form the groups they see being created when you hand out perfect sets. If allowing a smaller number to be in a safe group, it's not as necessary to make sure you have the right number of each color.

Always demonstrate what you mean before starting the game. Hand out 10 ribbons and show how if two of the same colors are in a group, that group can be frozen by the Creature of Sameness, or show how if the group has too few members, it is also not safe. Remind them not to ruin the safety of a group if you are being chased by joining a group that already has your color. Also, groups may not form until the creature has appeared—otherwise there is not much thrill and chasing if the groups are already formed and safe by the time the creature comes out.

At first, many kids will often just enjoy the thrill of the chase and not make serious attempts to unite as a group. So I would just go for 2 or 3 kids who had the same color ribbons and freeze them so no complete groups of 7 could form. (Only groups of 7 diverse colors could unfreeze someone). Finally, after a few rounds of "losing" they will form an invincible group and succeed in freeing all the "frozen" kids.

I have an assistant distribute the ribbons while I am changing into costume. Kids dip their hands into the sack and pull out a segment of ribbon or they are just given one. They are exhorted to be detached and not fuss over color. They can trade if they find someone willing, however. It is not a good idea to hand out all the ribbons until you are done explaining the game. The kids will be focusing on the ribbons rather than what you are saying.

While changing in costume, it helps if an assistant does the visualization exercise (described above) then plays a song on the beauty of diversity. Vitamin L's *Walk a Mile* recording has the perfect song called "People are a Rainbow." The ribbons can be handed out during the song. In that case, the kids are asked to be quiet and listen carefully to the song and accept the color they get. It is nice to have the kids lying down with eyes closed during the song and the ribbons are dropped onto their stomachs.

If you meet those of different race and colour from yourself.....be glad and show them kindness. Think of them as different coloured roses growing in the beautiful garden of humanity, and rejoice to be among them. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Paris Talks, page 53

The Shelter #

This game was inspired, but is different from, a game described in *Brilliant Star Magazine, Nov./Dec. 1992 p. 5* Any shelter—a tent, a cloth draped over chairs, etc. will do. I just happen to have wooden playscape next to my house with a platform and multiple extremely long silk saris from India b/c my eldest daughter did a year of volunteer service there. So using push pins, I created a rather lovely enclosed shelter of silk on a wooden frame. I covered the ground with a rug then on top of that a quilt, and on top of that a blue cloth with stars on it which could be easily washed as it was muddy outside. There was also a photo of Abdu'l-Baha on a silk scarf-covered stool inside. I shared with the students the following quote from Baha'u'llah about Abdu'l-Baha, as quoted by Shoghi Effendi in a lengthy section on the station of Abdu'l-Baha as described by Baha'u'llah:

"We have made Thee a shelter for all mankind....." World Order of Baha'u'llah, page 135.

First we had a discussion about what constitutes a shelter, and what Abdu'l-Baha may be sheltering us from—things like prejudice, disunity, schism, ego, lower nature, greed, etc. His example and guidance protects us from the storms and destruction of those forces and tendencies. So for this game, I wear a monster mask, and I of course symbolize the storms of lower nature, disunity, etc. Kids hide throughout our property. I count to 50. They are to remain hiding until I find them and exclaim their name—(they can't all run to the shelter while I am stalking others, otherwise the game would end quickly w/o much suspense). When I find a child, they can run to the shelter—but if I catch them, they also put on a mask and go hunting. The game ends when all are either "storms" or in the shelter. Once in the shelter, kids are to remain there (this symbolizes steadfastness) until all have been found. It helps to play this game when there is a covering of foliage.

East meets West ##
This game was inspired by the extremely numerous references in the Baha'i Writings to the future relationship between the East and the West. Here is just one of them, written in the early 1900's:

In these days the East is in need of material progress and the West is in want of a spiritual idea. It would be well for the West to turn to the East for illumination, and to give in exchange its scientific knowledge. There must be this interchange of gifts.

The East and the West must unite to give to each other what is lacking. This union will bring about a true civilization, where the spiritual is expressed and carried out in the material.

Receiving thus the one from the other the greatest harmony will prevail, all people will be united, a state of great perfection will be attained, there will be a firm cementing, and this world will become a shining mirror for the reflection of the attributes of God.

We all, the Eastern with the Western nations, must strive day and night with heart and soul to achieve this high ideal, to cement the unity between all the nations of the earth. Every heart will then be refreshed, all eyes will be opened, the most wonderful power will be given, the happiness of humanity will be assured. ~`Abdu'l-Baha: Paris Talks, pages 21-22

I did not read this quote but paraphrased it and elaborated that according to the Baha'i Writings, there will not be peace and security until the East and the West get along and work together. Also, it is very clear from Baha'i Writings that each hemisphere has weaknesses and strengths, and each can learn from the other. For example, (in general) the West has better equality of women and men, more democratic practices, freedom of speech and religion, fairer trials, etc. but also has more vulgar media, excessive materialism, more murder, etc. The East has more emphasis on reverence and daily practice of one's religion, more obedience to and respect for parents, more modesty, but it also has less tolerance for the right to practice one's own religion, lack of education and respect for females, brutal and widespread violations of human rights, etc.

I told the students that when the East and the West become united and have the openness and humility to learn from each other, the whole world will become a better place for everyone—but there are major barriers such as deep seated prejudices, long standing blind imitations of the past and attachment to unhealthy traditions which need to be broken or changed. I explained that these barriers are symbolized by the blocking each team will do to prevent the other team's ball from getting through. The goal is to kick your hemisphere's ball—which represents the good things from your culture/hemisphere-- into the goal of the other team's—which means your hemisphere/culture succeeded in uplifting/educating the other one—by breaking through the prejudices and barriers.

To begin this game, students form teams of 3 or 4 (or many more if the group is really large) by holding hands or linking elbows. Both the East and the West have 2 teams (if there are more than 16 or so kids, more teams can be formed). Goals are placed as in soccer, at opposite ends of a rectangular playing field. Each hemisphere gets a ball, and they should be soft (to avoid injury) and of different color so the teams can keep track of their own ball. In the beginning, the teams of each hemisphere line up facing each other in the center of the playing field. I explain that each child is a nation belonging to that hemisphere, and they must stay linked to symbolize unity. If the ball is kicked by a person who has broken off or by anyone on a team in which a person is disconnected, it is a foul, and goes back to the center. In both games, kids/teams can move all over the playing field, and some decide to hover near their goal to protect it. The game begins with the dropping of both balls in between the East and West teams who are facing each other, eager to get their culture-ball through to the other side.

Quickie Version:* If you want to dispense with all the metaphor here is a simpler, faster version: Two equal teams line up facing each other. Team members link arms and try to get a foam ball in-between the legs of the opposite team to score a point. Points are not given for balls that go around the end of the line or over the heads of the players. A really fun game if you can avoid getting kicked!

Cooperative Yaks & Wolves # *
In this game we first talk about how Yaks work together to form a circle with their horns facing outward, encircling the sick, old, and young, when wolves try to attack. So I gave all the kids a segment of yarn which represented tails. They tucked them in their pants with the instructions that they must have about a foot dangling out. One child (or an assistant) plays the wolf who does not have a tail ---for identification purposes. At the beginning of the game everyone spreads out and the wolf begins to chase. If he grabs your tail, that means you have been caught--and you become a wolf. The best way to protect yourself is to form a cluster with 1 or more kids, facing out. The wolf is not allowed to slide his "paw" in between to get the tail--the tail must be fully exposed to be snatched. Saturday's class worked in unity so much that for

the first time ever (and I have played this game dozens of times over the years with hundreds of kids in all sorts of camps and conferences), the wolves could not win by completely eliminating all the yaks. And the yaks are not allowed to just spend the whole game in a cluster—I told them they must go graze independently b/c in the wild the yaks would starve if all they did was remain in a circle. Yaks must separate and spread out immediately once the danger is past. The wolves gradually got better at ambushing, but it took some consultation to learn how to hunt as a pack and use cooperation to snatch a yak tail. Also, yak tails should never be tied on—this of course results in rope burn for the wolves and ripped clothes for the yaks. Girls wearing dresses are a problem--there is no place to tuck the yarn. Try taping the yarn tail on, or tying yarn around their waist like a belt, then tucking the tail yarn under that.

Pulse Tag #

This game is based on one that comes from *Brilliant Star* children's magazine, on p. 22-23, Special Edition 1992. It is all about how the human heart pumps food and oxygen to the body via the blood to make the body healthy and strong, and how when we teach Baha'u'llah's teachings, we are like spiritual hearts pumping spiritual food to the body of mankind. Each child chose a spiritual principle or teaching from the Baha'i Faith to be their message such as "we are the waves of one sea" or "unity in diversity". Then each took his/her pulse. Next we went outside and played a "share the message" tag game in which one child was a teacher and chased the others. When he or she tagged someone, he/she would say his/her message. The tagged person then also became a teacher who could tag, and they had their own message to say. The game ends when everyone is tagged with a message. After the game we all took our pulses again to see how much faster and harder the heart was beating, making the analogy that when we teach Baha'u'llah's teachings we are helping to pump stronger spiritual energy into the world--and the harder we work, the more gets pumped!

Be thou as a throbbing artery, pulsating in the body of the entire creation, that through the heat generated by this motion there may appear that which will quicken the hearts of those who hesitate. ~Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 142

This day, it behoveth whoso hath quaffed the Mystic Wine of everlasting life from the Hands of the loving-kindness of the Lord his God, the Merciful, to pulsate even as the throbbing artery in the body of mankind, that through him may be quickened the world and every crumbling bone. ~Baha'u'llah, The Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 82

I hope, from the bounties of the Exalted, the Quickener of the souls, that thou mayest not rest for one moment but pulsate constantly like unto the pulsation of an artery in the body of the world, to infuse the spirit of life in the souls and suffer the people to soar up to the zenith of the Kingdom. ~Abdu'l-Baha, Tablets of Abdu'l-Baha v3, p. 727

The next 4 tag games all go well with this quote: *Be ye as the fingers of one hand, the members of one body. Thus counselleth you the Pen of Revelation..... ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 140

Streamer Tag #

This game requires a high degree of unity and synchrony: Pairs are connected by holding onto a 2 foot or so segment of crepe paper party streamer. The "it" pair is connected also. The idea is basically tag but pairs could be frozen three different ways: If the pair ripped their streamer while running, if they were tagged by the “its”, or if they let go of the streamer while being chased. A pair remained frozen until an unfrozen pair came to the rescue by having each person of the unfrozen pair touch one of the frozen pair—in other words both frozen kids had to be touched by one of the unfrozens. To be tagged required that only one be touched. If a pair’s streamer ripped in half, they got a new one from the unfrozen pair who would come to the streamer depot to get new ones and locate the frozen pairs (who are yelling “help, help”). If the taggers (it pair) ripped or separated, they had to stop and get a new streamer or re-connect. Especially if the taggers had to get a new streamer, this provides an opportunity for others to rescue frozen pairs b/c the taggers are not chasing them if they obtaining another streamer. It took a lot of cooperation and other-oriented awareness to run and escape as a unit. Pairs could not hold hands or link elbows (thereby nullifying the effect of the streamers). I encourage kids to communicate with each other to reduce rips and harmonize their directions. It was a major challenge, but fun for all of them.

When we played this in a gym with over 50 10-12 yr olds kids, the chasers wore masks to represent all the ugly things that disunity causes, (like war, fighting, etc.). The chasers were not attached to another person, but to make it more fair, they could only skip or gallop sideways to pursue others. Some groups of that size will need only 2 chasers, some 3. It gets pretty chaotic, but the kids loved it. B/c of the intensity and number of kids, I let newly unfrozen pairs get their own new streamer if theirs was ripped in half and only 1 in the pair had to be touched to be freed.

Elbow Tag # *

Some kids were linked in pairs by the elbows. They always had to run with their free arms' hands on the hips, thereby forming an open triangle. Some kids were singles, and they could be tagged and frozen by the tagger. The only way to be immune from tagging was to link elbows with a pair—you could not be chased if you were in a pair. However, if a pair had a child link on the right side, the left side person had to release—only pairs are allowed. If a pair had a child link on the left side, the right side child had to release. It took some practice for the kids to think about running along side a person being chased so they could find rest and safety. Also, free kids could not form new pairs, otherwise the game would come to a stand still if even numbers of kids are playing. If uneven numbers are playing and all but one paired up, there would not be enough chasing b/c once in a pair, you can't be chased. *So the same number of pairs had to remain as in the beginning* so there were always free and paired units. Frozen children can only be unfrozen by a linked pair, but the pair who unfreezes then has to add the now unfrozen child. This means that when a pair rescues, one member of that pair will have to let go to allow the frozen child to be in a pair. For a group of ten, assigning 2-3 pairs is about right. If kids are really having no trouble escaping the bad guy, assign 2 bad guys. The bad guys win if all the singles are frozen at the same time—which is very unlikely unless you have a group that has no concept of cooperation.

You can make it metaphorical by saying that the linked pairs represent an Eastern and a Western culture or nation, and they are only safe from war, terrorism, violence and conflict (the tagger) when they are linked in unity. The tagger can wear a monster mask to symbolize conflict, war, disunity, etc. However, for our unit on generosity, the masked taggers stood for the opposite of generosity: greed and selfishness. The players could only triumph over them by showing generosity in the act of giving up their safety (being linked), so that another unlinked child was safe.

Tube Tag #

Pairs of kids are placed inside 3 *Tuba Ruba* (the name of a game by Milton Bradley) tubes which are connected to form a circle. I deliberately assigned slower children to be with faster children, as this would provide more opportunity for practicing cooperation and unified movement. I explain that this game is simply an exercise to teach unity, cooperation and synchrony—if you do not work in harmony and don't communicate or adjust your speed and direction to match your partners'—you lose. Those that think about how their movements are effecting their partner and talk to each other about direction and strategy, will succeed. Players can run side by side or front and back. However, if they run side by side, they can link elbows, thereby controlling the tension on the tubes better. The rules are that, if while running, you break the tubes apart, you are frozen until a "still connected" group has the opportunity to tag you and unfreeze you. They may be busy trying to escape the taggers. If a pair gets tagged they are also frozen and can't resume running until a free and connected group "unfreezes" them. If the taggers break their tubes while in pursuit, they just have to stop and reconnect—but that gives the free pairs a chance to unfreeze the frozen pairs. The frozen pairs who became frozen due to breaking their tubes are advised to reconnect their tubes immediately so they are ready for when a free pair whizzes by and unfreezes them—a pair cannot resume running until their tubes are reconnected. A round ends if the taggers freeze every one or when it becomes clear that the taggers can't possibly win. Then the role of tagger rotates to a new pair.

One can also play this game using a figure 8. Each pair takes 4 tubes and connects and twists them into a figure 8 and each child puts one of the loops around his or her waist.

Backwards Tag #

Kids in pairs holding hands were chased by one pair, and if tagged had to be frozen until a free pair tagged them. The one catch is that everyone, including the taggers, has to run backwards the whole time! It was quite humorous!

Go Tag ## *

This game is a semi-cooperative tag game in which kids form 2 lines, back to back in a squatting position. One child is selected to be the chaser and he/she can run only in one direction while trying to catch a runner who can run in both directions around the line of kids. The chaser can tag anyone in the line to continue the chase, and then takes the position in the line of the person tagged. This is a game that requires a lot of interdependence, strategy, and timing. If the runner is tagged, the tagger gets to be the runner—if he/she still has any breath left! If not, they can choose someone new to be the runner and I will choose the new chaser. If you have only 12 kids, and they are lined up back to back, that means the lines in each direction are only 6 kids long. This is a pretty short line to be taking curves on. The players should either put a little space between them to lengthen the 2 back to back lines, or make one line, alternating directions they face, rather than be back to back. This makes it a little harder for the chaser, b/c then they have to make sure that they choose only a player who is facing in the right direction to continue the pursuit.

Monster Mess #
I went outside and placed litter (just paper crumpled into a ball) around the acre of commons. For each child, one light green and one bright pink piece of paper was laid out. (So if there are 10 kids in a class, 20 pieces of paper would be distributed around the woods.) Some were put in low tree branches or on a bench, but most were on the ground. The light green was chosen b/c it was somewhat more camouflaged than the bright pink. None of the pieces were totally hidden from sight. I wore a mask and declared myself to be "Monster Mess". (You can also make it more comical or less scary for little ones by wearing a piece of garbage.) I would give them 10-15 seconds head start to the outside play area. They could escape being frozen by me if they had picked up and were holding 2 pieces of litter, one in each hand. The rules were that you could not be frozen by Monster Mess only if you had one of each color in your hand. If you got frozen, others could unfreeze you by giving you one of their colors. If you were frozen b/c you had no paper, they could give you either color, but if you were frozen b/c you had only one color, they had to give you the color you did not have. In either case, the rescuer is risking their own well being b/c as soon as they free you, they are vulnerable to freezing since they now have only one color. This is b/c another rule is that you can't carry more than 2 pieces at a time. So it is best to locate a piece you can retrieve before you rescue—but there are no guarantees someone else won't have gotten it by the time you return.

It is important to note that, a frozen person who has no litter at all can be unfrozen by the generous donating of just one piece of litter—but then both the donating person and the rescued person immediately become game for the monster b/c you must have 2 different colors to be safe. So kids should not unfreeze a person who has no litter right next to the monster. The game ends when all kids have both pieces of litter. But since kids can only carry 2 at once, the game stays hopping for quite a time, with a lot of team work and strategy. Near the end, I was guarding the last child to not have both pieces, and the only way she could get free was for some hot-shot rescuer to toss or hand her his/her paper and make a mad dash away from me to the last piece of paper—which nobody else could touch since you can only have 2 pieces at once in your hand. Kids worked together as informants and it was great to see the cooperative rescue efforts.

Helpmate Tag #
To illustrate the "helpmate" concept we played this game: I was IT and the kids spread out. If I tagged you, you were frozen. The only way to avoid freezing was to link up with a member of the opposite sex by holding hands or linking elbows. A unified pair of male/female could unfreeze a single person by touching them. It took them a while to really work together--at first, while I was chasing someone and closing in, they would run right past a child of the opposite sex rather than hooking up, and often, a child of the opposite sex would not run towards to rescue another child in danger of being frozen-they would either just stand there or run away. But finally, they got the hang of it and really looked out for each other. To make the game more dynamic, make the rule that you can only link up if being chased or to rescue a frozen soul. (Otherwise, kids would just stay linked and never get chased, which would be boring.) Once the danger of being frozen is passed b/c the tagger is focusing on someone else, pairs must release unless they are going to rescue someone. Then, once the rescue takes place, pairs must spread out. Also, the tagger can wear a mask and represent disunity and suffering—the result of men and women not helping each other.

*O ye two believers in God! The Lord, peerless is He, hath made woman and man to abide with each other in the closest companionship, and to be even as a single soul. They are two helpmates, two intimate friends, who should be concerned about the welfare of each other. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 122

Foxtail Toss *
This game involves the use of a toy called a Foxtail which is basically a ball with a nylon tail. You can make your own by sewing a tennis ball into a sock or sack. Teams of 2 had to stay connected and try to catch it (only by the tail) after I flung it up in the air.

Loose Caboose # *
In this game pairs hook up with each other and each pair tries to latch on to the back of another pair while all the time avoiding being latched onto. Once latched, breaking away is not allowed. It is pretty darn funny, and a great way to "hook up" kids who do not normally cling together. (I always deliberately pair up children who are not real close friends because I feel very strongly that cliques and exclusive groupings are not good for children or for the unity of the class). Anyway, the goal is to be the last in the train that is inevitably formed. The pair at the beginning of the train end up trying to hook up behind a pair that is trying to hook up to the train's end pair and it gets pretty wild. If kids can handle it physically, you can even encourage that the head of the train try to latch on to the caboose, which does not want to be hooked onto, like a dog trying to catch its own tail. I also use this game to emphasize that being last is better than being first for a change—for the truly spiritual and selfless person does not strive to be first in line or first to get things, only first to be virtuous. Putting oneself last is therefore a mark of selflessness in certain contexts.

Beamo Collective Stone ## *
Two teams of equal numbers are created. There are bases (you can use cones) as in baseball, a team in the outfield, and a team that are the "batters". Most of my students are not able to bat a ball and so we used the giant fabric Beamo frisbees. In this game, balls can be used w/o a bat—they can be thrown or kicked, but the kids love these giant frizbees and they are much easier to catch. This game does keep score and is competitive but as in most team sports, demands a lot of cooperation from team members. Unlike some team sports, however, even the slowest, youngest, less coordinated play as much and are as important as the more athletic. I do notice more negativity when we keep score and competition always seems to bring out the worst in some kids, but this is also an opportunity for practicing humility, detachment, and good sportsmanship—which they will need in most other game settings as well.

Anyway, this is how it goes: The outfield team decides on a sequence of tossing the Beamo—that makes the passing of it much more efficient and less chaotic. In other words, one always tosses the Beamo to the same person and receives it from the same person regardless of who catches it first. The "batting" team lines up at home plate and the first person sends the Beamo sailing. Getting caught in a tree or going directly to their right or left (where there are no outfielders) results in a foul and the player just keeps throwing it until they get it going—this never takes more than 2 tries. The outfield team tries to catch it—and even if they do so in mid air this is not an out. While the Beamo is in motion the original thrower is running the bases—but to make it more challenging they have to completely circle each cone (or base) rather than just running by it. Meanwhile the outfield team is tossing/throwing it to each and every one of its members. It can not be handed, it must be tossed. When all members have received the Beamo, the last one yells "Stone!" and the runner must stop frozen wherever s/he is. Then the last player to receive the Beamo throws it back to home plate and the next thrower gets a turn. If the prior thrower did not make it home, they will with the next toss, and a point is scored for each member circling home plate. Teams switch side when each member has tossed.

The maximum # of points for each turn is of course the number of team members. Most of the time, if the spacing of the bases and the # outfielders is well balanced, all but the last "batter" make it home. The only way to not end up with a tie score is if one team scores a home run and the other does not—and for us, everybody made it no farther than between 3rd and home no matter how good their toss was or how clumsy the outfielders tossed to each other. Once in a while the batting team gets a break and one of the outfielders tosses the Beamo way beyond their team mate, therefore giving the tosser/runner more time.

Alaskan Beamo ##*
This one was originally called "Alaskan Baseball" and like the one above, its from one of Terry Orlick's books (see *Resources* at end of document). We used our Beamos, but one can use any ball or frizbee. Players can also kick a ball instead of bat or throw. There are no bases. Divide the kids into 2 teams. The "batting" team, (which was the throwing team in our case), lines up with lots of space between those in line. The out fielders spread out. The first kid in the throwing line flings the Beamo as far as she can. Then she immediately proceeds to weave in and out of the line until she gets to the end of the line. At that point, she runs to the front of the line, and that scores a point –but only if the outfielders have not completed their task: As soon as they catch the Beamo or pick it off the ground, they line up and have to pass it over head behind them. Each outfielder must be included in the pass. If the Beamo makes it to the last person in line before the thrower runs to the front of her line, then the throwing team does not score a point. Regardless of whether a point is scored or not, the thrower goes to the back of the line so the next person can throw, and the outfielders spread out again. When every thrower has thrown, the outfielders and the throwers switch roles. If you cant create 2 teams of equal number, just have one child at the beginning of the batting or out fielding line go to the end of the line to be circled twice.

Creature Capture #
This game goes with our lesson on kindness to animals. Slightly more than half of the children are animals. They choose a nose from an animal nose pile and put it on. The rest are humans. You can also have a basket with the same number of little cards as players, and on ½ of the cards a human nose is drawn, on the other ½, an animal nose. Its best to have one more animal nose than human. Kids choose blindly and for the first round they are whichever nose they chose. Kids switch roles for the second round.

I explain that animals, even in the wild, need people to protect them. They need people to preserve their habitats, outlaw poachers, etc. So in this game, I am the animal poacher, and the only way you can escape me is to pair with a human—or out run me! So I chase the kids around the yard with a small net and try to (gently) throw it over their heads. If I catch one, that animal has to go into captivity. (The deck) The only way to escape captivity is if 2 linked children rescue the captive animal/child—since it often takes groups of people to protect wild and/or endangered animals. Since there are slightly more animals than people, and since 2 people can be occupied freeing an imprisoned animal, there are always plenty of animals for me to harass! Also, only 1 animal at a time can pair with a person to be immune from capture.

Children got to switch being animals and people. It is helpful to have one more animal than human helpers, otherwise they can just immediately pair up and the game is not exciting. When we have even numbers, I ask the animal children to spread out on the playing field without the human children. The human children stand behind me. I get a head start of the humans in chasing them. I usually am able to capture an animal before they can pair up, and this really peps up the game---the rescuer pairs start coming and that means there are unpaired animals to chase.

*.....to blessed animals the utmost kindness must be shown, the more the better. Tenderness and loving-kindness are basic principles of God's heavenly Kingdom. ~`Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 160

The other 2 games for our lesson on kindness to animals were *Cats and Mice* under Parachute Games, and *Whale Rescue* under Low Activity Games.

Higher Nature Vs Lower #

I first explained how all religions have repeatedly reminded us how spiritual goals, accomplishments, qualities, etc., are far more important and desirable than material and physical. It is the spiritual things which will benefit us after we die, while the material do not accompany us. Material things can often interfere with spiritual growth, and most religions warn us about this in very clear language.

(Just a side note—Baha'is are not ascetics—we do value material things but see them as a means to grow and develop rather than as an end in themselves. It is not bad to have material things as long as one is not over attached to them, nor uses them to exalt oneself over others, nor makes them the purpose of life, nor tramples on other's well being to obtain them. But when it comes to choosing between a spiritual value and a material one, from a spiritual perspective the choice should be obvious.)

For several years in Baha'i children's classes, we have discussed the Baha'i teaching that human beings have a dual nature---the lower, animalistic, selfish side, which is dominated by ego, lust, and impulse, and the higher, spiritual and angelic side, which is an expression of the Divine within us. It is in control when people are loving, selfless, compassionate, sacrificing, etc. Life is really a struggle between these two natures, with the goal of having the higher self dominate and control the lower—which never completely goes away. The Baha'i teachings explain that satan or the devil is not a real living entity but a symbol of the lower nature. Christ used this metaphor to impress on simple and concrete people how dangerous their lower nature was to their spirituality. Anyway, Abdu'l-Baha, (Baha'u'llah's son who He appointed to be the authoritative interpreter of His Writings and our Exemplar) explained it this way:

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. Signs of both these natures are to be found in men. In his material aspect he expresses untruth, cruelty and injustice; all these are the outcome of his lower nature. The attributes of his Divine nature are shown forth in love, mercy, kindness, truth and justice, one and all being expressions of his higher nature. Every good habit, every noble quality belongs to man's spiritual nature, whereas all his imperfections and sinful actions are born of his material nature. If a man's Divine nature dominates his human nature, we have a saint. ~`Abdu'l-Baha: Paris Talks, page 60

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.....
~`Abdu'l-Baha: Some Answered Questions, pages 235-236

Wherever there is suffering and injustice in the world, we will find without exception, that the lower nature has prevailed. The converse is also true. Any way, back to what was explained to your children:

I told them that life is full of choices and that the goal of life is to make choices which are guided by our higher selves, and to avoid ones which are from our lower selves. So with that in mind, I gave one child an ugly mask to represent our lower nature, and one an iridescent star garland crown and white silk cloth to represent our higher, more angelic nature. The angelic nature child was also given a pouch which contained an exotic mixture of luminous, iridescent, sparkly confetti and glitter which looked truly ethereal and unique. All the other children were then equipped with a small heart shaped box which represented their souls. I would read 2 choices, then point to a side of the lawn marked by cones which represented each choice. Children would then walk to the side representing their choice and stand facing away and close their eyes. On a cue they were to turn around and see which nature was standing in front of them. If it was the higher, each child was given a pinch of the "angel dust" to indicate radiance and spirituality in their soul. If it was the lower, they tried to

escape and correct their "mistake" and run over to the higher side, and receive "illumination" symbolized by the angel dust. I gave the children a chance to get it right because life is that way—how often do we surrender to our lower side, see the error of our ways and grow spiritually? However, if one was touched by the lower side, they could not continue to higher side and get the dust, symbolizing that they gave in and did not try to be better—which also happens in real life. But each round started over with each choice, so no one was bereft of spirituality for long!

I knew ahead of time that many kids would choose the lower nature choice just for the sheer joy of rebellion and of being chased by the monster-lower side. And this is indeed what happened, even though they risked not getting angel dust in their soul-boxes. (Most were able to escape being touched anyway). The important thing though, is that they witnessed several examples of higher verses lower choices, and hopefully this will make an impression on them. We rotated the higher and lower nature roles, so most kids got to play one or the other, and no one was the "bad guy" for long.

Harder Version: If you want to be more strict, you can say that if you choose the lower nature choice, when you run back over to the higher nature side, you do not get any angel dust even if you didn't get touched—and if the lower nature does touch you before you get there, you have to pour out into a container what angel dust you do have. Thus, the stakes are now higher if you make the wrong choice. Also, you can make the choices more nuanced for older kids. For example, "Would you rather starve or steal food from a greedy neighbor who has plenty"? (See Gleanings, pages 298-299 for guidance on this situation).

Here then are the choices. (Some of which had no moral implications whatsoever, which I explained would happen with a few, that they were merely a matter of personal taste. These were always choices between 2 material or physical attributes, rather than between spiritual and physical. In this case, no lower or higher nature-person would be present when they turned around).

Would you rather:

be a cockroach or a slug?
be a lonely King/Queen or live in a very poor but happy family?
be good looking or kind-hearted?
be happy or rich?
be too short or too tall?
be married to someone who is physically gorgeous but has a negative and shallow personality, or to someone who is physically unattractive, but has a wonderful personality?
be beautiful and mean or ugly and kind?
be a liar or a mute?
be a thief or an amputee?
be famous or an unknown servant to humanity?
*be smart or a good friend?
have a huge TV & DVD player all to yourself in your own room, or go on pilgrimage to the Holy places of your religion?
be rich or loving?
**sacrifice your life for a great cause or live a life of luxury?

*The Baha'i Writings extol education, but also warn that intelligence without virtue is dangerous. It is preferable to have both, but it is better to be virtuous and dull, than intelligent but immoral—because the virtuous one will benefit society, while the smart but immoral damages society.

*Training in morals and good conduct is far more important than book learning. A child that is cleanly, agreeable, of good character, well-behaved - even though he be ignorant - is preferable to a child that is rude, unwashed, ill-natured, and yet becoming deeply versed in all the sciences and arts. The reason for this is that the child who conducts himself well, even though he be ignorant, is of benefit to others, while an ill-natured, ill-behaved child is corrupted and harmful to others, even though he be learned. If, however, the child be trained to be both learned and good, the result is light upon light. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, pages 135-136

**I explained that sacrifice of life can mean death, or it can be giving your life to a cause and everyday sacrificing for it.
It is important to note with the children that in real life, all these qualities listed above are not mutually exclusive, for ex., one can be rich and loving. I do not want them to be prejudiced towards wealthy or physically attractive people. Also, just because someone is poor or physically unattractive (by society's' standards), does not mean they are virtuous!!!

Come Over to Our Side ## *
In this game 2 rows of equal number of children line up facing each other, about 2 yards apart. In a line on the ground between them are placed about 20 very light foam balls, about the size of baseballs. When I say "Go!" they dash for the balls and try to hit someone on the other side (below the neck). If one is hit, they have to come over to the other side and join that team, until they are hit again. If one catches a ball thrown, then the person who threw it goes over. Hitting the neck or face are not allowed, even though these balls are super light and soft—I just think that it encourages disrespect. It is basically a fun game that encourages kids to not develop "us" and "them" mentalities and to view everyone as a potential teammate, desirable to have on one's side. It is a chaotic and silly game, in that children are constantly chasing balls, throwing, and switching sides.

Wet Version: The rules are the same as above but large plastic cups of water are used instead of foam balls. The water stands for the Water of Life (The teachings of God) and no face splashing allowed—I said that was like "getting in your face" to teach the Cause of God—its obnoxious and rude and alienates and irritates people. Also, each team tosses the water to the other side on cue, and only direct hits on the torso count. Then everybody refills their cups from a large drum and lines up on their new team if they got soaked by that team, or stays on their old team if they managed to escape. Its important to have kids wait until every one has refilled and lined up, other wise the game deteriorates into wild cup splashing mayhem, with no one knowing what team they are on. The weather was hot, so this game, like all the other water games, was a huge hit.

The sincere among His servants will regard the precepts set forth by God as the Water of Life to the followers of every faith.....~Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 29

This new Revelation has in reality been the water of life unto the thirsty.....~Shoghi Effendi: Bahiyyih Khanum, page 188

Spiritual success can be won today, only by teaching the Faith of God. The people are seeking, dying from spiritual thirst. The Baha'is must disseminate the Water of Life freely, so seeking souls may find eternal life. ~Shoghi Effendi: High Endeavors, page 42

Deepening in the Water of Life #
The last day of camp, after everyone got in bathing suits, I had my 2 youth assistants line the kids up in 2 equal teams. The assistants would then ask a team a question relating to Progressive Revelation or the nature of a Manifestation, (which was our theme for that whole week). If any one on the team got it right within a slow-ish count to 3, they were spared, but if they did not, the whole team got sprayed with a hose—though they had a chance to run as soon as they realized their mistake. It was one of those impromptu games that turned out to be a real success. We teased them that if they could not answer the question, they obviously needed more soaking (deepening) in the Water of Life (the Revelation)! (See game immediately above for relevant quotes.)

Splash or Be Splashed
A free-for-all water cup splash with the only rules being that you could only fill one cup at a time, no face splashing, and all must wait and not dip cups during the filling of the containers. If one did not want to risk getting splashed, they were advised to watch. Moral of the game: you can't dish out to others what you aren't willing to have dished out to yourself! 3 large containers were filled with water and placed in a triangular relationship in the yard. Kids were given large plastic cups (the cups last longer if doubled up). With one refill of the large containers, this game lasts 10-15 minutes. The students LOVED this ending every day of our day camp. Virtues practiced: forgiveness (some always get facials b/c its hard to aim moving water—and some don't try very hard to miss the face), self-control and respect, (avoiding deliberately going for the face) patience (while waiting for the containers to be filled,) detachment from ego (if one takes offense easily, they best not play this game) and joy. You can also relate it to trustworthiness by explaining that players are being trusted not to abuse the water "weapon", by throwing cups that are filled with water (i.e. cup and all) or deliberately aiming for the face. I told the kids this game is the only time its okay to seek "revenge'! Have plenty of large cheap plastic cups available, because they do crack easily. Another beloved option: Giant water syringes from Walmart or dollar stores. They don't look like weapons and they can squirt really far. They are super cheap at the end of summer. ($1- 2 dollars a piece). On some days, we lined up kids behind a hose, made a row of 2 cups stacked a distance away, and the kids used syringe water to try and knock them over. They really enjoyed this too.

Support Me #
First I gave students a mini speech about how sometimes in a marriage, the man supports the woman either emotionally or financially or physically, and sometimes the woman is the stronger and she does it--and that in most good healthy marriages the support goes back and forth, depending on the burden. So for the next game I had the little boys ride piggy

back on the bigger girls, and the little girls ride piggy back on the bigger boys. To make it more enticing, I made it into a race--which I normally do not do. A few kids balked at the idea, but eventually everyone got into it and had a good time, with some fabulous spills!

This game can be tied into many virtues, not just the equality of women and men:

We began by discussing how sometimes in a friendship, one person happens to be stronger in some way (either emotionally, mentally, spiritually, financially or physically) than the other. In this case, the stronger one should willingly support the weaker one in the way that is needed. This shows *generosity*, and it is *fair* that the stronger support the weaker. And each should be *content* with their role. In a healthy relationship, this support should go back and forth, depending on the situation. But for our game, we focused on physical strength. So for the next game I had the little ones ride piggy back on the bigger ones. To make it more enticing, I made it into a race--which I normally do not do.

It is a law of God's creation that the weak should lean upon the strong. ~Abdu'l-Baha, Abdu'l-Baha in London, p. 96

Assist the world of humanity as much as possible. Be the source of consolation to every sad one, assist every weak one.....~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 453

.....mutual helpfulness and cooperation are the two necessary principles underlying human welfare. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 150

Not Eye to Eye #

For the next game, I explained that women and men are not just physically different, we often view things differently and we tend to have different strengths and weaknesses--but that does not make either sex better than the other. I explained that science has proven that our brains our different, (read the book called BrainSex) so it is no wonder that we do not see eye to eye on everything. But we still need to work together in unity. It is unity in diversity. And Baha'u'llah has given us the principle of consultation to help. So I put kids of the opposite sex who were relatively close in height back to back and had them link elbows. They were to gallop sideways, racing other couples. The back to back symbolized not seeing "eye to eye", but I am not sure all of them got that. Everybody practiced a few times. Each couple got 2 tries, racing in both directions. Then to represent the improvement in unity after consultation, couples were to face each other, hold hands, gallop sideways again, this time gazing into each other's eyes the whole time.

No, You Take it! #

We first talked about how one of the expressions of selfishness and materialism is to think of ourselves first, to want the most for ourselves, and to collect and consume more than we need. This game is about behaving in just the opposite way. All the quotes in the *reverse* version of Ver Ver Aras Lama go with this game as well. One is:

Blessed is he who preferreth his brother before himself. ~Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 71

I created 2 equal teams and placed them on the opposite sides of a very long bamboo pole on the ground. However, you can play with a net, or even indoors with just tape or a table marking the center.

Then I gave each side 12 soft foam balls. The object of the game is to be the team that is the first to give away all their balls—to try and get all the balls on the other side with none on your own side. (You can also give each team their own color of balls, and the goal is to get only all of your color to the other side.) I gave the example of how an unselfish person would insist that someone else have the last cookie. So when I shout "Go!" everybody starts throwing their balls over the net. They are also allowed to kick them under. Soon chaos and mayhem ensue, as each team desperately tries to get all the balls over to the other side. A few times a team would come close to having their side devoid of balls. (It helps to throw them far so the other team takes longer to get them back and to gather them up, and throw in a large group so the receiving team is overwhelmed with many at once). But of course somebody always managed to get one over just in time. It was fun.

We also played with 36 balls, knowing full well that no team would ever have their side clear of balls. In that case, I just turned away, waited a few minutes, and while not looking, blew a whistle. The winning team was the one with the least on their side at the moment of the whistle blowing. Foam balls are a must because regular balls like tennis or baseballs can hurt and also can be thrown too far.

The next 2 games use a badminton or volley ball net.

All on One Side # *
This game begins with everybody on the same side of the net. A balloon is used instead of a ball b/c it is slower. One person hits it over then dashes under the net over to the other side to hit it back over to the side they just came from. That person stays on the new side, however. The person receiving the balloon then bats it over and does the same thing—quickly dips under the net to hit it back but stays on the new side. This continues until everybody is on the new side and there is no one left to hit it back to.

Collective Volley Ball ## *
For this game we first used a giant beach ball, then a regular sized inflatable earth ball. It is fun either way. Two teams are created, one on each side of the net as usual. The goal is to see how many times the teams can get the ball back and forth over the net before it hits the ground. This requires a lot of cooperation. They need to be shown how to hit the ball up, not slam it down. I would count. It was hard, since some children just do not have volley ball skills. I believe 20 was our maximum. If you don't have a net, ask 2 helpers to hold a long pole with a sheet draped over it.

Variations: Require that after each hit, the child who hit it slips under the net to the opposite team. Also, another variation is --if the kids are really skilled-- you can add an extra ball and see if they can keep 2 going. The more kids playing the easier this is. A third variation is to require that everyone on your side must hit the ball at least once before it can be sent back over. I judged that my students were not skilled enough to handle this one, since it requires a lot of control and aim.

Hoops and Spears
Before playing, I talked about how in many societies long ago, and even in many today, men are the hunters, women are the educators and helpers. In this game, we switched roles over and over, and as we did so, I asked them: "Are any of you superior or more important b/c of the role you are currently playing?" The roles were: Hula Hoop thrower and "spear" thrower. (The spears were old broom and mop handles). It is very important to emphasize safety for this game—no one ever throws a spear unless the area is clear of kids.

Version One: Children tossed the hoops high in the air, while others tried to throw their spear through them. Then they switched. I explained how both roles were necessary and complemented each other.

Version Two: I would throw a hoop high in the air, and 3-4 children would try to toss their spear through it at once.

Version Three: Then we did a rolling version on the driveway, with students on the side of the driveway rolling the hoops across the driveway while others tried to spear it. A student taught us the best technique for rolling: Do not fling with the wrist, but just place a flat palm on the hoop and push.

Version Four: Next, everyone was given spears, and played catch in teams of 2 by using the spear to fling the hoop and the teammate attempts to catch it on his/her spear. The technique is to hang the hoop on the end of the pole and fling it. One should not toss overhand, but hold the pole with 2 hands and swing with an upward/sideways motion.

Version Five: And finally, a group of 3 would be chosen to position themselves across from me and then the individuals would attempt to hook the hoop on their own spear (as opposed to throwing it through) as I flung the hoop super high in the air.

The world of humanity consists of two parts: male and female. Each is the complement of the other. Therefore, if one is defective, the other will necessarily be incomplete, and perfection cannot be attained. ~`Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 134

The happiness of mankind will be realized when women and men coordinate and advance equally, for each is the complement and helpmeet of the other.
~`Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 182

Among the teachings of Baha'u'llah is the principle of equality of man and woman. Baha'u'llah has said that both belong to humankind and that in the estimation of God they are equal, for each is the complement of the other in the divine creative plan.
~`Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 280

Grouped Soccer ##
Same as the regular game but everybody is linked in pairs, so 3 pairs holding hands formed each team. I deliberately paired the super assertive players with younger or less aggressive kids--now that was interesting. It was a test of detachment for many, but they all seemed to enjoy it. To make the game last a little longer, there was a rule that a goal could not be made by kicking the ball over the heads of those guarding the goal. Kids can also be put in 3's, or connected by linking elbows, or put inside of hula hoops together. And it also can be played w/o goalies. Use a foam ball if possible.

Illustrative Game #
This game was played at the beginning of a 5 class unit on the Laws of Baha'u'llah. We first talked about how laws are similar and different from rules. I said they are almost the same except laws are of greater importance and have more serious consequences if you break them. To really drive home the point about rules and laws being good for us, I told them we were going to play a game with no rules—except one—which was no one can hurt any one in any way. I reminded them that if there were no rules, then there was no such thing as cheating. I told them the goal of the game was to get the most balls behind your teams' goal cones by the time I end the game. I divided the class into 2 fairly equal (by age and size) teams and asked them to stand behind their cones. The goal cones were positioned at opposite ends of a large rectangular playing field outside. The teams were given animal names to support the concept in the quote below. (The Hyenas and the Wolves.) Then I dumped about 35 small foam and tennis balls in the center of the playing field and yelled "Go!"

At first they laughed a lot as they ran back and forth stealing each other's balls. Some were very clever and hid the balls stuffed in their sleeves and pockets and under their coats. I tipped one team member to go on the deck and get the empty trash barrel, put their team's balls in it, and guard it. After a while, though, as I had hoped, many got frustrated and annoyed and some went too far in wrestling others to get their balls and the victims felt oppressed. The bigger kids always dominated the little ones. Disunity was in the air. So I ended the game before they ended up hating each other. Then we debriefed and analyzed what had happened. I also explained that one of the purposes of laws is to protect the weaker, smaller, younger, less powerful in a society, from the *"harm of the mischief-maker"* or worse.

Know ye that the embodiment of liberty and its symbol is the animal. That which beseemeth man is submission unto such restraints as will protect him from his own ignorance, and guard him against the harm of the mischief-maker.....Regard men as a flock of sheep that need a shepherd for their protection. This, verily, is the truth, the certain truth. We approve of liberty in certain circumstances, and refuse to sanction it in others. We, verily, are the All-Knowing.. ~Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 63

For contrast, its a good idea to replay the game with rules: Players can only carry one ball at a time. Once a ball is behind the safety zone, it cannot be removed. The game ends when all the balls are gone from the center.

Since I don't like to reinforce the notion that winners are those who have the most material things, I say that to those whom God has given more, God expects more.

These are the immutable laws of God, from which there is no escape: "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." (The Compilation of Compilations, Vol. 2 page 27, quoting Luke, 12:48)

If we have an abundance of something, then we are being tested spiritually to see what we do with it. Do we hoard it and thereby demonstrate greed and selfishness, or do we share it and therefore express generosity, caring, and detachment? Do we use the gifts of God whether they are intellectual, physical, or material, for the benefits of others, or do we just use them to glorify ourselves?

.....withhold not from the poor the gifts which the grace of God hath bestowed upon you. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 278

After this little speech, I turn to the team with the most balls and say: "So what should you do now if you are spiritually strong?" They always know—they equalize the number for both teams. If you do this version, start with an even number of balls.

(For many more games relating to laws, you can request the laws unit in our curriculum. I did not include them here b/c they utilize a lot of quotes and special cards that involve much time and effort to create.)

Virtue Tag #
Find a large rectangular playing field. Place 1 set of goal cones at each end. Divide group into 2 equal (if possible) teams. Have each team come to the center (can be marked with a rope or yardstick) and face each other almost touching the center line. Have a large poster list of virtues in view. Give an example of a virtue being expressed. It can be as short as: "Keeping promises" (trustworthiness) or as long as a mini-story: "Its after Christmas break. Each kid in your regular school class is invited by the teacher to come to the front of the class and talk about their favorite holiday memory or gift. As a Baha'i, you did not celebrate Christmas, but did get a generous check from your non-Baha'i grandparents. You can of course discuss that, but instead explain that you are a Baha'i and get most of your gifts at Ayyam-i-Ha. Among snickering and giggles at the strange-sounding terms, you continue to describe the meaning of Ayyam-i-Ha." Insist that you finish the story before any one can answer. The first person to guess any of the virtues expressed (courage, loyalty) is met with a loud "Yes!" from you. At that point the team who had the member with the correct answer begins to chase the other team, who is only safe from capture if they make it through the goal cones on their side of the field. If any one is tagged before reaching the goal cones, that person becomes a member of the other team. So the basic rule is, if a member of your team is first to get a correct virtue, your team chases the other team. The team who did not have the member with the right answer first, runs away. This is a great game to replace discussion of virtues with action. Kids learn various ways to express virtues but still get to be physically active.

To make it harder, you can insist on the exact virtue you were thinking of, acknowledging that other virtues are also correct, just not the one you had in mind. (For example, a description of generosity would also involve detachment or sacrifice.) When a child names a virtue that is definitely involved in the description, but not the exact one you had in mind, shout "Correct!". This teaches kids how inter-related the virtues are, and acknowledges their insight. The rule is that they only do the chasing when you yell "Yes!" for the exact one. If they get stumped, you can offer first letters or syllables of the one you have in mind. (For another similar game, but involving group pantomime, see the Creative Dramatics Manual, "Gratitude Pantomime Pursuit". At the end of the entry it describes how all virtues can be used in this dramatic tag game).

Tip: Students enjoy it if you use their names as characters in the mini virtue story—which works best if you have time to include all those playing in at least one story.

Virtue Pictionary Tag #
For this game, I divided the students into 2 teams. I set up a dry erase board on legs and had a rag handy to clean the board quickly. There is also a large poster of the names of virtues displayed for all to see. The 2 teams line up facing each other in the center of a rectangle, and a safety zone is created with cones at both ends of the rectangle. The poster and the dry erase board are also in the center, but outside the playing area. I explained that I will be drawing simple pictures of virtues being shown, and the first team to have any member guess the exact virtue chases the other team and tries to tag them. If tagged, one joins the other team. Runners are safe if they reach their safety area, which is the area between the cones a distance behind them. If your team guesses right, then you move forward, chasing the other team, who turns and runs to the safety area behind them. If your team did not guess the correct virtue first, then you turn around and run, trying to avoid being tagged.

I also explain that, as in real life, often several virtues are being shown at the same time in a given situation. But to make the game more challenging and to learn about virtues that often go together (like self-control & moderation, detachment & generosity, etc.) I will accept only the one virtue I originally intended to draw. When a team member gets that right, I shout "YES"! so they know its time to chase. If the virtue they name does have a role in the picture, but is not the exact one, I simply say "correct", and this means it is still not time to chase, but at least acknowledges the player's insight. Kids are not allowed to just speed read the virtue poster out loud in hopes of hitting on the right one.

Depending on the size of your group, you may have to ask those who wish to answer to raise their hand. Otherwise it can become a shouting spree, and you can't ascertain who is saying what. I would try to call on those who had not recently answered, and would go back and forth between the teams until a member got it right. Since I was drawing and therefore often could not notice whose hand went up first, that was not a criteria for being called on. (However, if one has an assistant or child who is not playing, their role can be to inform who raised their hand first). It's helpful to advise the kids not to impulsively raise their hands, but to be sure to have an answer ready before doing so. If someone could not answer upon being called on, I immediately called on someone from the other team.

Medium Active Variation: This is a highly active game if played in a gym or outside, but one can make it less active and play it inside a large living room cleared of furniture by doing the following: Each player uses a thin strip of cloth tied in a loop and slips one foot in and then the other. You can give them a choice on how to move or decide which mode all have to use: They can either move by two legged leaps, or by moving in quick baby steps, b/c the loop is not tight. Wearing the loop above the ankles in not allowed b/c this makes it too easy. Its important to remind kids not to lunge with all their body weight when tagging b/c they can push the fleeing kids down. This is especially important when a wide age range is playing and big kids are chasing little kids.

Here are a few examples of the drawings: (I drew mine in improvisational style, but it may be helpful for some to have ideas already noted before playing).

Cooperation was depicted by 2 stick figures carrying a large square representing a box or something. (Other virtues shown: helpfulness, unity).

Contentment was depicted by drawing a stick figure sitting next to 3 large squares with a ribbon on top of each representing gifts. The figure is smiling saying "I got more than you". Next to that figure is another stick figure sitting next to one small square with a ribbon, also representing a gift. The figure is smiling broadly and saying "That's okay". (Other virtue shown: detachment).

Courage was shown by a stick figure holding a square representing a paper. On the paper is written "The Baha'i Faith", and an arrow pointing to it says "speech". The stick figure has its mouth open. Below that figure are drawn 3 or 4 other figures, whose faces you can't see b/c they are facing the figure giving the speech. Above their heads is written the words "snicker, snicker". (Other virtues shown: detachment, steadfastness, service to the Faith).

Patience was shown by a stick figure talking on the phone, labeled "mom" or "dad" and a small stick figure holding a square, with an arrow pointing to it saying "book". The parent figure is saying "blah, blah, blah" and the smaller figure has an arrow pointing to it saying "quiet". The implication is that the child is waiting quietly to have a book read to him or her. (Other virtues shown: courtesy, self-control, detachment.)

Justice in the Nick of Time

This game can also be called "Watering the Tree", the tree being humanity, the water is the Word of God. It was inspired by the following quote.

Man is like unto a tree.....The fruits of the human tree are exquisite, highly desired and dearly cherished. Among them are upright character, virtuous deeds and a goodly utterance. .....Were the trees of men's lives to be adorned in this divine Springtime with the fruits that have been mentioned, the effulgence of the light of Justice would, of a certainty, illumine all the dwellers of the earth and everyone would abide in tranquillity and contentment beneath the sheltering shadow of Him Who is the Object of all mankind. The Water for these trees is the living water of the sacred Words uttered by the Beloved of the world. ~Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 257

We discussed that in the above quote, Baha'u'llah is revealing that the quality of individual souls influence the state of the world and the quality of life for all people. He is basically saying that Justice, tranquillity, and contentment will illumine the earth when the tree of humanity is watered with His Revelation. I told the students that the world is made up of individuals, and its suffering and conditions are basically the result of the low level of spiritual development in the souls of individuals. Especially when powerful groups are formed consisting of spiritually ignorant individuals, they can do major damage to the state of the world. When a majority of people become nourished with the living water of the Word of God, the fruits will come forth, and the world will change. A tree that is dying of thirst, does not bear fruit.

I then shared with them the following verse which is on my front door, by a very wise Chinese Philosopher, Lao Tsu:

If there is right in the soul, there will be beauty in the person. If there is beauty in the person, there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation. If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.

The game represents how important it is to get the Word of God, the Water of Life, into the human heart, to promote justice, tranquility, and contentment, and ward off injustice and suffering.

When we first played this, only 2 students at a time played in a round. But others love watching this short race, and very soon everybody gets a turn. For playing with more numbers at a time see variation below. Here is how its done: Two students stand at opposite ends of an open area, each behind 2 cones. I put on a mask and represented injustice and suffering. One student was the teacher, and she had a small pocket size booklet of The Hidden Words by Baha'u'llah. The book will get dropped and bent, which is not teaching reverence for the Word of God. So now I have switched to using giant raindrops made from the same holographic material as in *Sacred Rain,* but with a plain mirror cardboard on one of the sides. It is clear from numerous Baha'i references that the Word of God is the Water of Life. So, on the plain silver mirrored side "The Word of God" is written in gold. Then the whole drop is laminated to protect it.

The other student was a seeker, and wore a large red heart pocket with a gold cord around her neck. On the heart it said "The Human Heart". She held it open and ready. (That is a good definition of a seeker, one whose heart is open and ready to receive the Word of God, the Revelation of Baha'u'llah).

I went a good distance away and faced the two that were facing each other. So, in other words, we all formed a giant capital "T". The students were at opposite sides of the top of the "T", and I was positioned at the bottom of the stem. I marked my position with a large stick. When I shouted "Go!" the two students were to run as fast as possible towards each other. When they met, the student playing the Baha'i teacher was to quickly place the Word of God, the rain drop shape, in the heart pocket of the other student. Then they were to run to the other's original spot behind the 2 cones—exchanging places, before I could touch them. They won the round if they made it behind the cones w/o me touching them *and* the rain drop was in the heart pocket. They each got a point if that happened. I got a point for each one I touched, and I also got a point if the heart did not receive the Word of God before I got to them.

I also explained that injustice is everywhere, and even good people of all religions and steadfast Baha'is can be victimized by it. We live in one world. That is why, even after the Word of God was planted in the heart, they still were not safe until they had made it back to the safety area behind the cones, which I guess could represent taking refuge in God.

The distances between players will depend on the age of the students and the speed/age of the person playing injustice. We had to do a few trial runs to get the distances right—not too easy, not impossible. I never was able to tag them both. But I did learn that it was best to head for one of the cone areas instead of straight ahead, b/c by the time I would get to the center where they were exchanging, it would be too late.

The students loved this, and begged to play it twice. For the second round, they played with the same partners, but altered who was the teacher and the seeker. After everybody had run twice, we tallied up the points. The goal of course was for the teachers and seekers to triumph over injustice.

Variation:
If you have the materials, larger numbers of students can run towards each other. In that case, you will need more masks for more monsters of injustice, heart pocket necklaces (or heart shaped boxes with no lids) and raindrops. However, you don't have to use the heart pockets, the kids can just exchange the raindrops, but I like the metaphor. Also, if there is no heart pocket, they will make the exchange faster, so the monsters of injustice will have to be closer at the start. And if there a large number of kids, the monsters won't remember who had the raindrops to begin with, so it will be hard to ascertain if the exchange has taken place.

Parent Power I
I told the kids that for our unit on Honoring Parents, we would be playing 3 games that represented 3 of the major duties/ roles of parents: *Protection, Guidance***,** and *Support***.** In Parent Power I, we would focus on their role as *protectors.* So I asked the students to list ways their parents protect them, and from what they protect them. We discussed how parents protect kids from their own and other's lower natures, from their own and other's ignorance, from physical and emotional harm, etc. I want children to be cognizant of and grateful for their parents' protection. The more they recognize and appreciate parents' efforts, the more they will honor and respect, ---and hopefully obey--- them.

Then I explained that one way to look at it was that parents protect children from loss—loss of spirituality, potential, happiness, health, and safety. I gave examples of each. For example, parents protect children from losing spirituality by sending them to Baha'i classes, teaching them to pray and read and obey the Words of God, etc. Parents protect their children's potential by educating them, nurturing their capacities and talents, and limiting their exposure to TV and other addictions that may interfere with growth. They protect children from losing happiness by teaching them to make good choices and behave in ways that have positive outcomes with others. Parents protect the health of children by limiting sugar and providing a healthy diet, teaching them to wash their hands, giving them medicine, etc. And finally, they prevent the loss of safety by constantly monitoring them, covering electrical outlets when they are little, not letting them run with scissors, using car seats and seat belts, keeping strangers and nasty people away, etc.

So for this game, kids were put in teams of 3. Each team had at least one boy to represent the father. One child represented the mother, and the 3rd, a son or daughter. The child was given 5 different colored silk ribbons, about 20 inches long, about 1/2 inch wide, each one representing one of the things that parents protect: Spirituality was lavender, (this one was about 1 inch wide, b/c I wanted to emphasize its importance), potential was blue like the sky, (b/c the sky is unlimited), happiness was a cheerful yellow like the sun, health was green and safety was orange, (the color of those safety cones we see at construction sites here in the U.S). (From what I have read about colors, green is usually associated with healing and lavender with higher consciousness).

The child was to tie a scarf around his or her waist and then tuck the ribbons underneath it so that they dangled down. The children playing the parents then stood on either side of the child, ready to guard and protect. 2 cones spread many feet apart, like a goal area, were placed at each end of a playing field. Once through these cones, the threesome was safe. The distance between the cones represented childhood and youth, ages 0-21 years. The number of children in class that day determined the number of family groups crossing the field. For *each* family group, a person wearing a mask, representing evil, harm, the lower/animal nature, etc. was assigned. This person was to attempt to pull the ribbons off the child's belt. The children playing the parents were to block and guard against the loss of the ribbons, the loss of happiness, spirituality, etc. No one was allowed to grab others or kick or push. Blocking was the only technique acceptable. So as the family group of 3, with the child in between the "parents", moved across the field, towards the opposite set of cones, the lower nature was trying to slip their hand in and grab a ribbon. The child is not to run across ahead of the parents—they should move as a unit. The goal was of course to have none of the ribbons taken, but if only spirituality was left, that was considered a win for the family. (That's why it's a good idea to have that ribbon hanging in front so the child can also protect it.) If the lower nature got 3 or more, including the lavender spirituality ribbon, it won—and the parents needed to improve their parenting protection technique! Those playing the lower nature should not be bigger and stronger than those playing the parents, or they will win every time.

(Parent Power II on Support and Parent Power III on Guidance are to be found under Low Activity Games).

Forgiveness VS the Grudge

The goal is to possess forgiveness before the nasty Grudge poisons you. If the Grudge touches you before you have forgiveness, you are frozen with bad feelings on the spot you were touched. A person who is thus frozen yells for help, and then someone who has forgiveness in their heart can free you by giving you forgiveness. (This mimics real life, for isn't it true that when someone gives us forgiveness, it inspires us to be more forgiving towards others?)

Before the game starts, I distribute a small heart shaped canvas bag to each student, and hide silk flower heads around the outside commons area. The flowers are not immediately obvious, but not hidden under anything either. I usually tuck them behind a tree or in a stump, or branch etc. The flowers stand for the virtue of forgiveness. (Throughout the Baha'i Writings, flowers are used as metaphors for virtues in the garden of the heart. For example, Persian Hidden Words, #s 3 and 33, and the Kitab-i-Iqan page 211. One can also use giant gems instead of flower heads, but only if they can be found somewhat easily, like in a snow covered area. If it is summer and everything is lush, green, leafy and grassy, the gems will be too hard to find. If your playing area is indoors or desert-like or everything is brown from cold, this can also work. Gems are also frequently used as a metaphor for virtues in our class, b/c in the Baha'i Writings it refers to the *"gem of divine virtue"*, Arabic Hidden Words, p.1, and to "*regard man as a mine rich in gems*", Gleanings p. 260. One can also use small heart shaped boxes instead of the canvas bags. The idea is to get forgiveness into one's heart).

Then I give the kids about a 30 second head start. There is one flower for each child. After 30 seconds are up, I put on an ugly mask and start to pursue the kids. The ones that find a flower and have placed it in their sack are immune, and can't be frozen. But they still have an active part to play—finding flowers of forgiveness for those that I capture. They can even sacrifice their own, but then of course they are vulnerable and need to find a flower for themselves. Another rule is that one can't be carrying more than 2 flowers at a time—their own and one to rescue someone with. This prevents those with excellent visual discrimination skills from monopolizing the supply. (And also, we want kids to be actively engaged as much as possible throughout the game, and if they have their flower and there are no more flowers to rescue others with, b/c someone is hoarding them, then the game becomes dull.)

The game does end, however, whenever everybody has their flower. You can let this happen or take advantage of the last 2 rules to keep the game going longer: First, the players' flower must be in their sack to represent having forgiveness in their heart. If its not, then a player can still be frozen and their flower is taken from them and held by the Grudge. Second, the nasty Grudge can snatch someone's sack (or box) if they are not careful and steal the flower, and may freeze the owner at the same time if they do not get away fast enough. (I told the kids that this is b/c grudges can easily steal forgiveness out of our hearts, if we start dwelling on our hurts again.) Kids are not allowed to hide the heart sacks in their clothes—they must be able to show me on demand that it has the flower of forgiveness in it and plus that gives me an opportunity to grab it. But the Grudge has to leave any snatched heart sack on the ground for its owner to eventually retrieve. The Grudge can then continue to hunt others who don't have forgiveness, or, if everyone else is secure with forgiveness in their heart, he/she can place the stolen flowers on the ground or hang them from a branch and guard them, while the players work together to try to snatch them back for their original owners. This can be quite fun.

When the Grudge, (who I recommend be an adult or youth assistant), is tired or wants to end the game, he/she can just slip up and let the players snatch the flowers back.

Hunting for Happiness

I explained that I was going to hide cards describing the sources of true happiness outside in the commons and in the acre of woods included in the commons. They would not be under anything, they would be in plain sight, but you would still have to look closely to notice them. Each card would describe one of the sources listed in our *Recipe for True Happiness* activity, (See Mostly Cerebral Games) and would have a happy face sticker on it. I was going to wear an ugly monster mask, and I stood for despair, depression, and all the additional bad things that happen to us when we seek happiness from the wrong sources—such as drugs, alcohol, materialism, power, etc. (The cards were cut from mat board, and the source was written in sparkling ink. The happy face sticker was a sparkling 3 dimensional one I got from the scrap booking section of Michael's Arts and Crafts. I wanted the cards to be attractive to reinforce the notion that the sources of true happiness are beautiful and attractive. (One should put a small piece of clear scotch tape over a 3D sticker so it does not fall or is picked off.)

I would count to 10 and give them a head start. They were to run outside and locate 2 sources as fast as possible. I would chase them and I could freeze them if they did not have 2 of the source-cards. But all was not lost. If you got frozen you should yell for help. Another soul could give you one of their own 2 source-cards and unfreeze you by giving it to you. But one could only do that if they had 2 source cards—the rescuer could not unfreeze someone if the rescuer only had one card. And, since it takes 2 source cards to be immune from freezing, both the person who rescued the frozen person, and the newly freed unfrozen person were now vulnerable to being frozen by despair/depression until they found an additional card. (That is unless the frozen person already had one card.) To make sure every one had lots of opportunities to find source cards, it was a rule that one could not carry more than 3 cards at a time—your own 2 plus one for rescue.

I had hidden just a few more cards than children, so in case some were not found, at some point, the game would still be able to end b/c every child would have two. Since the game will end when everyone has 2 cards, it is important to not give them too much of a head start or to hide the cards in too obvious locations. I stuck them in branches, tucked them behind tree trunks, and laid them on the ground, but one still had to look a little bit to notice them, since we were playing on an acre of wooded land. I encouraged the kids to communicate with each other and inform others of the locations.

The other rule was that in order to be safe from me, you had to know the contents of your source cards. I could freeze you and take the cards from you if, upon demand, you could not tell me what both of your 2 sources of true happiness were w/o reading the cards. (Exact phrasing was not required.) I then put the cards out of play by putting them in my pocket. (If you knew one card, you could keep that one.) This removal aspect also encourages helpfulness to others b/c then the unfrozen students can come to the rescue by searching for and finding more source-cards to liberate that child. (This is also another reason to have a few extras hidden.) Also, students had to carry their cards in their hands and not hide them so that the depression/despair monster was not using up his/her time and energy chasing players who could then produce cards.

Goblins VS Gardeners

Just as springtime is the ideal time for planting in earthly gardens, so it is with spiritual springtimes—now is the best time to plant the seeds of God's new Revelation, His Teachings, in the garden of humanity's hearts. But we can only do so if people's hearts are open—we should never force-plant the seeds of Divine Revelation in someone's heart—that violates the principle of unity and is not respectful. This game was used in relation to a lesson plan on Naw Ruz and spiritual springtime.

I explained that I would wear a monster mask (I called it a Goblin mask) and represent war, prejudice, greed, materialism, etc.—all those expressions of our lower nature that are damaging our world and destroying peace and joy. The goal is to "plant" the seed of God's new Revelation in the garden of a person's heart before the goblin monster gets to him or her and prevents the planting by closing the heart or grabbing the seed. And just like in real life, the seed can't be planted in a person's heart unless it is open. Trying to plant seeds into a heart that is not open would be like trying to shove seeds into dried cement.

So for each round, I would choose 2 children, one would get a giant heart pocket on a golden string necklace that said "the garden of the human heart" on it. That person would be the seeker. The other child got a giant seed shaped piece of brown-golden mat board, which said "the Seed of God's Revelation" on it. That child would be the Baha'i teacher/gardener. I had unscrewed the 2 bases from my HEPA air filters which are squares on wheels. The players were to sit on these and propel themselves *backward* by pushing off on their feet. (Schools often have wooden or plastic versions of these for using in gym class. See **www.discountschoolsupply.com**, Item# 8WWROLLIT, called Roller board). However, the coming together of the seeker and the teacher/gardener can be done through running, but we were indoors and there was not space for that). I admonished the kids to keep their fingers away from the wheels. Players should also be assigned a corridor or alley, one left, one right, so they don't collide as they are speeding backward.

The 2 players were to start at opposite ends of the wooden floored living room. I, the goblin, went downstairs and started at the playroom sliding door, so that I would have to run across the room and up 2 short flights of stairs before reaching the players. (We had to do some trial runs to determine a fair--not too easy or impossible---distance for the goblin's starting point). When I yelled "GO!," the 2 on wheels frantically pushed themselves towards each other, and when they had barely passed, (so they are now facing each other, the seeker would open his/her heart and the teacher would thrust the seed in. (Some kids found it easiest to hold the heart open as they moved so it was ready). If the planting was completed before I got to them and either grabbed the seed or closed the heart, they won that round. To add dramatic effect I made monster sounds as I came running up the stairs.

Version 2: The second time each pair went, they sat cross legged on their rolling square, facing forward and another person pushed them towards each other. I likened these to angels, guiding and propelling us towards spiritual growth and the fulfillment of God's plan. It is important to show the angels how to stop the 2 rolling souls at the right moment to get the best planting opportunity and to avoid collision.

Version 3: The teacher and seeker can come together in a variety of ways. And the speed of the technique of course needs to alter how the goblin moves or the distance he comes from. The goblin can be required to move using the same technique, or placed at a fair distance and allowed to run. Some techniques for coming together: Basic running, running backward, jumping on two feet with ankles in a loop of cloth, crawling, riding piggey back on an "angel", rolling on the ground, etc. Most of these can even be done indoors.

(For similar games in terms of action or metaphor, see *Justice in the Nick of Time* and the parachute game, *Save the World*. This game can also be titled "Righteous Rollers", but I have already used that one for another roller board game).

Sow the seeds of My divine wisdom in the pure soil of the heart, and water them with the waters of certitude, that the hyacinths of knowledge and wisdom may spring up fresh and green..... ~Baha'u'llah: Persian Hidden Words, # 78

The sons and daughters of the kingdom are like unto the real farmers. Through whichever state or country they pass they display self-sacrifice and sow divine seeds. From that seed harvests are produced. On this subject it is revealed in the glorious Gospel: When the pure seeds are scattered in the good ground heavenly blessing and benediction is obtained. ~Abdu'l-Baha, Tablets of the Divine Plan, p. 15

Use thy utmost power to sow and cast these pure seeds, the divine teachings in the hearts. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Tablets of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 171

The days of life are swiftly going by, and eventually man will be confined into subterranean regions and his name shall perish, except those souls who become Divine gardeners and who sow seeds in the soil of hearts. Those shall eternally remain shining and glittering like unto stars from the horizon of Truth. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Japan Will Turn Ablaze, page 19

Urgent Equal Education

This game was inspired by the following quotes which were a part of our unit on the Equality of Women and Men. Before playing the game, some should be shared or at least summarized. (The first quote, however, is not appropriate to share with children, its way too sophisticated with too many big words.)

The emancipation of women, the achievement of full equality between the sexes, is one of the most important, though less acknowledged prerequisites of peace. The denial of such equality perpetrates an injustice against one half of the world's population and promotes in men harmful attitudes and habits that are carried from the family to the workplace, to political life, and ultimately to international relations. There are no grounds, moral, practical, or biological, upon which such denial can be justified. Only as women are welcomed into full partnership in all fields of human endeavour will the moral and psychological climate be created in which international peace can emerge.
(From The Promise of World Peace, Bahá'í World Center, 1985)

The primary, the most urgent requirement is the promotion of education. It is inconceivable that any nation should achieve prosperity and success unless this paramount, this fundamental concern is

carried forward. The principal reason for the decline and fall of peoples is ignorance. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Secret of Divine Civilization, p. 109

When all mankind shall receive the same opportunity of education and the equality of men and women be realized, the foundations of war will be utterly destroyed.
~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 175

War and its ravages have blighted the world; the education of woman will be a mighty step toward its abolition and ending, for she will use her whole influence against war….. In truth, she will be the greatest factor in establishing universal peace and international arbitration. Assuredly, woman will abolish warfare among mankind. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 108

The world of humanity consists of two parts: male and female. Each is the complement of the other. Therefore, if one is defective, the other will necessarily be incomplete, and perfection cannot be attained. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 134

The happiness of mankind will be realized when women and men coordinate and advance equally, for each is the complement and helpmeet of the other.
~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 182

…..until woman and man recognize and realize equality, social and political progress here or anywhere will not be possible. For the world of humanity consists of two parts or members: one is woman; the other is man. Until these two members are equal in strength, the oneness of humanity cannot be established, and the happiness and felicity of mankind will not be a reality.
~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 77

As long as women are prevented from attaining their highest possibilities, so long will men be unable to achieve the greatness which might be theirs. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Paris Talks, page 133

…..most important of all is the education of girl children, for these girls will one day be mothers, and the mother is the first teacher of the child. In whatever way she reareth the child, so will the child become, and the results of that first training will remain with the individual throughout his entire life, and it would be most difficult to alter them. And how can a mother, herself ignorant and untrained, educate her child? It is therefore clear that the education of girls is of far greater consequence than that of boys. This fact is extremely important, and the matter must be seen to with the greatest energy and dedication. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Education, page 286

While the students stayed in the classroom, I hid school books about children around the world outside in the commons in the wooded area. I chose that theme b/c one of the most important concepts that all children must learn in schools is the oneness of humanity:

"World order can be founded only on an unshakable consciousness of the oneness of mankind, a spiritual truth which all the human sciences confirm.... Recognition of this truth requires abandonment of prejudice--prejudice of every kind--race, class, color, creed, nation, sex, degree of material civilization, everything which enables people to consider themselves superior to others.... Universal acceptance of this spiritual principle is essential to any successful attempt to establish world peace. It should therefore be universally proclaimed, taught in schools, and constantly asserted in every nation as preparation for the organic change in the structure of society which it implies."
(From The Promise of World Peace, Bahá'í World Center, 1985. This was not shared with the kids b/c it is too complex.)

When I came back in, I explained that we are to pretend that we live in a country where most girls do not have the same access to education as the boys. The boys in our class are already educated and are spiritually enlightened. They know that for themselves, their children, and their country to progress, to have happiness and peace, the girls need to have equal rights to education. There is one book hidden outside for each girl. The boys will not be obtaining books for themselves, only for the girls, since they are already educated in our imaginary country. They were not hidden under

anything, but one had to look carefully to find them. Some were in trees or behind a tree trunk or laid in an area covered with ivy.

I am going to wear a monster mask and represent war, imperfection, social and political stagnation, the disunity of humanity and sadness and suffering. These are all the opposite of the conditions that the above quotes explain that the equality and education of women will create. These are all conditions that inequality feeds or makes worse.

I will give the kids a 15 second head start. Both sexes are to locate textbooks as fast as possible. I will be going after the girls. If I catch a girl w/o education, she is frozen. She can be rescued/unfrozen if someone gives her a book. Those frozen should yell for help to alert others. But if I get more than half of the girls frozen at once—war, disunity, and sadness have taken over their country, and social and political advancement have been halted.

Once the majority of the girls have a book, then the game ends with victory through equality of education. The evils created by inequality in education have been overcome. The girl students need to be reminded that just b/c they have education (a book) doesn't mean that they can stop searching. They need to aid the other girls—but they can't give away their own book—they have to find another to rescue another girl. The boys should also always be making efforts until all girls are educated, symbolized by possessing a book.

It is important to hide the books well enough so that the game does not end w/o some effort and suspense. But the books can't be so hard to find that it is impossible for the kids to find enough.

Fast Track Education*

We played a game I got from one of my cooperative games books which is definitely competitive. I tied it into our class theme by explaining that all children need access to not only public/academic education, but also spiritual education. With spiritual education we will, as Abdu'l-Baha puts it, "take great steps forward in all degrees of life", and "advance in all aspects of human endeavor", especially in virtue development. But there are forces that hinder all kinds of education, such as sexism (especially if we are girls in an environment that values boys more), drug abuse, poverty, war, laziness, stress, an unstable family life, teachers who don't care or are mean, prejudice, etc..

Kids lined up with their hands behind their backs, cupped. I walked behind them with a small pocket sized book of the Hidden Words by Baha'u'llah. (I chose this book b/c in its opening passage, He proclaims that it contains the essence of the teachings of all the Divinely revealed religions—i.e. divine education). While walking, I secretively dropped the booklet in someone's hands. Then that person tries to run across the field to the other side through an opening marked by 2 cones without getting tagged by any of the other kids—who represent all the forces that hinder divine education. All those who did not get the book must be very alert to notice who starts running first. If someone tags the runner, they get to be the person who drops the book into someone's hand in the next line up. If the runner is not tagged and makes it through the cone, they have then overcome the obstacles to spiritual education. They then get to drop the book in the line up. Runners do not need to hold their hands behind them as they run. This game was fun.

.....through divine education the masses of mankind generally will take great steps forward in all degrees of life.... ~Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 191

All humankind are as children in a school, and the Dawning-Points of Light, the Sources of divine revelation, are the teachers, wondrous and without peer. .....they educate these sons and daughters, according to teachings from God...., so that they may .....show forth the excellent gifts and blessings of the Lord, and combine human perfections; that they may advance in all aspects of human endeavour..... ~Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 128

In a secular setting, the education referred to can be secular—and the booklet can be a small pocket dictionary or other school-oriented text.

Clinging to the Cord of the Covenant

This game is based on and inspired by this quote: .....the strong cord to which all must cling with assurance is the Covenant. (The Universal House of Justice, Wellspring of Guidance, Messages 1963-1968, p. 89)

Each student was given a thick 7 foot long shiny golden orange nylon cord and one glove. I wanted the cord to be somewhat pretty b/c it represents the cord of the Covenant. The kids are then to run around outside (or inside if raining)

holding tightly to their cord. They can just run around and drag the cord, or shake it back and forth while walking or standing still. Except for the section that leads up to their hand, it must remain on the ground. I put on an ugly mask and represent the lower nature, especially pride, arrogance, greed, selfish ambition, ignorance, etc.---all those negative attributes that influence some people to think they have the right and ability to assume leadership and authority in interpreting and applying God's religion. It is those qualities that have corrupted and degraded the teachings of the Divine Teachers in the past and it is those qualities that will inspire many to attempt to split the Baha'i Faith as well.

I try to stomp on the cords and thus have them yanked out of the hands of the students. This is why every child must have the hand that is holding the cord gloved—otherwise they will get rope burn. The cords should not be made out of the abrasive polyester material. Also, players may not wrap the rope around their hands or wrists, otherwise it is impossible to have them yanked out. They also must hold them with only one hand, not swing them in the air, and only hold onto the end, (not in the middle thereby shortening it so its too hard for the stomper to get at). If I manage to get the cord out of a child's hand by stomping on it, they are frozen until another child brings them a new cord. Players are also frozen if they accidentally drop their cord for any reason. This includes just inadvertently dropping it, it gets caught on some branch, or they or some other player accidentally steps on it. I place the cords of frozen players in a pile at a specified location, and others trying to help have to go there to get a cord to rescue the frozen children. This is a risk and entails some danger to one's own cord b/c I will be frequently going back to my stock pile to check on it and if a child is near it, I will naturally go after their cord. Rescuers can only carry one cord at a time other than their own. They may carry the rescue cord off the ground, however. The game ends when I get too tired or all lose their cords, which has never happened. For our age group (7-10) having 2 adult lower-nature stompers for 6 children was about right—they really worked us hard and kept us quite busy. If one wants to make it more challenging, you can have the captured ropes in an out of the way, sort of hard to get to location. This will slow down the rescues, which is needed especially if the stomper to cord-clinger ratio is greater.

Variation for teaching detachment instead of clinging: I like this one b/c it encourages kids to not be attached to their possessions. You could name it "Dynamic Detachment". It was originally called "Shake the Snake" and comes from Terry Orlick's The Cooperative Sports and Games Book. The children are divided into two groups, the shakers and the stompers. The shakers each hold the end of a 7-8 foot rope between their thumb and forefinger. They must not hold it in their hand or they will get rope burn. And stompers must wear shoes for the same reason. The shakers run around a large space wildly squiggling or shaking their rope, but keeping the bottom half on the floor, not in the air. The stompers run around trying to step on the wiggling rope, thereby pulling it from the fingers of the shakers. If successful, that stomper then gets the rope and becomes a shaker, and the shaker becomes a stomper.

Say: Rejoice not in the things ye possess; tonight they are yours, tomorrow others will possess them. Thus warneth you He Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. ~Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 33

Play with Me*

The basics of the game are taken from More New Games by Andrew Fluegelman, page 57. However, I changed the dialogue required of the players to be more relevant to our class on kindness and to reinforce that we can be kind even in competition. It is also a good game to help kids get to know each other's names. I renamed the game from *How Do You Do* (which would work well in our class on courtesy) to *Play with Me,* since inviting someone to play with you is, especially in a child's world, one of the most appreciated acts of kindness:

Players stand in a circle, facing inward. One player is chosen by the teacher to be the "Kind Kid". That child walks around the circle on the outside and taps someone on the shoulder. The chosen child then turns and faces the kind kid. The kind kid then says: "Hi, I'm _____(name). What's your name?" The chosen child is to say "I'm _____"(name). Then the kind kid says: "Will you play with me?" The chosen child says enthusiastically "Yes!, let's race!" Then they each start to run around the circle in opposite directions (the kind kid goes in the direction he/she originally traveled in). The goal is to be the first one back to the spot left open by the chosen child. At some point they will need to pass by each other while they are running. To emphasize that kindness is more important than winning, they must stop, shake hands and each say: "I like you even if you win!" then keep running. The child who makes it back first gets to be the next kind kid, and I like how that reinforces the idea that although being first isn't spiritually important, being first to be kind is! However, if the original kind kid makes it back first, he/she has the option to be even kinder, and let the chosen child get to be the kind kid instead. Usually this is what happens. If the group is small, just have the kids spread out in a large circle.

Protecting from Putdowns*

This game was originally called "Triangle Tag". I renamed it to try and force it to fit our theme of kindness. In this game, teams of 3 are formed, and one from each team is designated the target. We talked a bit about what makes people a target: Being different from the main group in some way, for example, being overweight, underweight, disabled, a minority skin color, different language, etc.

This is an outdoor or large open space game. Teams form a triangle with their bodies by holding hands. I put on an ugly mask and represent unkindness—a put down, etc. (If there are 4 or more teams, you should probably have 2 bad guys.) The goal is to protect the target from me. I can freeze the whole team of 3 if I touch the target. And if I freeze all teams, I win. If a team is frozen they yell for help, and any free team can unfreeze them by touching the target person of the frozen team. If kids are really unified and synchronized—they are really hard to freeze. This is because the rules are that I can't touch the target person from across the triangle or on the hands or arms. So, this is really not a running game, but more of a blocking game. Each trio has to position itself by rotating in one direction or another, so that the target is always on the opposite side of me. When I played it with my classes, they were amazingly effective at protecting their target person. (I played this with 6-11 year olds). They loved exhausting me. I told them that I should name the game "Beautiful Baha'i Barriers" in honor of their great performance! I shared this quote after the game:

Be ..... a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. ~Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 93

Huqúqu'lláh Game

This game was created for our class on The Right of God. It is played in 2 phases. The first phase is not highly active, but the second phase involves chasing and running. We split the phases up, with lessons in between that required a lot of listening and discussion. When the kids were clearly ready for activity, we did phase 2.

Phase 1: *Gold Mining*

The basic concept of this game is that after we obtain excess wealth, we need to purify it by giving some to Huquq. If we don't, then it means that our lower nature, our greedy, attached, selfish inclinations have snagged us. If we do pay Huquq, then the rest of our wealth is purified and we have a victory over our lower nature, and for the time being are "safe" from its tyranny. However, first we have to gain wealth, which is phase 1 of the game. For practical purposes, we rounded the Huquq payment up from 19% to 20%, or 1/5.

Phase 1 was inspired by this quote:

Wealth is praiseworthy in the highest degree, if it is acquired by an ***individual's own efforts*** *and the grace of God, in commerce, agriculture, art and industry, and if it be expended for philanthropic purposes. ~Abdu'l-Baha,* The Secret of Divine Civilization, p. 24

(Wealth acquired through gambling, which is unlawful to Baha'is, is not considered praiseworthy).

Before class, I buried golden dollar coins in 3 wide and long containers of dirt. The dirt was 5-6 inches deep. (A container should be large enough, or there should be enough of them, so that all players can search at the same time). Students were instructed to use their hands or tools (large spoons held in a basket) to dig in the dirt and find 5 gold coins. This mimics toiling for one's wealth. (Hands are a lot more effective than spoons since one can feel a buried coin, but some kids actually don't like using their hands). Kids can take no more than 5. (There should be about 6 coins per kid, b/c some will be hard to find). Pretty golden mesh bags were placed on a tray nearby. After a student obtained 5 coins, they were to put them in a bag without cleaning them. (The coins were bought from our local bank. The cloth mesh bags are the kind wedding favors come in, available from Michael's Arts and Crafts and many other sources).

Phase 2: *Purification Pursuit*

For phase 2 of the game, we went outside to the commons, a wooded acre of land. The players were given 10 seconds advance start to try and find the Huquq donation box which would also be next to a source of water. (The water could be a large bowl or outdoor faucet. The donation box was a shoe box that I had decorated with lovely golden foil wrapping paper, with a slot in the lid). The goal was to find it, and put 1/5 (i.e. 1 coin) in an envelope, write "Right of God" and sign their name on it, (this makes it a more formal, memorable act) and stick it in the box. Before, doing that, however, one was to rinse the dirt off that coin. Pretty yellow envelopes and a few elegant pens are placed in an attractive receptacle next to the box. A few nice small towels were also hanging next to the water for drying, since a wet coin could ruin the paper envelope. After putting a coin in the box, then one could rinse the other coins. This is why a mesh bag was used. This way they could just hold the bag under the water and shake it to clean (purify) the coins. The players did not know it until they discovered it, but the Huquq box was next to our outdoor faucet. It was on a small tray table with a pretty cloth on it along with the pens and envelopes in pretty tray.

B/c Huquq is a very private act, that no one can urge upon others, once a player found the Huquq box, they could not inform others as to its location. All had to find it for themselves, just as we all have to "find" that level of spiritual certitude within us in order to pay Huquq w/o being prompted.

The game is more than a hide n' seek game however, and has more thrill and challenge b/c it is also a game of pursuit: I have donned an ugly monster mask and represent greed, selfishness, attachment to material things, etc. I am hunting the kids and when I find them I will try and snatch the whole bag of coins for myself. I may even try to keep them from getting to the Huquq box, but if they work together, they can distract me away from each other. Once a bag of coins has been purified, I can't touch it, but I can verbally try to convince the kids to hand it over—which they won't of course. This just makes it more interesting for those that have purified wealth—they still can have some fun teasing me and interacting with a masked creature. If I manage to grab a bag of unpurified coins from a player, all is not lost for them, however. They can go back to the containers of dirt and obtain 5 more coins of unpurified wealth, including another bag to put them in. (If one is short on coins, the snatched ones can be put back into the dirt.) I won't harass them while they are "earning" their wealth, but once the coins are bagged, I will. If I grab that one too, they stay poor. It mimics the story of Muhammad Baqir, who twice asked Baha'u'llah for wealth, and twice lost it b/c he became corrupted by it.

Should a person acquire one hundred mithqals of gold, nineteen mithqals thereof belong unto God, the Creator of earth and heaven. Take heed, O people, lest ye deprive yourselves of this great bounty. We have prescribed this law unto you while We are wholly independent of you and of all that are in the heavens and on the earth. Indeed there lie concealed in this command, mysteries and benefits which are beyond the comprehension of anyone save God, the All- Knowing, the All-Informed. Say, through this injunction God desireth to purify your possessions and enable you to draw nigh unto such stations as none can attain, except those whom God may please. Verily, He is the Generous, the Gracious, the Bountiful.....~Baha'u'llah, Compilations, Huququ'llah, page 3

MEDIUM ACTIVE GAMES

The desire to seek and search is implanted in every soul and this trait is so very valuable in spiritual growth and in our journey towards the Divine. One will find reference to seekers throughout religious scripture, especially in the Baha'i writings. Thus, I feel it is important to encourage this inborn tendency in children. This is why so many of the Highly Active and following games involve searching, hunting, seeking.

Search for The Bab

First I share the following quote and then explain this game which relates to The Letters of the Living's search for The Bab:

I am the Lamp which the Finger of God hath lit within its niche and caused to shine with deathless splendour. ~The Bab: Selections from Writings of the Bab, page 74

The Bab commanded that Eighteen souls had to discover Him on their own before any of them could tell others. This also reminds me of a Baha'i principle called the independent investigation of truth, it which we are to check things out for our selves, rather than relying on other's views, to determine truth. So, I hid a lovely little oil lamp outside. It has green oil in it, since green is the color I use in teaching about The Bab. This is b/c He wore a green turban—only those who were descendents of Muhammad wore green turbans, and The Bab was a descendant. (I explained that lamps were oil back in those days, and had to be lit rather than turned on). The lamp symbolizes The Bab. I lit it and put it on a brass dish (for a pillar candle) and that on a silk green cloth. Under the cloth around the edges, I placed 8 (the exact number of students) gold cardboard stars on strings, to be worn as necklaces. They could easily be pulled out w/o disturbing the lamp. I explained that the students were to pretend that they were one of the 18 Letters of The Living in search of The Promised One. They had to spread out and not travel in groups, only as individuals. I told them to remember that Messengers often are found in places and ways people do not expect—that is why Christ said He would come as a thief in the night—thieves are not obvious, they hide, and people are unaware of them. If one is seeking a Messenger of God, they must show the virtues of thoroughness, perseverance, determination, and creativity by looking in unexpected places. I told them the lamp could be hidden anywhere in the yard area-- my front and back yard—but nobody else's yards. If they found the lamp, they could take a gold star and put it on, but they could not tell others where they found it. The star symbolized the illumination of their souls upon connecting with the Lamp of God, the Messenger. I explained it must have

been so hard for the first eighteen not to tell their friends who were also seeking. They had to show extreme patience, self control, and trustworthiness.

I also told the kids that if someone was around you, and you saw the flame of the lamp, to leave the area and wait until you were alone to approach it, otherwise you would give it away. Also, it made it less likely you would give the secret location away if you hid your star under your shirt until you were a distance from where you found it. After the last child found the lamp and donned the star necklace, I took them inside and told them the story of Quddus, the last of the 18 to find The Bab. The Bab told the others that Quddus had the highest station of all of them, and The Bab honored him by taking him on His pilgrimage to Mecca. I pointed out that in the spiritual world, being first is not necessarily important.

Inside Version:
Due to weather, we had to play this game inside once and this is how that was done: I told them that the oil lamp (which symbolized The Bab) was inside, not outside, that it was under the roof. I told them it would not be in any drawer, cabinet, or closet. I hid it on a green silk cloth on an ice chest in the garage behind my husband's car. (The garage is connected to the house.) I surrounded it with clear plastic rhinestone stars (one for each student) and you were to take one if you found it. The five pointed star is the symbol for The Bab and the teacher of Mulla Husayn, the first seeker to find The Bab, wrote the qualities The Bab would possess inside a five pointed star. Also, the idea is that when you find the Messenger, you become illumined spiritually, like a star shining in darkness. Last time I used gold cardboard stars on a string, but too many kids were clued when they saw another student donning the necklace. These rhinestone stars could fit secretly in one's hand. They were not to tell others where they found it, just as the first disciples of The Bab were not allowed to say anything until 18 souls found Him on their own. Anyway, it took quite some time for the kids to think about going into the garage but eventually they all did. The kids always love seeking games.

Inside Version #2:
The third time we played this game, I told them the lamp could be hidden anywhere in the house or garage but not in any cabinets, closets, or drawers. If they found the lamp they would also see sparkly star stickers. They were to place one of the stickers on their foreheads or over their hearts. Others would notice and be encouraged. Then I did a really sneaky thing: They all waited in the classroom while I supposedly hid the lamp. I waited a few minutes then announced it was time to begin their search. After they had all dashed out to look for it, and were mostly downstairs, I took the lamp which I had stashed in the bathroom tub and placed it behind the end of the couch in the classroom. I put it on a brass dish (for a pillar candle) and that on a silk green cloth. On the cloth, instead of star necklaces as in previous games, I placed the sparkly silver star stickers. Anyway, one could not see the lamp from the door, you would have to go to that end of the room. Of course they assumed it was not in the classroom since they had been gathered there. It took some time for them to find it. When they got frustrated, I just reminded them to never give up and to look in unexpected places. Eventually they all found it.

Seek and Ye Shall Find
This game can be played outside or inside. Outside makes it more active. I hid a leather-covered treasure chest. Inside I placed a red silk scarf, multiple gigantic glass diamond gemstones in 2 different sizes, and gigantic pearls. (One can also use large rhinestones. The important thing is that it be stunning, beautiful, and opulent.) Standing up, behind these objects, also on the red silk, were 11 deep-red shimmering cardstocks (8 ½ X11). On each of these was pasted a slightly smaller black rectangle (so that the red cardstock formed a frame) with Baha'u'llah's name written in white calligraphy. These were to be decorated with sparkling and metallic ink pens and diverse sticky-back gems for the student's arts and crafts activity at the end of class. Before playing, these quotes were shared and discussed:

*By the righteousness of God! The **Hidden Treasure**, the Impenetrable Mystery, hath been uncovered to men's eyes, causing all things, whether of the past or of the future, to rejoice. ~Baha'u'llah,* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 77

*This is the Mystery of God and His **Treasure**....., if ye be of them that perceive. ~Baha'u'llah,* The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, p. 5

*The door of the knowledge of the Ancient of Days being thus closed in the face of all beings, the Source of infinite grace, ... hath caused those luminous **Gems** of Holiness to appear out of the realm of the spirit, in the noble form of the human temple....., They are the **Treasuries** of Divine knowledge, and the Repositories of celestial wisdom. Through them is transmitted a grace that is infinite, and by them is revealed the Light that can never fade.... By the revelation of these **Gems** of Divine virtue all the names and attributes of God, such as knowledge and power, sovereignty and*

dominion, mercy and wisdom, glory, bounty, and grace, are made manifest. ~Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 47-48

We talked about how whenever a new Messenger comes, souls need to exert effort to find Him b/c He is not obvious. He comes "like a thief in the night". He is the most precious hidden treasure a person can discover. Baha'u'llah explains in the Kitab-i-Iqan, page 71, that the light of all Messengers are hidden behind the clouds of things that are contrary to the ways and desires of people. He elaborates on how the clouds mentioned in Biblical prophecy are metaphors or symbols for that which block the light.

Thus, I hid the treasure chest described above. The students needed to find this somewhere in the house. Once a child found it, he/she could guide others to it through *subtle* hints and clues, but only if those others asked help. (Kids need examples of subtle hints/clues, otherwise their clues are too easy and leave no challenge for others.) The game ends when every child has discovered the treasure chest. They were not to open it until all had found it. I explained before hand that it would not be hidden in any closets, cabinets, or drawers, and that it was in plain sight, just not obvious. A Messenger of God, (and the religion He leaves behind once He ascends) is in plain sight, just not obvious.

Seek the Seekers #

This is a twist on hide n' seek, in that the "seekers" are hiding. I explained how The Bab commanded His disciples, The Letters of the Living, to spread far and wide and find and teach receptive souls. We talked about how seekers of truth often are hard to find. In 1844 in Persia, there were many souls who were seeking the Promised One, but they did not wear a flashing neon sign advertising that fact! Also, many of them hid their beliefs, b/c the majority of Muslims were fundamentalist and they persecuted those who believed a new Messenger was coming or had arrived. The Letters of the Living thus had to really search for the true seekers. I also shared this quote with the kids, and then asked them what the 3 characteristics were which promote success. *"Teaching the Faith is.....conditioned by.....how much we have studied the Teachings, to what degree we live the Baha'i life, and how much we long to share this Message with others. When we have these characteristics, we are sure, if we search, to find receptive souls. You should persevere and be confident that, with effort, success can be yours."* (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi by his secretary to an American believer, 1957: Baha'i News, No. 351, p. 2, May 1960 Lights of Guidance, page 586)

Then I chose 2 children to be Letters of the Living. I explained that rarely does having the most matter or is a positive thing, but in this case, finding and sharing the message with the most seekers is spiritually a great blessing. (In both The Bab's and Baha'u'llah's writings, we are exhorted to find as many seeking souls as we can, and this brings great blessings to ourselves, to them, and to the world.) Thus, the idea was for each Letter of the Living child to find as many hiding seekers as possible. Each of these 2 children were given a gold star on a necklace for themselves, plus one for each of the total number of hider-seekers-- (for the unlikely event that one child found all the hider-seekers, and the other child none). The 2 children then put all the necklaces on and we waited about 5 minutes until going on the search. The other children were allowed to hide anywhere on our property, in the commons, up in trees, or in the house or garage, (except closets and cabinets.) The Letter of the Living children were to spread out from each other in their search so there would be no argument who spotted who first.

When a hider-seeker was found, that child could not try to escape. He or she was given a gold star necklace to wear to symbolize enlightenment and illumination. (The necklaces tangle very easily unless you show the kids how to be sure to lift the top one off first for each child found.) Then that child stayed with the Letter of the Living child who found them and they looked for others in a group. I told them to stay with the group who had found them and seek out seekers as a group. This makes the game more cooperative, b/c many eyes are better than one, and b/c some of the hider-seekers saw where the others hid, the game moves faster. I explained that the group represents community and a larger community is usually more effective than a small one. To keep them together, and to symbolize a unified community of souls, I gave each "Letter of the Living" a silky braided cord (with knots every foot or so, to prevent rope burn b/c they do get excited and tug) and they hold that at the front end, and the found seekers are to stay connected by holding onto a segment. The game ends when all hider-seekers are found.

Variation: Find the Faithful

Children hide outside. One child is designated as a Dawnbreaker who is seeking receptive souls. That child wears a star necklace which is just a gold cardboard star on an attractive string. (These stars are available in many party stores and come with a hole already punch in one of the prongs---or you can make your own.) When that child discovers a hiding child, the found child willingly goes with the first Dawnbreaker child to a lit oil lamp which symbolizes The Bab:

I am the Lamp which the Finger of God hath lit within its niche and caused to shine with deathless splendour. ~The Bab: Selections from Writings of the Bab, page 74.

There are star necklaces placed around the lamp. The newly found child puts a necklace on and becomes a Dawnbreaker. Then he/she goes to search for more hiding souls and when finds one, follows the same procedure as was done for him/her. Players can change hiding places if they wish, for example if they think a found hider knows where they are hiding, they may want to re-locate. Game ends when all children are found.

Both versions can also be played w/o the Letter of the Living theme, and be used for a unit on teaching the Baha'i Faith. Use these quotes:

Teach ye the Cause of God, O people of Baha, for God hath prescribed unto every one the duty of proclaiming His Message, and regardeth it as the most meritorious of all deeds. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 278

Teach the Cause! Teach! Teach! Convey the Message! Awaken the souls!
~Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i Meetings and the Nineteen Day Feast, p. 9

For a unit on life after death, one could use the following quote, and have the seekers just be regular Baha'is who are striving to teach.

It is better to guide one soul than to possess all that is on earth, for as long as that guided soul is under the shadow of the Tree of Divine Unity, he and the one who hath guided him will both be recipients of God's tender mercy, whereas possession of earthly things will cease at the time of death.
~The Bab: Selections from the Writings of The Bab, page 77

The Hidden Words

O Thou Who art the most manifest of the manifest and the most hidden of the hidden!
~Baha'u'llah: Prayers and Meditations, page 248

He Who is everlastingly hidden from the eyes of men can never be known except through His Manifestation.... ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 49

This is basically a Hide and Seek game. I explained that God is the Most Hidden of the Hidden. But He is also the most Manifest of the Manifest—through His creation and through His Manifestations, also known as Divine Messengers. We can learn a lot about God through His creation, through studying nature. However, if we want to know for sure God's wisdom and truths, we have to read the words, and study the teachings given to us through His appointed Manifestations. But these Manifestations also are hidden in that they don't come out of the sky for all to see. We have to seek out and find who these Manifestations are. Since most people do not have the good fortune of being alive at the time a Messenger walks the earth, we need to search for the teachings He left behind instead of His person. And that is what this game is about. Finding the Hidden Words of Baha'u'llah,-- very aptly named. (I used a very ornate and illuminated copy to make it even more worthy of the search.) So, to sum it up: God is Hidden, but also Manifest, through the holy books revealed by His Manifestations. We need to seek Him through these books. But these books are hidden from the awareness of most.

When someone found the book, they were to stay there with the book. This symbolized steadfastness. They could not alert others, and this symbolized Baha'u'llah's teaching of independent investigation of truth—finding the truth for ourselves. When the entire class had found the book, that round ended. Sometimes we played it outside, and sometimes inside. When it was outside, I placed the book on a red cloth b/c it was green and very camouflaged, but also b/c it was more respectful than to lie it on the ground. The first round I hid it under our front porch—which was ideal b/c the entire class could fit under there w/o being seen, and it took a little effort to think about looking there. Then I hid it in my daughter's old bedroom. I told the class this was the only time they were allowed in all the rooms of the house, and the book would not be hidden in any drawers, cabinets, or closets, but in plain view. However, one would have to be thorough when searching, b/c it would not be in the line of sight when you walked in the door. For all locations, the book was hidden but also manifest, just like the paradox of God. For one round, I asked the kids to wait in the classroom while I hid it a second time in the house. I tricked them and hid it under my shirt and when they left the classroom, I placed it next to the classroom couch on the opposite side of the door. That one took a long time, b/c of course it did not occur to them that it could be in that room until I hinted that the book could be in ANY room and that sometimes God's teachings are found in the most unsuspected places! The kids really enjoyed this game and begged to play more than 3 rounds.

Hidden Words Treasure Hunt
Various excerpts from Baha'u'llah's Hidden Words were written in gold on different colored strips of ribbon and hidden according to the clue the prior ribbon provided. (Sometimes it's easiest to line the ribbon with clear tape, and write on the tape instead of directly on the ribbon.)

Some of the clues took some hinting, but most figured it out pretty fast. The child who figured out the answer first was the one who got to go in front of the group and search the area. In a large group, if a child figured out and found more than one clue, he/she had to give the next one to someone else to read, otherwise all the oldest kids would have dominated the hunt.

Also, some kids are too young to read this level of script, so after all the older readers had their thrill of finding and reading one, these younger ones were allowed to be in the advance group who got to look in the correctly determined location first. Once they found one, then they had to let others who had not had the delight of extracting one go in front of the group. In any treasure hunt, it is important to stress no running or pushing, and to give every one a chance at being the one to spot the clue. We also had to discuss what each verse meant before moving on. Before we started I shared this quote by Abdu'l-Baha:

*The **Hidden** Words is a **treasury** of divine mysteries. When thou ponderest its contents, the doors of the mysteries will open. ~`Abdu'l-Baha:* The Importance of Deepening, page 197.

Here are the excerpts and where they led:

1. *Upon the tree of effulgent glory I have hung for thee the choicest fruits, wherefore hast thou turned away and contented thyself with that which is less good?* (fruit bowl in kitchen)
2. *.....forfeit not thy portion from My wondrous fountain, lest thou shouldst thirst for evermore.* (drinking fountain in kitchen)
3. *The candle of thine heart is lighted by the hand of My power, quench it not with the contrary winds of self and passion.* (heart shaped candle in classroom)
4. *Thou art but one step away from the glorious heights above .....*(staircase)
5. *Ye are the trees of My garden; ye must give forth goodly and wondrous fruits, that ye yourselves and others may profit therefrom.* (indoor fig tree)
6. *My calamity is My providence, outwardly it is fire and vengeance, but inwardly it is light and mercy.* (fireplace)
7. *....thou wouldst find no rest save in submission to Our command and humbleness before Our Face. (*bed)
8. *Barter not the garden of eternal delight for the dust-heap of a mortal world.* (outside garden)
9. *.....enter the heaven of communion with Me.* (classroom prayer book b/c prayer is how one enters the heaven of communion)
10. *Make mention of Me on My earth.....*(globe in classroom)
11. *Neglect not My commandments if thou lovest My beauty....*(The Kitab-i-Aqdas, the Baha'i book of laws.)
12. *Thou art My lamp and My light is in thee.* (lamp)
13. *.....no man should enter the house of his friend save at his friend's pleasure....* (entry door)
14. *To the eternal I call thee, yet thou dost seek that which perisheth.* (refrigerator, b/c it holds perishables)

In the refrigerator was a treasure chest like box. In the box were lots of large rhinestone gems on necklaces and also on devices that clipped on a button. They were wearable to remind the kids that they are the real treasures and of their inner wealth of divine virtues and knowledge. Students could choose one necklace or button clip gem. The box also was filled with small loose iridescent pearls for added effect. And this was the verse on a ribbon inside the box:

15. *Ye are My treasury, for in you I have treasured the pearls of My mysteries and the gems of My knowledge. ~Baha'u'llah* (the children themselves)

I shared with the kids that I thought the last quote (#15) meant that they were treasures of God. We discussed what this might mean, what the pearls and gems might be (virtues, talents, skills, etc.) So the real treasure was them! But since I knew they would be disappointed if after all that work, they didn't find a more traditional treasure, I had the box of gem necklaces. I told them to wear it as a reminder that they were treasures of God.

I also had written each of their names with sparkling ink on a gold paper strip, with quote #15 above typed in fancy font. Each strip was also decorated with dots of shimmer paints, that when dry, look like gems and pearls. (One can also use sparkling or iridescent fabric paints or small rhinestone gems and pearls that are glued on). The ends of each strip were cut with fancy edging scissors. The strips were then each rolled into a scroll using a thick marker as a guide and tied with a thin purple silk ribbon. And to really add a touch of elegance, a sparkling Diamond Dot sticker was put on the center of the bow. Also, a tiny white sticker was placed on the opposite side of the bow with the child's initials, so each student could open their own scroll. (If one has limited time, they can just put all the children's names on one pretty piece of decorated paper with the quote on it. But I like the idea of kids being able to take their own mini scroll home for a keepsake). I am real big on consistently providing a spiritual definition to children of what a human is, to counteract all the animalistic and debased definitions, images, and standards in the media and in our culture in general. After working w/ youth, I am frequently reminded how important it is that our children have solid spiritual identities, that they perceive themselves as noble and act in such ways that are befitting of such a lofty station:

Were man to appreciate the greatness of his station and the loftiness of his destiny he would manifest naught save goodly character, pure deeds, and a seemly and praiseworthy conduct.
~Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 172.

Too many youth have very low opinions and standards about what a human being is, and this is reflected in their behavior towards themselves and others.

Noble have I created thee, yet thou hast abased thyself. Rise then unto that for which thou wast created. ~Baha'u'llah: Arabic Hidden Words, # 22.

It is also interesting to note that at the opening of the Hidden Words, Baha'u'llah says:

*This is that which hath descended from the realm of glory, uttered by the tongue of power and might, and revealed unto the Prophets of old. We have taken the inner essence thereof and clothed it in the garment of brevity, as a token of grace unto the righteous, that they may stand faithful unto the Covenant of God, may fulfill in their lives His trust, and in the realm of spirit obtain the **gem** of Divine virtue. ~Baha'u'llah*

About the materials for the scrolls: The golden shimmer paper is available from www.paperdirect.com, and is called Bright Gold Shimmer Paper, Item # SD103. One may also be able to find something similar in scrap booking sections of arts and crafts stores. The prismatic dot stickers (called Dot Sparklers) can be used to spiff up many materials. They come in many different colors, and can be obtained at http://www.stampendous.com/shop/glitters-plus/class-apeel-stickers/dot-sparklers-class-a-peel-stickers/. The pens came from Michael's Arts and Crafts, they are called Glitter Paint Markers by Marvy. The sparkle effect is subtle, so to intensify it I went over each name with a similar color of a sparkling Gelly Roll pen by Sakura. These pens are too fine to show up well on the gold paper by themselves, but really add to the sparkle when used with the paint markers. I use both the paint markers and the Gelly Rolls in many, many arts and crafts projects with my students.

It may be hard to find the particular treasures I used. Michael's Arts & Crafts sometimes carries large fake rhinestones/ gemstones in plastic pouches. They have a hole and thus can be worn on a silken cord. I also used large rhinestones that are glued onto metal pieces that attach to buttons. I like the idea of the students wearing them on their persons b/c that reinforces the idea that they are the treasures and have treasures within them, the gems of Divine virtue. One can also offer single gigantic pearls on a golden or silver cord. These are available at some craft stores. I chose not to include them this time even though they are mentioned in the quote ("pearls of My mysteries") b/c we used these earlier in the curriculum for symbols of "pearls of wisdom" in our unit on the Creative Word.

If one wants to make the treasure even more special and personally relevant, one could use a small photo of each student in a small matted frame with the quote written in sparkling ink above or below it. Shimmer or fabric paints could be used to decorate around the mat, as was done with the scrolls. Tiny pearls and rhinestones could be glued on the mat instead.

Graduates' Treasure Hunt
One of the most exciting activities was this test of the graduates' memory of past classes. The entire class participated by listening to the clues and following behind the grads, and offering suggestions if the grads were stumped. The clues led to the big pine tree outside that most of my students love to climb. Hanging a little more than 1/3 way up, were 4 cloth bags, (made by tying a section of silk my daughter brought back from India) tied with a ribbon to a branch, each one having the name of one of the grads written on a large gold star attached to the ribbon. The gifts inside were chosen from a selection by the parents of the grads at a previous date. They were wrapped with gold wrapping paper with stars on it,

since the star metaphor is used so much in our class. Also inside each bag was a quote from the Baha'i Writings in a fancy font on special paper which related to the gift inside, rolled up as a scroll with ribbon. There was also a silken pouch of high quality sweets for the entire class.

Lua got Austrian crystal heart shaped earrings and her quote read:

My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart, that thine may be a sovereignty ancient, imperishable and everlasting. ~Baha'u'llah

(Another quote that I have now added in conjunction with heart shaped crystal earrings or pendants is: *O thou handmaid of God! In this day, to thank God for His bounties consisteth in possessing a radiant heart, and a soul open to the promptings of the spirit. This is the essence of thanksgiving. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha*)

India got a silver bracelet made up of hands and hearts. The hands symbolized service, giving a helping hand to others. Her quote read:

.....service in love for mankind is unity with God. ~`Abdu'l-Baha and Love ye all religions and all races with a love that is true and sincere and show that love through deeds..... ~`Abdu'l-Baha

Both Kevins got the same thing b/c that's what their parents chose: A fancy pen whose barrel was half clear and sheds a blue light when turned on. Their quote was:

O SON OF MAN! Write all that We have revealed unto thee with the ink of light upon the tablet of thy spirit..... Sweeter indeed is this to Me than all else, that its light may endure for ever. ~Baha'u'llah

(Other Baha'i related gifts and their accompanying quotes can be found at the end of this document in Resources.)

Clues were written on colored cardstock, folded into a tiny card with fancy trimmed edges and a flower sticker on the front, except for the last one which had a star, to symbolize illumination from spiritual knowledge—as demonstrated by successively completing the treasure hunt. The italicized underlines are what they had to guess, the parenthesis are rhyming answers and where they had to go.

The clues were as follows:

1. Baha'u'llah said: "*The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens*" Go to object which represents answer for next clue. (globe)
2. Perseverance means not giving *up*. Go to a thing which helps us go *up*. (stairs)
3. I am *trustworthy* when I do what I say I'll do and not do what I'm not supposed to do. Go to a machine in this house that takes something out of the air that rhymes with the 1st syllable. (dust, electronic dust remover--- or feather duster if there is no machine—change clue to read "removes something that rhymes.....")
4. The first 18 people to find and believe in The Bab (Forerunner Prophet of the Baha'i Faith) were called The *Letters* of the Living. Go to where *Letters* are received at this house. (mailbox)
5. Being happy and pleased with what I have and not demanding more is called *contentment* Go to something on the stairway wall which rhymes with the last syllable. (vent)
6. You are being *patient* when you wait nicely without complaining. Go to a toy in the playroom that children sometimes use to pretend to be a *patient*. (doctor kit)
7. In the Baha'i Writings it says: "Follow in the footsteps of *Abdu'l-Baha*" Go to a picture of the answer for next clue. (framed photo)
8. One expression of humility is when we are able to admit we were *wrong*. Go to an object people use to play something that rhymes with *wrong*. (song/stereo)
9. Go to a picture that shows where The Bab is buried. (Shrine of The Bab photo)
10. To show caring is to be *kind*. Go to a thing in this room that rhymes with *kind.* (blind)
11. When we express virtues such as courtesy, kindness, and patience, we make the world more joyful and beautiful just like *flowers* do. Go to some inside. (vase of flowers)

12. To *sacrifice* is to give up something for the sake of unity or for others. Go to a place where you would find something that rhymes with the last syllable of the answer. (rice/kitchen cabinet)
13. Steadfastness means not giving *in* to our lower nature. Go to a place where we can come *in.* (front door)
14. One example of fairness is to make sure others get their *turn*. Go to an object where things sometimes do something which rhymes with *turn*. (burn/oven)
15. Men are like one *wing* on the *bird* of humanity and women are the other. When both *wings* can *fly* equally well, in other words, when women have the same respect and are treated equal to men, we will have world peace-- according to the Baha'i Writings. Go to a picture that represents the answers. (poster in classroom of human figures riding a dove of peace, but any bird picture will do)
16. *Gratitude* means showing and feeling thankfulness, contentment, and appreciation for what we have and for what others do for us. Go to a place that stores something that rhymes with the last syllable. (food/refrigerator)
17. The Bab said: *"I am the Lamp which the Finger of God hath lit."* Go to one. (lamp)
18. Courtesy means I make sure you're happy before I take care of *me*. Go to a living thing outside which rhymes with *me.* (tree with next clue obviously displayed b/c there are a lot of trees in my back yard!)
19. According to the Baha'i Writings, the station of a faithful servant and true believer of Baha'u'llah in the next world is very *high*. Now each of you must go *high* to discover your reward. (climb up to treasure-gifts hanging on branches)

Graduate's Treasure Hunt II

This one is based on some of the quotes we used in an all day class on the Oneness of Humanity. I have 6 other treasure hunts, one based on *Progressive Revelation*, one on *Teaching the Faith,* and another based on *Consultation* and more on *various virtues,* including the *avoiding of backbiting and gossip.* They are not listed here b/c kids would most likely not be able to get the clues unless they were familiar with all the quotations used throughout those 5 day camps, which are extensive. However, if you are interested, email me, and I will send the quotes and the clues.

All the clues are based on quotations used in the Oneness of Humanity class, with the exception of the hint quotation in #13. We studied that one when we did our unit on laws several years ago. During the hunt, the other students follow behind the graduates, and only the graduates get to retrieve the clues and then read them out loud to the group. (They alternate back and forth with each other.) If the graduates are stumped, they can ask for help from the other students.

1. *Ye are the _____ of one tree..... ~Baha'u'llah* Go to where one may find _____ in this house. *(A: Fruits; a bowl of fruit in the kitchen).*

2. In the same quote as the previous one, Baha'u'llah says: "*So _____ is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth."* Go to where the first 2 syllables of the answer is controlled in this house. (Hint: it's downstairs, not in a bedroom) *(A: Powerful; power; a circuit breaker box in the study).*

3. *It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole _____. ~ Baha'u'llah.* Go to an object upstairs that represents the answer. *(A: World; a globe).*

4. *The Prophets of God should be regarded as _____whose task is to foster the well-being of the world and its peoples, that, through the spirit of oneness, they may heal the sickness of a divided humanity. ~Baha'u'llah* Go to an object in the downstairs playroom that represents what real _____ would use. *(A: Physicians; a play doctor's kit.)*

5. *We have created you from one _____....., that haply ye may become a source of comfort to one another. ~The Bab* Go to the answer in the dining room. *(A: Tree; a small indoor one).*

6. *Your souls are as _____ on the _____of the spirit; although each individual is a distinct _____the _____is one, all are united in God..... The spirit is as one great _____and the _____thereof are the souls of men. ~`Abdu'l-Baha* Go to a picture that illustrates all 6 blanks. *(A: Waves, sea, wave, ocean, ocean, waves; a large Japanese painting of a giant wave).*

7. *Every heart should radiate unity, so that the _____of the one Divine Source of all may shine forth bright and luminous. ~`Abdu'l-Baha* Go to the largest source of _____ in the living room during the day. *(A: Light; giant window).*

8. *.....you all are the servants of one God and, therefore, brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers. In the sight of God there is no distinction between _____and_____; all are as one. ~Abdu'l-Baha* Go to an object in the bedroom across from the classroom that is made of only _____ and _____. *(A: Whites and blacks; a black and white drawing on the wall).*

9. *All humanity are the _____ of God; they belong to the same _____, to the same original race. There can be no multiplicity of races, since all are the descendants of Adam. ~Abdu'l-Baha* Go to an item upstairs that shows Linden's _____ and _____. *(A: Children, family; a photo collage of my children and family on the hallway wall).*

10. *Know ye, verily, that the _____ of mankind lieth in the unity and the harmony of the human race.....~Abdu'l-Baha* Go to an item in the room across from the classroom that reveals the secret of _____. *(A: Happiness; a matted and decorated quote by Abdu'l-Baha that sits on a miniature easel on a shelf. Students got these as gifts last summer after a camp that had happiness as one of its themes. It says*: *Man is, in reality, a spiritual being, and only when he lives in the spirit is he truly happy. ~Abdu'l-Baha*)

11. World order can be founded only on an unshakeable consciousness of the oneness of mankind, a spiritual truth which all the human sciences confirm..... recognition of this truth requires abandonment of _____ -- _____of every kind..... everything which enables people to consider themselves superior to others. Go to a place upstairs where the last 3 letters of the last syllable of the answer would be found. *(A: Prejudice, prejudice; ice; the freezer in the kitchen).*

12. The Universal House of Justice continues the previous quote by saying that Universal acceptance of this spiritual principle (the oneness of humanity) is essential to any successful attempt to establish ____ ____. Go to a document in the classroom that discusses the promise of _____ _____ and outlines how to achieve _____ _____. *(A: World peace; The Promise of World Peace).*

13. Now go to the source of the answer in last clue. Hint: *The religion of God and His divine law are the most potent instruments and the surest of all means for the dawning of the light of unity amongst men. ~Baha'u'llah (A: <u>The Kitab-i-Aqdas</u> found on our Baha'i bookcase).*

14. *Be ye as the fingers of one hand, the members of one _____. Thus counselleth you the Pen of Revelation, if ye be of them that believe. ~Baha'u'llah* Go to a downstairs place in this house where the _____ would be cleaned. *(A: Body; the bathtub).*

In addition to the treasure and scrolls for the graduates is a quote on a scroll about sweetness such as *"....no happiness is sweeter than spiritual comprehension of the divine teachings." ~`Abdu'l-Baha:* <u>Promulgation of Universal Peace</u>, pages 459-460. And so of course there would be a small amount of chocolate sweets for everybody, b/c this rewards the contribution of the non-graduates in figuring out the clues and makes the hunt more engaging for them. (More quotes relating the Words of God to sweetness can be found in <u>Gleanings,</u> p. 343, and <u>Prayers and Meditations</u> pages 82-83).

Since the kids had already had chocolate from a previous activity, this time I put in something else: A round cardboard disc that had a picture of red cherries on it. It was wrapped in shimmering tissue paper, and sealed with a large heart sticker that said "class". The cherries of course represented the fact that we are the "fruits of one tree". I wanted the cherries to be cold, so they were in the refrigerator, already washed. There was also a wrapped miniature Angel Food cake that had been decorated on the surface with varying food colors. I washed my hands and plucked off a piece for each child and plopped it in their mouth (since they had not washed their hands). The cake represented how we are all different on the outside in how we look, but our essence is the same—spirit. Each piece was unique, no 2 were alike on the surface. But all were part of the same cake, and were the same deep inside—sugar, flower, etc. Both the cherry disc and the cake were labeled "class". The graduates got to partake of these too, of course.

Metaphor Hunt

We played this game at a 12th Day of Ridvan celebration at my house. It can be played on any Holy Day, since all 3 Central Figures use lots of metaphors in Their writings. In some instances, it also may be more appropriate for a class

setting than a holy day. But it needs to be light outside, unless you want to do it inside, which I think is less appealing. The dialogue was geared toward the older kids and adults, but the younger kids, and even pre-youth really loved the hide n' seek part of this game. And the preschoolers were especially thrilled whenever they found something. I chose what I believe is referred to as the Tablet of Ridvan, from pages 319-322 Gleanings, which is entry CLI, and includes 5 paragraphs rich in metaphorical visual imagery. Since we were expecting many non-Baha'is, I left out the 4th paragraph, because it is a bit scolding. It was printed on rose bordered paper.

I went through the selection, hunting for metaphors. These are the words I found, and the objects I gathered to go with them: nightingales (2 pictures of a nightingale), sweetness (a small pretty bowl of sugar or honey jar), bitterness (a grapefruit peel stuck on a stick—so it could be stuck in the ground), clouds (a wad of cotton), veil (a sheer scarf), birds (2 fake birds), Rose Garden (a rose), hearts (a lovely heart pillow and a rhinestone heart), fragrance (a vial of perfume), chains (a thick dog chain), hands (a plastic doll hand and cardboard one on a stick), cage (a miniature cage), nest (a bird nest), candle (a large candle), and moth (a fake moth made from feathers). I did not use "eyes" and "ear" b/c they were not being used to represent something else, i.e. they were not metaphors in this particular Writing. I chose 19 metaphors in all.

Before beginning the program, I encouraged everybody to really listen to the readings. All those old enough to read had their own copy of the writings. I said something like the following: "Before we begin, I need to prepare you for the activity following the program. Who can tell me what is a metaphor? Well, the Baha'i Writings are full of them. (I gave a few examples). Abdu'l-Baha explains in Some Answered Questions (p. 84) that b/c the spiritual world is so unknown to us, it is necessary to explain spiritual ideas, truths, and relationships using objects from the known, physical, material world. I think it's important to recognize metaphors when they are used b/c if we don't, they can confuse our understanding of the Messenger's words and mislead us. This is why most people did not recognize Christ when He first came, and also why many have missed His second coming in Baha'u'llah. (Give examples of how in Christ's time, people expected His throne and army to be literal, and how many refuse to accept Baha'u'llah b/c they are expecting Christ on a cloud, etc.) Please listen carefully to the readings and try to remember as many metaphors as you can. After the closing song, we'll try to list them as a group, then I will explain the rules for the activity."

After music, reading of the 4 paragraphs, and singing together, I brought out a dry erase board. Using the readings and also by memory, the whole group made a list which consisted of the metaphors I had found. There are many more metaphors in the Tablet of Ridvan than the objects I chose, so on the left side I listed the metaphors named by the group that were not represented by objects hidden outside. On the right side I wrote the ones that were represented as objects outside. I emphasized to the kids that they would be searching outside for only the list on the right of the board. After making the list, I told the group that "when trying to understand a metaphor in Baha'u'llah's Writings, its important to have humility—that is to know that maybe our understanding or idea or picture of what that metaphor means may not be what Baha'u'llah intended, or it has many meanings. Likewise, when searching for the metaphor objects outside, try to keep an open mind and not cling to a definite idea about what that object may look like. Remember, there are 2 of some things, and they may or may not be what you expect—the form or size they take may not match the picture in your mind—but you will recognize it when you see it."

The rules were: If you find an object, bring it inside for all to see and place on the table. I will then cross that item off on the list so we can keep track. Only then may you go back out to search for another object. Each child may find only 2 (this keeps the older kids from hogging them all—but of course this depends on how many things you hide and how big your group of kids are.) If you have found your 2, you may assist a younger child who is wanting help—but do not take the pleasure of finding an object away from them—just guide, and let them be the ones to retrieve it. All objects are in clear view—none are hidden under or inside of anything, though some may be up off the ground. (I placed things sort of camouflaged, but just by being small and in the yard, one had to really search to locate one. I did not place them in the middle of the lawn, for example, but in nooks and crannies). The kids had a blast, and as each one triumphantly brought one in, all the adults inside applauded and oohed and aahed.

The Knot # *

This is another game to polish communication skills, and illustrate how we are all connected and effect each other. Stand in a circle, everybody reaches in and grabs hands of 2 *different* people who are not directly next to you, and try to untangle yourselves with out letting go of the hands you are holding. Consider the knot a conflict or "tangle" in a relationship, and the holding hands to the "bonds of unity", and that as Baha'is we should always strive to solve conflict and problems without breaking the bonds of unity, using consultation and virtues. Nine times out of ten players can successfully untangle themselves back into a perfect circle. A few tips: remember to be gentle and not squeeze too hard. Its OK to rotate your hands in the other persons' as you maneuver your arms and legs as long as you do not let go. Be flexible and creative—you will need to be stepping over other's arms, threading your way under other's connections, wiggling through openings made by other's arms and torsos, etc. Consult with each other and work together. This game

works best with 6-10 people. More than ten is usually very, very challenging. Remember to hold hands of different kids, otherwise you will form your own little circle and the game will end very fast for you! A perfect circle may have some facing in and some facing out, and that's fine. For larger groups of 11-15, or impossible knots, after 10 minutes w/o success, let one child let go of 1 hand. They still have to work in unity to untangle and everyone is still holding a hand to show unity.

Balloon Bump Trio

First we talked about how people have different abilities and skills and all are important. The students were asked to think of examples of jobs in which people contribute to the world by primarily using their brains, (like computer programmers) hands (like carpenters, artists, etc.) and feet (rainforest guides.) To start, Students are to get in a group of 3 and decide who will represent the head-- they can use their heads and shoulders. Then they are to decide who gets to be the hand person---they can use their hands and arms, and the foot person can use their feet and legs. If time permits, each person can then verbally share a job that uses their body part a lot. I encourage them to focus on occupations that are of service to others and help improve the world. It is important and far more challenging if you have the rule that the same person can't hit the balloon twice in a row—it must alternate. If that is too hard then allow the feet and head people to hit it twice in a row, but not the hand person b/c that is too easy for them. How long can you keep your balloon up as a group? When the balloon hits the ground, rotate who plays what parts. The smaller the balloon, the faster it falls—experiment. This game demonstrates unity in diversity.

Balloon Pass

Hoop Version: It is best to have hula hoops for this version. Two teams each form a line and the first person on each team gets a balloon. The balloons need to be the same size so they float equally well. If you want to give the game a religious tone, you can say that the balloons represent the message that The Bab or Baha'u'llah has come, and the goal is to get that message to as many countries or towns (the hoops) as fast as possible. Or the balloons can represent the teachings of Baha'u'llah. (You can write "He Has Come!" or "Teachings of Baha'u'llah" in an attractive script using metallic pens on the balloons to reinforce the point). The second person in each line holds a hula hoop. The third person has no hoop, the 4th does, and so on, alternating hoop holders with no hoop holders. Teams must be evenly numbered and end with the last person not holding a hoop. When I say "Go!" the first person on each team attempts to bat the balloon through the hoop. They may not push or carry it through. If the kids are older, like 11 and up, you can make the rule that they get to hit the balloon only once, or twice maximum. Since I had kids as young as 7, I allowed unlimited number of hits—but no holding is allowed.

The hoop person can maneuver their hoop to assist in the process, but can not touch the balloon. Once the balloon goes through, it can only be batted by the 3rd child, who attempts to get in through the 4th child's hoop, and so on down the line, until the last person catches the balloon. You can make the round longer by the last person having to bat it back up through the line, doing the same procedure only in reverse. If the balloon hits the ground at any time, it has to go back to the beginning. Kids like to alternate being hoop holders and batters. If you are short an end person, have the first child in line who originally batted the balloon through the first hoop go to the end of the line to be the child to catch the balloon for the ending. This is a highly cooperative game with the competitive aspect of a race. I never keep score, and highly discourage displays of exaltation by the winners. This game can also be played w/o hula hoops. Kids can form the largest circle they can with their arms, but this makes the game quite a bit harder since the circles will be a lot smaller. Or, you can try bending willow branches for hoops. For the hoop version only, it is best to have at least 10 players.

Non-Hoop Variations: These variations can be played with 4 or more players. Kids can be split into 2 competing teams or form one team. Sometimes the competition creates disunity, (or there are not enough kids for 2 teams) so I prefer using one team and one balloon and the kids compete against a stopwatch. Each round they try to get the balloon down the line faster. Each child can represent a nation. They get to name which one. I explain that its urgent to get the message to humanity that a new Divine Messenger has come with new teachings to heal the world. The peoples of the world are suffering horribly. There is no time to waste, speed is necessary.

Depending on the age and skill level of the players, there are many variations that can make the movement of the balloon harder or easier. Any version can be made more challenging by using smaller balloons which will fall faster.

Easiest version for little ones: Each team (or use one team) attempts to pass their team's balloon down the line, allowing as many hits per person as is necessary, using any body part needed. However, the balloon can not skip anybody and has to go down the team line in order. Holding or carrying is not allowed except when returning the balloon to the beginning. If the balloon hits the ground (symbolizing that teaching is not off the ground, or is "grounded,") the balloon has to be carried back to the start of the line. The first team to get their balloon to the end of the line is the winner—though I never emphasize this concept in class games. (When playing with kids under 9, it may be best not to use 2 teams competing, but to use only the stop watch).

Medium hard version: Same as above, but allow only 2 contacts per person. Each child can hit the balloon up to two times, using any body part they want.

Harder version: Explain that there are many obstacles to passing on the message, and ask what those obstacles might be. Older students give examples like fear, prejudice, ignorance, materialism, suspicion, apathy, etc. Also, we all have handicaps when sharing the message—such as our own fear of rejection, lack of faith, insecurity, illness, materialism, etc. Thus, to remind us to keep trying in the face of these obstacles and handicaps, and not get discouraged and give up, players can not use their hands or forearms. Elbows and any other body parts are okay. *All other rules in the easiest version apply.*

Hardest version: Same as the harder version, but allow only 2 contacts per person. 3 contacts is the same as dropping the balloon and it must be returned to the beginning.

Quotes relating to God's teachings and the healing of the world:

The All-Knowing Physician hath His finger on the pulse of mankind. He perceiveth the disease, and prescribeth, in His unerring wisdom, the remedy. Every age hath its own problem, and every soul its particular aspiration. The remedy the world needeth in its present-day afflictions can never be the same as that which a subsequent age may require. Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in, and center your deliberations on its exigencies and requirements.
We can well perceive how the whole human race is encompassed with great, with incalculable afflictions. We see it languishing on its bed of sickness, sore-tried and disillusioned. They that are intoxicated by self-conceit have interposed themselves between it and the Divine and infallible Physician. Witness how they have entangled all men, themselves included, in the mesh of their devices. They can neither discover the cause of the disease, nor have they any knowledge of the remedy. They have conceived the straight to be crooked, and have imagined their friend an enemy.
Incline your ears to the sweet melody of this Prisoner. Arise, and lift up your voices, that haply they that are fast asleep may be awakened. Say: O ye who are as dead! The Hand of Divine bounty proffereth unto you the Water of Life. Hasten and drink your fill. ~Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 212

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?..... the.... task of converting satanic strength into heavenly power is one that We have been empowered to accomplish.....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 from the Writings of Baha'u'llah , p. 199

*.....today these heavenly Teachings are the remedy for a sick and suffering world, and a healing balm for the sores on the body of mankind. They are the spirit of life, the ark of salvation, the magnet to draw down eternal glory, the dynamic power to motivate the inner self of man. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 61

Everyone who truly seeks and justly reflects will admit that the teachings of the present day emanating from mere human sources and authority are the cause of difficulty and disagreement amongst mankind, the very destroyers of humanity, whereas the teachings of Baha'u'llah are the very healing of the sick world, the remedy for every need and condition. In them may be found the realization of every desire and aspiration, the cause of the happiness of the world of humanity, the stimulus and illumination of mentality, the impulse for advancement and uplift, the basis of unity for all nations, the fountain source of love amongst mankind, the center of agreement, the means of peace and harmony, the one bond which will unite the East and the West. ~`Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 440

Unity Ball #
You need an inflatable ball for this one, preferably one representing planet earth. It can be played indoors if its OK with the owners of the building. It is best to remove lamps and anything that can be easily knocked over from the room. If played indoors, (unless ceilings are really high) the group should sit down or be on their knees. It can also be fun to play on your backs using heads, feet and hands. If using feet, players must be spaced far enough apart so that they can't kick each other. In a small group, each child gets a chance to see how many times he or she can hit the ball up in the air by themselves, with no assistance from the rest of the group. (For large groups invite just a few to demonstrate). It is too easy to tap it only a few inches high—it must go several feet to be fair. Everybody counts the number of hits. After every one has had a chance to do it by themselves, it is time to see how powerful unity is and do it as a group. Always remember to hit the ball up either underhand or pushing up with your fingertips as in volley ball—never slam or whack it down—remember the goal is to keep the ball *up*!!! Also, don't forget to be courteous---let others have a shot—no hogging!! Again everybody counts. The all time record is 240! You will do much better if you stick together as a group and do not leave huge areas open and unattended—and you hit straight up as possible.

Hopefully, the group number of hits will far outnumber the individual hits and it will show how much more effective a group working together is than a lone soul. For world peace to happen, we need large numbers of people working together in unity—individuals can't do it alone. If there are large numbers of adults, youth and children, and wee ones, either the older should hold the little ones up so they get a shot at hitting the ball or put the little ones in the middle and make sure you deliberately hit the ball to them, b/c taller folks will always get to it first, otherwise, adding another ball also helps.

Out of doors is harder b/c there are no walls to bounce off of and there is always more space than bodies can cover. One of the most joyful and effective games was played outside and was inter-generational. The adults and youth stood in a circle around the younger ones about 4 feet behind them. The younger kids sat (or they can kneel) down in the grass, filling the space inside the circle. The standing people were able to deliberately aim the ball to those areas that did not get as much opportunity. As the kids got better, the standers moved farther back. Aurelia Blake created this version, and it was a huge success, played with a gigantic earth ball.

If you have a gigantic balloon or very large nylon ball—both of which are very light and slow in descent—ask kids who are 9 and over to only use their feet, shoulders, elbows, heads, hips etc. No hands, forearms, or fists. The other rule should be that one can't hit the ball or balloon twice in a row—this makes it more challenging and discourages hogging. Admonish kids to be careful to avoid kicking others. Remind kids that hogging or shoving to get to the ball does not promote unity! Either before the game or if there are complaints that several never made contact with the ball or balloon, I ask everyone to form a line with at least 4 feet between each person. You may need to form two or more lines, depending on length of room and # of kids. Then I ask them to each hit the ball to the one behind them, until everyone has had that magic moment.

People of the Mountain*
This game is the exact opposite of the old-world-order game "King of the Mountain" which rewards selfishness, hoarding, and power and control of resources for oneself. In that game, the goal is to prevent all others from getting on a boulder or object and to be the only one on it. It can get violent in that kids are pushing others off and away from the desired territory. You do not need a boulder for this one—sturdy chairs will do. It can be played outside or in. Just make sure no sharp edges on furniture are near the playing area. The number of chairs you use depends on the number of kids playing. You be the judge. The goal is to get everybody on the chairs—it should not be easy. Make sure to tell the kids to never place their fingers between the chairs. Chairs should be back to back, if more than two are used, you can place one on each end of the line too.

The chairs stand for a valuable mountain which contains fertile soil, water, timber, and a peaceful, happy, thriving community. Each child represents a tribe or ethnic group in need of a place to live. Remember Baha'u'llah's teachings that one of the requirements for world peace would be the elimination of the extremes of wealth and poverty? Think about how all that is on earth belongs to God and that grossly unequal distribution of wealth causes conflict and suffering. The people with wealth (the haves) will never have peace and security so long as those in great poverty (the have-nots) are desperate to survive. Everyone wants peace and joy and everyone knows you can't have that if you are busy defending your territory and shoving people off your turf. Aggression is not peaceful or joyful! Even if the haves own their wealth legally, they will always be in fear of invasion. Think of the illegal immigrant or refugee problem.

"The inordinate disparity between rich and poor, a source of acute suffering, keeps the world in a state of instability, virtually on the brink of war."—The Universal House of Justice, from The Promise of World Peace.

We started the game by myself and a few other taller, mature students hogging the chairs and pushing other students away. (These students need to be trustworthy in your requirement that they do not get carried away in their shoving). We were the rich and powerful. Before it got out of hand, we stopped and debriefed: I asked the kids if we rich and powerful

could relax, have peace and tranquility, and enjoy our wealth while having to constantly guard and prevent others from using it? Of course not..... We would live in a constant state of suspicion and fear. And I asked how it felt to be shoved away, not given even a tiny bit of space, while we had so much? At first, they thought it was fun and challenging to try and outsmart us to get on the chairs, but it soon got tense. (For many groups or settings, it may be wisest to skip this contrasting scenario, and just go right to the sharing of the chairs.)

Then I explained that we rich and powerful now understand that we are all brothers and sisters, and that all really belongs to God and that we have a duty to share wealth. So the next stage in this game, the goal is to see how many people can share and enjoy the mountain. You succeed only if everyone is on the "mountain" and if only those who are seated have their feet on the ground. Some can stand on the bars below the seats or on the seats. It takes a lot of maneuvering and balancing and supporting and communicating. But laughter and joy should be the end product. You may want an adult to stand by to catch any one falling off the mountain!

O YE RICH ONES ON EARTH! The poor in your midst are My trust; guard ye My trust, and be not intent only on your own ease. ~Baha'u'llah: Persian Hidden Words, # 54

(I assured the students that they are the rich ones on earth compared to most children in the world).

Be ye trustworthy on earth, and withhold not from the poor the things given unto you by God through His grace. ~Baha'u'llah: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, pages 54-55

.....withhold not from the poor the gifts which the grace of God hath bestowed upon you. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 278

Tell the rich of the midnight sighing of the poor, lest heedlessness lead them into the path of destruction, and deprive them of the Tree of Wealth. To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues. ~Baha'u'llah: Persian Hidden Words, # 49

We ask God to endow human souls with justice so that they may be fair, and may strive to provide for the comfort of all, that each member of humanity may pass his life in the utmost comfort and welfare. Then this material world will become the very paradise of the Kingdom, this elemental earth will be in a heavenly state and all the servants of God will live in the utmost joy, happiness and gladness. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Foundations of World Unity, page 43

.....voluntary sharing, the freely-chosen expending of one's substance, leadeth to society's comfort and peace. It lighteth up the world; it bestoweth honour upon humankind. ~Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 114

And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is voluntary sharing of one's property with others among mankind. This voluntary sharing is greater than equality, and consists in this, that man should not prefer himself to others, but rather should sacrifice his life and property for others. ~Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 302

But if conditions are such that some are happy and comfortable and some in misery; some are accumulating exorbitant wealth and others are in dire want -- under such a system it is impossible for man to be happy and impossible for him to win the good pleasure of God. God is kind to all. The good pleasure of God consists in the welfare of all the individual members of mankind. ~Abdu'l-Baha, Foundations of World Unity, p. 41

Simpler Variation: Use a Hula Hoop or any circular boundary and call it 'People of the Island". Or using the hoop, you can relate it the inclusiveness inspired by this quote:

Bring those who have been excluded into the circle of intimate friends. ~Abdu'l-Baha: Education, p. 293

If you feel it would be enlightening, you can start the game by 2 people preventing others from stepping inside the circle. It may get rough. Stop the game before it gets too intense. Debrief and discuss how it feels to be pushed away, excluded, shoved out, etc. Then play it with the virtue of kindness, shown through inclusiveness. Explain that being inclusive, especially with diverse people is often not easy, and takes flexibility and effort. And that is exactly what the next task will

require.....Try to get all players with both feet inside the hoop, encourage flexibility and creativity in squeezing everyone in. For example, bigger kids can place smaller ones on their backs.

The number and size of children will greatly influence what the right size for the circle should be. You can even cut one out of cloth or poster board to fit your group's size. You can call this version *Circle of Friends*.

Chair Island ##

This is a cooperative version of musical chairs—and a lot more fun. I have played this game for 30 years and with hundreds of children and it is ALWAYS a hit. Place the chairs back to back in a line and perhaps one on each end. Of course the number of chairs you use depends on the number of players. Use danceable drum music or something with a strong beat with no words. Encourage the players to dance as they encircle the chairs. You should point out what direction the kids are to go in as they move, explaining that this is the current around the island, and only sea creatures can swim against this current, i.e. go in the opposite direction. As in the traditional version, chairs will be removed throughout the game—(the number removed each round depends on how fast you want the game to end). But no person is removed for having no chair—the kids just share space and hold each other on as the chairs get fewer and fewer, yet the number of kids stays the same. It is important to have some help running a boom box and an adult or youth assigned to remove chairs. When the music stops kids will throw themselves into chairs—so the best time to remove sets of chairs is *after the music starts up* again. The helper just slips into the group and pulls 1-4 chairs out. They can't be removing chairs as the music is stopping b/c kids are diving for those seats.

Now here is the Island part, the dramatic part, which really gets their imaginations and giggles going. Some preschoolers may find it too scary. It adds to the drama if you have a shark nose &/or a shark fin on your back. (Costume shops and toy stores and catalogs carry vinyl animal noses with elastic bands. www.orientaltrading.com carries a foam shark fin for the back with arm straps. In 2009 it was Item# 34/1632) I explain that they all live on a gorgeous sunny island and I describe a classic postcard scene: Palm trees waving in the ocean breeze, clean white sand beaches, crystal blue or turquoise water, warm all year round, etc. I tell them they love living there mainly b/c they are spiritually enlightened (adjust your vocabulary to the age) and understand that they are all one family. Everybody loves everybody else and treats all the islanders, no matter how different they look, as brothers and sisters. Also, everybody spends their days fishing, swimming, snorkeling, and playing in the water around the island. But there are 2 big problems with the island: first of all, the sea level is rising, and so the island is shrinking—getting smaller by the minute. Pieces (chairs) of the island are disappearing into the ocean at a rapid rate and thus islanders' yards are sinking into the ocean and are lost forever. Chairs being removed are those parcels of land being lost to the ocean. The second problem is that out in the deep of the ocean there is a very hungry shark who would love to eat an islander. (I know sharks are not necessarily man eaters, my apologies to the environmentalists. I tell the players that I am a brain-damaged shark, and assure them that most sharks are not human eaters and that I have even swam with sharks—which is true.) Then I explain that when the music stops, that means the shark has come into the shallow water for a meal. But the island has grown so small, its hard to find a space on land to escape the shark. However, since you are all so enlightened and realize that people are more important than property, you invite islanders who have no property-land (a chair), to share with you on yours. You love each other and definitely do not want them to be eaten by the hungry shark. Any child that is not seated or on the chairs in some fashion, or on another person, is shark bait. If a child is seated they can have their feet on the floor, but all others must have their feet off the floor—otherwise they could just stand next to a chair.

During the music I encircle the group, licking my lips, rubbing my belly, exclaiming how hungry I am and how that leg or arm looks so juicy, etc. I really ham it up as I dance-swim to the music. I need an assistant for the music so the kids don't know when it's going to stop (otherwise they will all just head for the chairs as they see me going for the boom box. Before beginning the game I have taught the CD player attendant a somewhat subtle cue with my hand.)

There are always children who prefer to be pursued by the shark than to find safety on land, and I often catch them and drag them off to the deeps for dinner. Children are encouraged to rescue these rascals by leaping off their chairs and dragging them back towards land by their feet. We often have a hysterical tug of war—me pulling a child by the arms or carrying by the waist while a mob of kids pulls at the victim's legs. I always eventually let that child go and he/she is triumphantly carried back to the chairs. But if no one comes to help (and that is rare—especially b/c I reveal the rescue option while explaining the game) I carry the kid far from the chairs and pretend to eat him. Then he/she helps removes chairs. I don't want any child to be doing nothing for the rest of the game. It is important to explain ahead of time that they can't hurt the shark in any way b/c there is only one dancing brain damaged shark in the whole world, me, and point out the boundaries of "no return" –the area at which the water is too deep and the victim can't be rescued. Don't feel too sorry for these rare victims—they have plenty of offers for sharing land but prefer to show off and be pursued by the shark. You can also proclaim that once you start counting to 5 (after chasing a hot-shot kid a little too long and often) that means that they drown unless they are on the island by 5. Point out that they can't swim as long or fast as a shark, and that you don't mind dead meat as long as its fresh! (Be sensitive to how graphic you get with little ones—the drowning aspect may be too heavy for preschoolers, but older kids think its all part of the fun.)

It is *very important* that you tell the kids—better yet show them—not to hold onto the backs of chairs thereby putting their fingers between chairs. Also, not to place fingers between seats of chairs. Fingers will get smashed as kids move chairs as they maneuver their bodies. Encourage them to be flexible in how they use the chairs. Standing may be dangerous, though feet use less space than rear ends. Standing on the bars attached to the legs below the seats of the chairs and holding onto seated players works well. Also, some folding chairs have the dangerous tendency to fold up fast if the majority of the weight is placed on the back of the seat. Check this out and warn if necessary. Needless to say, the chairs need to be extremely sturdy. And the players need to feel comfortable with a lot of close physical contact—including sitting on each other's knees and laps. Adults mixed with children is always a good combination—though often it is the tiniest child that takes the seat first and then the bigger ones have to sit on them!

End the game when it becomes obvious that the chairs will break or someone will get hurt. You be the judge.

Version 2: If you do not have enough sturdy chairs— use hula hoops on the ground instead. It then becomes *Hoop Island*. Players have to have both feet inside the hoop. They can place others on their backs, hold up a stray leg of someone else, whatever it takes to make sure everybody is inside the hoops. This works really well and is just as much fun as with chairs. You can play it outside and use a drum or maracas for the music. Remove hoops one at a time right after the music starts up and just as kids start moving again. One can also use outdoor furniture cushions.

(If your group consists of kids mostly over 10 years old, the similar *People of the Mountain* game is more appropriate.)

To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues. ~Baha'u'llah: Persian Hidden Words, # 49

Be..... a haven for the distressed..... ~Baha'u'llah: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 93

Forget your own selves, and turn your eyes towards your neighbor. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 9

Blessed is he who preferreth his brother before himself. ~Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 71

(See also quotes under *People of the Mountain,* especially those relating to voluntary sharing of one's property.)

Unity Toss #*

You need two (preferably double sized/full) sheets and an inflatable or foam ball about the size of a soccer ball or larger. (The inflatable ball can be too light for the first 2 versions—though some have succeeded with it.) I assigned students in even numbered groups and asked each player to come up with a national identity. I said the ball stood for peace. I gave each group a large sheet and explained that only by working together in synchrony and unity, being aware of our inter-connectedness as members of 1 human family, would they be able to toss the ball of peace to each other using the sheet as the propeller. I told them that it would be a challenge and that at first they probably would not be able to do it, but if they persevered they probably would. I explained that the process of nations attempting to build world unity would also be extremely difficult and we would make many mistakes and have many failures but we should never give up. For all versions, kids should hold sheet with both hands, several inches up on the sheet, so they have about a 4-5 inch bundle.

Version one: I demonstrated how they had to stand around all the sides but one (the side the ball would be coming out of). They are then to lift the sheet in unison so that the back side is higher and thrust the ball to the other team who will have to move as a unit to catch it in their sheet. So that version just involved tossing it back and forth using the sheet.

Version two: The second version is harder and they could only do it once: The team encircles all 4 sides of the sheet, makes the sheet very tight, and lowers it onto the ground with the ball in the center. On the count of 3, they all have to thrust the sheet straight up so that the ball goes straight up (instead of to the side as in version one) then they need to run out from under it while the other team runs under it to catch it. Even though the 2 teams are placed very close together, the ball has to go up really high to provide time for the second team to move under it.

Version three: The third version involves being very aware of how your actions affect the whole and being a counter balance to others. A large red circle is drawn in the center of each sheet. I said this stands for a conflict zone. The goal is to keep the ball of peace rolling around and around the world (the sheet) from nation to nation, w/o letting it pass into the conflict zone. Everybody's actions have an effect, and you have to be acutely aware of how high or low and when to move your section of the sheet to prevent the ball from rolling into the center. This involves the kids having to go slowly, pay attention, and know when to raise or lower one's section. Another slightly *different metaphor:* You can also use an inflatable earth ball, and say the goal is to keep the world out of war and conflict. In real life, this can only happen when the nations are unified. Those children gathered around the sheet stand for different nations. This time the ball stands for the world, and if they are really unified, they will be able to keep the earth out of the war zone.

Tips: the tighter and more taut the sheet is, the more control kids will have. Have them hold tight, separating their grasping hands by about 2 feet.

The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 286

Be ye as the fingers of one hand, the members of one body. Thus counselleth you the Pen of Revelation, if ye be of them that believe. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 140

And yet *another metaphor for Version 3:* The ball stands for conversation, and the red circle in the center stands for gossip and backbiting, which takes discipline to avoid as conversation is passed around to others. One could call this version *Controlled Conversation.*

Stand Up

This game goes with a song called "Stand Up" from Jonathon Sprout's *Kid Power* recording. The song is about standing up to make a difference in the world and it repeats the phrase "Stand Up" 10 times throughout the song. The game can be played w/o the song, but the song is perfect for, and inspired the game. When given a choice, kids always prefer to play with the song—it really adds spirit to the whole thing. First I start out by asking kids what it means to stand up for something. Then I ask what are some issues we should stand up for (race unity, women's rights, religious freedom, the environment, etc.). In a Baha'i setting, I point out that by promoting Baha'u'llah's teachings, we are also standing up for these things b/c His teachings support and enlighten people on these issues. Next I ask what are the obstacles that get in the way of people standing up (ignorance, lack of education, illness, insecurity, apathy, materialism, violence, greed, selfishness, laziness, hopelessness, poverty, addictions, fear, etc.)

Then I ask kids to share something they would like to stand up for. In more educational or formal settings, I give them a stick-on label that looks like a medal for an award and write their chosen cause on it and ask them to wear it over their heart. This way they take it more seriously and it is kind of a way of affirming their desire to make a difference. I also tell them to wear it over their heart to remind them that it is love for others and for God that makes us care and gives us the strength to suffer, strive, struggle, and sacrifice to make the world a better place. I also ask what other virtues one uses when they stand up for something (courage, faith, detachment, determination, perseverance, generosity, justice, caring, service, etc.)

For each child who is going to stand up, you need at least 3, perhaps 4 who will be their obstacles. The child who wants to stand up for something then lies down on the floor, *hands and arms pressed against his/her sides*—he will need to get these free first. (Carpeting is nice to have. Loosely fitting pants with no belt are at risk of coming off and horribly embarrassing the victim. Dress or skirt wearers should not participate.). Then 3 or 4 kids sit down next to the prone person, *alternating sitting on the left/right of the prone person,* with their legs bent over the person from their upper chest to their ankles. (Use your best judgment when deciding # of obstacle children—a small child may need only 2 obstacles for a good struggle. And of course the size of the obstacle children are a factor too.) It is best to keep girls with girls and boys with boys unless the kids are under the age of puberty—there is a lot of physical contact. The legs represent the obstacles. The kids holding the person lying down cannot use their arms or hands. The person lying down who wants to stand up can use their hands because the hands represent the tool of the human spirit which is indefatigable and infinitely resourceful and irrepressible. *And as in real life, the power of the human spirit must first be released in order to achieve great results*, the child lying down must first release his/her hands to be able to break free. But the person trying to break free can't pinch or scratch or use any painful technique—they can only squirm and push. I tell them it is never OK to use violence or hurt people to further one's cause. The kids holding him down with their legs just can squeeze and press. And *once the stander has escaped from any obstacle, the obstacle child can't get back on.* It is very challenging—and I always point out that standing up for a cause really is full of challenge and struggle and takes a tremendous amount of determination and perseverance. This is an excellent game to teach for classes on those virtues or for when promoting UNICEF, which our NSA asks us to do every Halloween.

If using the song, I have all in their positions, they listen, and then when the appropriate words are about to be sung I go stand next to one of the prone kids, raise both my hands with my index fingers in the pointing position and then dramatically lower them when the singer says "Stand Up!" to point to the person to signal it is their time to break free.

Also, in the more formal or educational settings, I ask each child who has broken free to stand on a chair which is in a row with other chairs, or to go up on stage if there is a stage. At the end of the game all the standers are standing on this row of chairs or stage. I urge them to hold hands and raise their arms up to show victory. I also tell them that I put them up high to symbolize that they were able to "rise above" their obstacles.

Important Tip: If it becomes clear that a child will not be able to break free, or is getting upset, choose a few bystanders to help free them—Explain that this demonstrates that we often need community to support us in our efforts. Its a good idea to let the group know this is an option before playing, so obstacles don't get startled and the stander does not feel like a failure. However, it is best to choose the right size of obstacle children for the stander to begin with---a tiny child should have small obstacle-children. I tell the kids that Baha'u'llah says God never tests us beyond our abilities, and so I should not either!

Another tip: If in a large mixed age group, have the causes that Baha'is stand up for already written in attractive marker on the sticker medals, or if not using the stickers, have a list. Otherwise, when you call on the audience to raise their hand and share what they want to stand up for, kids often come up with silly things or can't think of any and the audience attention is lost as they ponder. Some have no idea to begin with and just raise their hands b/c they are eager to be the stander. Party audiences have low tolerance for discussion and long silences for contemplation! So I would just say: "Who wants to stand up for religious freedom? Who wants to stand up for universal education?" and place the appropriate sticker medal on them—(even though we don't yet know if they will succeed breaking free, they get honored for their attempt to struggle). This also makes it easier for younger ones to be the standers, since they often can't think of causes on their own. Here's a list I came up with—I am sure you can add your own: The environment (or clean water, air, the rainforests, etc.), healthcare for all, the poor and homeless, (this is easier for kids to understand than elimination of the extremes of wealth and poverty) freedom of religion, (or the oneness of religion) children's rights, racial equality, universal education, animal rights, equality of women and men, peace and justice, the hungry, the oneness of humanity, world unity, freedom of speech. Just remember, if using the song and the phrase "stand up!" to cue a person to break free, there are only 10 opportunities. (However, one can point to 2 groups at once if you have a large group).

Kids love this game and everyone always cheers during the game and applauds very enthusiastically for each success and this is so affirming for them. But a word of caution: Be careful who you do this game with. If you are working in a location with kids who have had a rough life—know that it can really open wounds if a child has been held down and abused and then he/she is placed in the similar situation of being held down for the game. On the other hand it can be tremendously cathartic and healing to break free. Know your group.

It behooveth man to show forth that which will benefit mankind.
~Baha'u'llah: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 49

Do not busy yourselves in your own concerns; let your thoughts be fixed upon that which will rehabilitate the fortunes of mankind and sanctify the hearts and souls of men.
~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, pages 93-94

Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression.
~Baha'u'llah: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 93

The betterment of the world can be accomplished through pure and goodly deeds.....
~Baha'u'llah: A Chaste and Holy Life, page 62

Assist the world of humanity as much as possible. Be the source of consolation to every sad one, assist every weak one.....~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 453

Happy the soul that shall forget his own good, and like the chosen ones of God, vie with his fellows in service to the good of all.....~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Secret of Divine Civilization, page 116

And 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. Is any larger bounty conceivable than this, that an individual, looking within himself, should find that by the confirming grace of God he has become the cause of peace and well-being, of happiness and advantage to his fellow men? No, by the one true God, there is no greater bliss, no more complete delight.
~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Secret of Divine Civilization, pgs. 2-3

How excellent, how honorable is man if he arises to fulfil his responsibilities; how wretched and contemptible, if he shuts his eyes to the welfare of society and wastes his precious life in pursuing his

own selfish interests and personal advantages..... And this is man's uttermost wretchedness: that he should live inert, apathetic, dull, involved only with his own base appetites.
~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Secret of Divine Civilization, page 4

World Rescue
In this game I told the kids they each represented a nation. Then I gave each student a yard stick and said this represents your government. I put them in two equal teams of 4 (3-5 can also work). I said their goal was to rescue the world from pollution, violence, and war. In order to do this they must work together. Each team got an earth ball. (I used 2 balls and 2 teams simply so more children could play at the same time). The goal was to carry the earth ball using only the sticks as support. Students had to learn how to put relatively equal pressure on all sides and place at least 2 sticks under the ball and move in synchrony. Each team came up with their own techniques and structures. They could use both hands but not touch the ball or another's stick with their hands, nor use their bodies as support. I put on a monster mask and for the 1st round crawled after them. I, of course, symbolized war, pollution, and violence and the goal was to get across the yard to the safety zone (world unity) marked by cones or a banner suggesting peace or world unity themes, w/o me touching their earth ball. If I touched it, that meant that a war, fighting or environmental disaster took place. If the ball was dropped, this signified disunity, and that round was considered a loss too. In the 2nd round, when they were faster and more experienced, I jumped after them with 2 feet held together in a cloth loop. You can make it harder by allowing kids to hold their stick with 1 hand only. This game can easily be played indoors as well.

The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 286

Variation: For the 3rd round, we tried a different version—Each team got in a circle facing outward and I put the earth inside and their backs held it in place. Again they had to move in synchrony to the safety zone while I pursued them by jumping with 2 feet held together in a cloth loop.

For a class on the role of women in supporting and promoting world peace, I represented only war. Also, each team had to have at least the same number of females as males, and I appointed a female leader of each group—who had the job of directing and advising the group and also participating.

Strive that the ideal of international peace may become realized through the efforts of womankind, for man is more inclined to war than woman, and a real evidence of woman's superiority will be her service and efficiency in the establishment of universal peace.
~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 284

Spirituality VS Materialism ##
This is a game about how the forces of materialism and the forces of spirituality both can impact souls: I explained that materialism is one of the most potent forces in this world which weaken spirituality in humans. It can cause people to totally neglect and ignore their spiritual needs and goals. People can become so focused on obtaining material status and things that it consumes all their energy and thought, and they end up in a cycle of consumption that never brings them true happiness. People are often misled by advertising to believe that owning a certain product will bring them joy and fulfillment, only to find out that it is really temporary and shallow. The Baha'i Writings point out that humanity is "submerged in a sea of materialism". Here are some quotes which inspired this game. Just share and discuss a few of them, ---or ½ of them before and ½ of them after the game.

A new life is, in this age, stirring within all the peoples of the earth; and yet none hath discovered its cause or perceived its motive. Consider the peoples of the West. Witness how, in their pursuit of that which is vain and trivial, they have sacrificed, and are still sacrificing, countless lives for the sake of its establishment and promotion. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 196

O YE THAT PRIDE YOURSELVES ON MORTAL RICHES! Know ye in truth that wealth is a mighty barrier between the seeker and his desire, the lover and his beloved. The rich, but for a few, shall in no wise attain the court of His presence nor enter the city of content and resignation. Well is it then with him, who, being rich, is not hindered by his riches from the eternal kingdom, nor deprived by them of imperishable dominion. By the Most Great Name! The splendor of such a wealthy man shall illuminate the dwellers of heaven even as the sun enlightens the people of the earth! ~Baha'u'llah: Persian Hidden Words, # 53

Thou dost wish for gold and I desire thy freedom from it. Thou thinkest thyself rich in its possession, and I recognize thy wealth in thy sanctity therefrom. By My life! This is My knowledge, and that is thy fancy; how can My way accord with thine? ~Baha'u'llah: Arabic Hidden Words, # 56

For material forces have attacked mankind. The world of humanity is submerged in a sea of materialism. ~`Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 12

Consider to what a remarkable extent the spirituality of people has been overcome by materialism so that spiritual susceptibility seems to have vanished, divine civilization become decadent, and guidance and knowledge of God no longer remain. All are submerged in the sea of materialism. ~`Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 221

Observe how darkness has overspread the world. In every corner of the earth there is strife, discord and warfare of some kind. Mankind is submerged in the sea of materialism and occupied with the affairs of this world. They have no thought beyond earthly possessions and manifest no desire save the passions of this fleeting, mortal existence. Their utmost purpose is the attainment of material livelihood, physical comforts and worldly enjoyments such as constitute the happiness of the animal world rather than the world of man.

The honor of man is through the attainment of the knowledge of God; his happiness is from the love of God; his joy is in the glad tidings of God; his greatness is dependent upon his servitude to God. ~`Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 335

How to attain spirituality is, indeed, a question to which every young man and woman must sooner or later try to find a satisfactory answer. It is precisely because no such satisfactory reply has been given or found, that modern youth finds itself bewildered, and is being consequently carried away by the materialistic forces that are so powerfully undermining the foundation of man's moral and spiritual life.

Indeed, the chief reason for the evils now rampant in society is a lack of spirituality. The materialistic civilization of our age has so much absorbed the energy and interest of mankind, that people in general no longer feel the necessity of raising themselves above the forces and conditions of their daily material existence. There is not sufficient demand for things that we should call spiritual to differentiate them from the needs and requirements of our physical existence. The universal crisis affecting mankind is, therefore, essentially spiritual in its causes. The spirit of the age, taken on the whole, is irreligious. Man's outlook upon life is too crude and materialistic to enable him to elevate himself into the higher realms of the spirit. ~Shoghi Effendi, Directives of the Guardian, page 86

After sharing some of the quotes above, I reiterated how materialism can infect us and make us spiritually "sick" by making us care only about material things. But I also pointed out that the spiritual forces are also at work in the world, and that we can be instruments of the Holy Spirit and illumine others by our actions and our own spiritual strengths:

Wouldst thou seek the grace of the Holy Spirit, enter into fellowship with the righteous, for he hath drunk the cup of eternal life at the hands of the immortal Cup-bearer and even as the true morn doth quicken and illumine the hearts of the dead. ~Baha'u'llah: Persian Hidden Words, # 58

.....fellowship with the righteous cleanseth the rust from off the heart.
~Baha'u'llah: Persian Hidden Words, # 56

Let the love and light of the Kingdom radiate through you until all who look upon you shall be illumined by its reflection. Be as stars, brilliant and sparkling in the loftiness of their heavenly station.~`Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 8

I pray that God in His mercy may illumine your hearts and souls with His glorious Light, then shall each one of you shine as a radiant star in the dark places of the world. ~`Abdu'l-Baha: Paris Talks, page 70

Bestow upon us the breath of the Holy Spirit, so that we may be assisted in Thy service and, like unto brilliant stars, shine in these regions with the light of Thy guidance. ~`Abdu'l-Baha: Tablets of the Divine Plan, page 65

Then I assigned one child to be a Baha'i teacher (for mixed groups or non-Baha'i settings you should use the label "spiritual teacher", "the righteous" or "spiritualist"), and the other to be the materialist, representing materialism. The Baha'i/spiritualist will try to "illumine" as many others as possible, and the materialist will try to "infect" as many others as possible. The spiritualist wears a gold star around his/her neck, and the materialist wears a necklace with a bill of play money around his/her's. (I put clear contact paper on $5 play bills, and used a hole punch for the necklace. The gold stars were cardboard and already had holes.) I again explained that these are the 2 major forces at work in the world today and because there are more people infected with materialism than illumined with spirituality, we have a very sick world indeed. But once the world has more people illumined with spirituality than infected with materialism, then the world will begin to heal and improve. This is the job of a spiritual teacher--to assist in the illumination of others while they themselves work on their own spirituality and virtues. I asked the kids to explain why I chose a gold star to represent the spiritual teacher and they had no trouble figuring out that it had to do with illumination and spiritual radiance. I also pointed out that spiritual people shine in the darkness, like stars, and the darkness is materialism, war, hatred, greed, etc.

The game is played thus: The spiritual teacher and the materialist each get one necklace of their kind, in addition to the one around their own neck, i.e. the spiritualist gets a star necklace, the materialist gets a paper bill necklace. They hide their heads and count to 50. The other children hide, representing uninfected and unillumined souls. At the end of the count, they both dash off to find souls. If a spiritualist finds you first, they put their extra necklace around your neck, and if a materialist finds you first, they put their extra necklace around your neck. Then each person, both the original spiritualist/materialist and the ones they find, must rush back to home base to get another necklace before they can search for any one else. In other words, you may never go looking for any one unless you have a necklace to give them besides your own, and every time you find someone and place a necklace on their neck, you have to go back to get another necklace. The game moves quickly, of course, because each person found then also becomes a seeker to illumine or infect, depending on who found them. The game ends when all children are found, and we determine whether the world was ruined or saved, depending on whether there were more spiritualists or more materialists. The kids really enjoyed this game, so I promised to let them play it next week too. You can have the rule that if found you are caught and can't run, or you can allow children to try to escape the hunters. It's also a good idea to advise the hiders that they can change hiding places if other hiders who have been found saw where they hid. Otherwise, once the former hiders become hunters, they will go directly after the hiders they saw hiding.

Unity Lift ##

This game is best played with little kids. A brave adult or youth lies down on the ground. If female, she should not be wearing a dress. You ask kids for a volunteer who is very strong. Ask her to carry (not drag) the adult across the room. She will not be able to do it. Then ask for another child to help her. Then another, up to 4 or 5 kids. Frequently remind them that they must lift off the ground and carry. Then invite the whole group to help. They should be able to carry if they position themselves well. I have never been dropped yet. It is reassuring to have another adult in the room who can guard your head, though. Make sure you tell them not to use your hair! Point out how much more powerful and strong they are as a group working together than alone. If the kids are bigger, just 2-4 of them will be able to carry the adult and the point will not be well made.

No power can exist except through unity. ~Baha'u'llah: Consultation, page 93

Log Roll ## *

Children all lie down on their stomachs in a row, preferably on carpet. They should leave about 9-12 inches between each other and their arms should be above them, pointed as if in a dive. There needs to be plenty of space at the end of the line b/c all bodies will be moving several feet. They are the rollers. One child gets to "ride"—He/she is the rider or cargo. That child lays down across the row of bodies, approximately along the lower backs. (Since kids come in different sizes, it is best to advise them to align themselves with lower backs next to each other, otherwise, the rider will be riding buttocks or shoulders, etc.) The rider needs to remain straight and stiff so their elbows and knees are not sticking the rollers. He/she should also be in the dive position with hands and arms straight out in front. When you give the cue, the first child begins to roll, and as soon as the second child feels the space between them narrow, he/she begins to roll, and so on down the line. They all keep rolling over and over until the cargo/rider is propelled off the last body. Synchrony and unity are important b/c otherwise you get a body clog or a huge gap which the rider can fall into. They need to practice when to roll—when you give the signal to start, kids at the end of the line should not begin until the earlier rollers reach them b/c

they will go faster with no cargo to transport and thus a large gap will be produced by the time the cargo/rider reaches them. When the rider is done, he/she becomes a roller at the end of the line, and the first roller then gets to ride.

Is there a possible Baha'i metaphor here? Community support—carrying/supporting the new member until he/she then becomes an active member of the community? Also, this game is a bit too intimate for mixed sex groups after puberty.

Twisting Tubes ##
You will need connecting tubes for this game. The ones I used consisted of 4 *Tuba Ruba* (by Milton Bradley) games combined. If you can't find this game in a toy store, try a hardware store. If you can't find tubes that disconnect and re-connect, just buy two very long (like 25 feet) flexible tubes used in construction. This game can be played in competition between 2 teams or just with one group. If competing, I always tell my students that being first is not praiseworthy or important—unless you are striving to be first to be virtuous and serve God and others. You can begin by dumping all the tubes in a pile and (if your tubes are in connectable segments) having 2 teams race to create one long tube consisting of 19 or so segments, (alternating clear and colored tubes so that a marble rolling through can be spotted more often.) When each team had completed their one long giant tube with equal number of segments, we played 3 versions of a cooperative-race. The kids really had to work together in unity to win, but it also had the competitive nature of a race. Each version got progressively harder. The goal was the same for all 3 versions: Be the first team to get your marble from one end to the other and out.

The marble can represent one of 2 things, depending on what metaphor you want to use: it can be God's love, and the tubes, people. I explained that passing God's love onto others is not always easy, especially if you are tired, frustrated, or find someone to be irritating, etc. I also explained that God's love does not flow where there is disunity—no one can feel His love when there are hurt feelings or anger, disunity, etc. And in the game, the marble (God's love) really does not flow unless the team is really unified! I also will ask each child to give a concrete example of how they can pass God's love onto others. Using a red permanent marker, you can even draw a heart on each marble to represent love.

The second thing the marble can be is the pith of self, and the tubes are people. We talked about the meaning of "pith" and how it is really hard to get the pith of our selves out of the way so God's love can flow through us to others. It is a daily struggle. It goes with a prayer written by a famous Baha'i that goes like this*: "O God, make me as hollow as a reed from which the pith of self hath been blown, that I may become a clear channel through which Thy love may flow to others."* For this game, the marble was the pith of self. The 3 versions are as follows:

1.) The teams lay their one long tube on the ground. At the exact same moment, I drop a marble down each tube. Kids grab the tube and using timing and gravity, try to get the marble to the other end and out as quickly as possible.

2.) The game is exactly the same but children may not use their hands at all, only elbows, teeth, wrists, feet, ankles, legs, etc.

3.) Each team member wraps the tube one complete loop around any part of their body—torso, neck, arm, leg, or ankle, and may use their hands to move the marble, but may not unwrap themselves to do it. Those next to the person struggling with the pith of self (the marble), may help their other team member get the marble around their looped parts, but others in the loop may not leave their positions to assist.

.....love God by loving His servants.... ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Secret of Divine Civilization, page 40

Technology VS Teachers #
We played several versions of the same game which were meant to be played outside, but it was sleeting. For the first game, I explained that although technology is good and it will assist in uniting the world, if people have technology without spiritual guidance and spiritual principles, it can have a negative influence and/or increase the harmful effects of immorality. I asked for examples of how people can use/abuse technology: people using cell phones to make drug deals, addiction to computer games, weapon making, etc.

So I assigned some kids to be pure souls on an isolated island. Then we had 4 teams of three. Two of each team kneeled down and I put a large pillow across their 2 backs. Two of the teams were the spiritual traveling teachers or pioneers. The other two teams represented technology and they each wore a computer diskette hung around their necks with a wire necklace. Then I put the smallest of the three on top of each pair to ride like a horse. This child represented hardships. Spiritual traveling teachers face hardships (such as tests and difficulties, detachment, physical hardships, missing one's home, etc.) and the implementation of technology does too---such as lack of electricity, poverty, language barriers, etc. The goal was to have the teachers reach the island of pure souls and touch each one of the souls before

technology does, so that once technology was in place, it would be used to benefit humanity. So the two teams raced each other across my hard living room floor. It was a rather short and cramped race due to being indoors, but it was still really fun. We switched teams and riders a lot, but some of the bigger kids had to always be on their knees or souls on the island b/c there was no way the younger kids could support them on their backs. The teams really had to work in synchrony, (remember, those being ridden are in pairs) otherwise the pillow and rider fell off.

Variations: Same concept but kids walked quickly, and carried their "hardship" by the ankles and hands. And finally, teams carried their hardship by each person hooking an arm under the legs of a seated child, who held on by wrapping his/her arms around the shoulders of the carriers. The kids really enjoyed all these races very much.

These quotes inspired the above game, and the first one was discussed with the students:

.....material progress alone does not tend to uplift man. On the contrary, the more he becomes immersed in material progress, the more does his spirituality become obscured.
~Abdu'l-Baha: Paris Talks, page 107

No matter how far the material world advances, it cannot establish the happiness of mankind. Only when material and spiritual civilization are linked and coordinated will happiness be assured. Then material civilization will not contribute its energies to the forces of evil in destroying the oneness of humanity.... ~`Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 109

All this is the outcome of material civilization; therefore, although material advancement furthers good purposes in life, at the same time it serves evil ends. The divine civilization is good because it cultivates morals. ~`Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 109

*....until material achievements, physical accomplishments and human virtues are reinforced by spiritual perfections, luminous qualities and characteristics of mercy, no fruit or result shall issue therefrom, nor will the happiness of the world of humanity, which is the ultimate aim, be attained. For although, on the one hand, material achievements and the development of the physical world produce prosperity, which exquisitely manifests its intended aims, on the other hand dangers, severe calamities and violent afflictions are imminent..... Progress and barbarism go hand in hand, unless material civilization be confirmed by Divine Guidance,.....by godly virtues, and be reinforced by spiritual conduct, by the ideals of the Kingdom.....*Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, pgs. 283-284

Beamo Toss (Share the Teachings) #
The next game we played was with 2 new toys I acquired for the class. They are called Beamos and they are like giant frizbees, with foam edges, stretchy cloth, and a large hole in the middle. I explained that these Beamos represent the Baha'i teachings, especially unity in diversity, since they are made of several different colored cloth segments sewn together. They float quite nicely and slowly through the air. Anyway, kids practiced for awhile tossing them and diving into their holes. Then I lined them up in two lines with each child spread 10-20 feet apart. (Distance depends on age level). The goal was to be the first team to get the Beamo, the Baha'i teachings, to everybody in their line. The first child would pass and the second would try to catch it by pointing their hands as if in a dive and letting it fall onto them like a ring toss. Then they would step out of it and toss it to the next person in line. If a person could not enter through the hole, which represented being enveloped in the teachings, they had to toss it back to the person who threw it to them and try again. You can make the game easier by allowing kids two ways to recieve the Beamo—the way described above, or if that is too hard, they can catch the Beamo with their hands and then placing it over their heads and wiggling through it.

Teach ye the Cause of God, O people of Baha, for God hath prescribed unto every one the duty of proclaiming His Message, and regardeth it as the most meritorious of all deeds.
~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 278

Teach the Cause! Teach! Teach! Convey the Message! Awaken the souls!
~`Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i Meetings and the 19 Day Feast, page 9

Variation: I had the kids stand in a spread out group far back from me, and I explained that again, the Beamos represented Baha'u'llah's teachings. The goal was to get "deep inside" these "teachings" by leaping into the Beamo and go through it--which is feasible b/c of the big holes. If one caught and was enveloped by the Beamo, they became a

teacher and got to toss it to others. Kids were pretty good about not hogging and stealing the Beamo if it did not come directly to them. The kids really enjoyed learning to throw and catch these unique toys.

For a unit on life after death, one could use the following quote:

It is better to guide one soul than to possess all that is on earth, for as long as that guided soul is under the shadow of the Tree of Divine Unity, he and the one who hath guided him will both be recipients of God's tender mercy, whereas possession of earthly things will cease at the time of death. ~The Bab: Selections from the Writings of The Bab, page 77

Beamo Toss (Pass the Message) #
This game is played almost exactly like the above except if dropped, the Beamo would go back to the beginning of the line, rather than to just the person who threw it to you. And the metaphor is slightly changed to fit the theme of the class: Since we were studying how the early followers of The Bab were to spread the message that He had come, I explained that for this game the Beamos represent that message—which is their duty to pass on to others so they can grasp it. Then I lined them up in two lines and the goal was to be the first team to get the Beamo, the message, to everybody in their line, down to the last person. The first child would pass and the second would try to catch it by pointing their hands as if in a dive and letting it fall onto them like a ring toss. Then they would step out of it and toss it to the next person in line. If a child could not catch and go through it, it was sent directly back to the beginning of the line. As they tossed it they were to say loudly: "He has come!!!" We played several times, reversing the direction of the tossing.

Variation: Get the Message
My assistant and I stood on our deck and asked the kids to scatter into the open space in the commons, facing us. The Beamos represent the message that a new Messenger has come. We then threw the giant frizbee cloth Beamos to them, shouting "He has come!", and encouraged the students to catch them. When one had caught 2 (b/c 2 new Messengers have come) they were allowed to have free play. Another fun version is to ask that the students dive into the center hole it as individuals instead of catching it. Kids can throw the Beamos back to us for more "spreading of the message". Often, students will ask to be the throwers, especially if they have already caught several times. This only works if they can do it well—otherwise the catchers get frustrated.

If there is a large group, and players are not being dismissed after catching twice, some of the smaller or younger ones may struggle to make contact with the Beamo, and bigger more athletic types tend to dominate. To make sure that everyone "gets the message", the throwers can call out names and try their best to get the Beamo directly to them.

Beamo Toss (Peace is Coming) #
This is played just like the games above, but the message was changed to address the anxiety the children felt about the September 11 tragedy and the war in Afghanistan. The message this time is "Peace is coming!" I explained how it is very clear in Baha'u'llah's Writings that world peace and world unity will be achieved. But it is equally clear that it will be a long, evolutionary process. This process is quickened by suffering and tragedy b/c people become more open to spiritual guidance when they are troubled. The Baha'i Writings also explain that the twin processes of unification and disintegration of civilization are going on simultaneously. Baha'u'llah repeatedly describes how the old world order is being rolled up, how the foundations of society are being shaken and dismantled, clearing the way for divine civilization—which is gradually developing every day through the spiritual power released by His new Revelation... I gave the kids the analogy of how if you are going to build a new, beautiful house, the old one must be knocked down and cleared away on the land first. This is the game: I explained that these Beamos represent the message that peace is coming—a message of hope that inspires and empowers people, protects them from depression, resignation, apathy and withdrawal. I said that the Baha'is believe this b/c it is promised so clearly in our sacred scriptures—and Baha'u'llah has provided the teachings and means by which to create peace. So it is our duty to pass this information onto others to give them hope and the tools to create peace. Play it as the versions above and as the Beamo is tossed, say loudly: "Peace is coming!!"

Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the "Most Great Peace" shall come.... ~Baha'u'llah: Peace, page 157

Beamo Toss (Food Distribution) #
This game is played exactly like the versions above, but is more compatible with public school and non-religious settings. I lined them up in two lines with each child spread 10-20 feet apart. (Distance depends on age level). Each person represents a nation (or they can represent a tribe) trying to get food relief to a population in danger of starvation. The

Beamo is the food, and all must work together to get the food to the last person who represents the hungry population. Both teams compete to get the food relief to their hungry "population" as fast as possible. Thus, the goal was to be the first team to get the Beamo to the last person in line. The first child would pass and the second would try to catch it and so on. If a person missed, they had to toss it back to the person who threw it to them and try again. You can make it even harder by requiring that if missed, the Beamo has to be tossed back to the first person in line to start all over.

Happy the soul that shall forget his own good, and..... vie with his fellows in service to the good of all.....~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Secret of Divine Civilization, page 116

You can point out all the news lately about how UNICEF or UN food convoys rely very heavily on the cooperation of antagonistic tribes and nations to get relief through to the people—if those involved in the transportation fight with others who are also on the route, the hungry people will perish.

Each one of you must have great consideration for the poor and render them assistance. Organize in an effort to help them and prevent increase of poverty. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 216

Loving Hands ###
(Variation can be done with less than 8 kids)

This game goes great with Baha'is Jean Marks and Susan Engle's "Loving Hands" song from their recording of the same name. The game is geared more toward 3-6 year olds, but can be played with older groups if one adjusts the description accordingly. I begin by talking about how its great to feel love and caring and to tell others you love them, but its really more important to show love with actions.

Let deeds, not words, be your adorning. ~Baha'u'llah: Persian Hidden Words, # 5

If you had a choice between a parent who told you constantly that they loved you, but never did anything for you, or a parent who rarely said they loved you but did things for you all the time, which one would you believe or want more? Its best to have parents who show they love you through actions and tell you they love you, but "actions speak louder than words." Our hands are the perfect tools to show our love. How many of you have ever painted with a paintbrush? The paintbrush is a tool to show our thoughts and pictures inside our heads. Our hands are one of the tools to show what's inside our hearts. God has given us hands as tools to do His will and we should use them in ways that are pleasing to Him. I explained that we can use our hands to bring sadness or happiness to others: For example, we can use our hands to grab something away from someone, or we can use our hands to give a gift or loving touch. So for this game, you are going to show love with hands.

Thine hand is a symbol of My loving-kindness, hinder it not from holding fast unto My guarded and hidden Tablets.... ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 322

Love manifests its reality in deeds, not only in words - these alone are without effect. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Paris Talks, page 35

*Love ye all religions and all races with a love that is true and sincere and show that love through deeds..... ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 69

The number of players will determine how many sets of hands you need to make. If there are 20 children there will be 5 sets. The hands are different skin colors and are available in school supply stores and catalogs. They come in different sizes, but for little kids, I suggest using the adult life size. Each set will have four hands. On each hand is a heart and on each heart is one of the letters from the word "LOVE". A set is complete when there are 4 hands of different colors which spell "LOVE." The hands should be laminated or protected with clear contact paper. Each team groups together at *opposite* ends of the room (or yard) around a 11x17 piece of cardboard which spells the word "LOVE" on it. (If you use capitals on the hands then use capitals on the cardboard. Since players in this game are generally not strong readers, they will use this sign to match the letters to make sure they are spelling the word love.) Explain that when people of different colors get together to show love its especially beautiful and pleasing to God and that is why the goal of this game is for every team to have a set of different colored hands which spell "LOVE".

To begin the game, (the teams are standing next to their own cardboard sign) each team member is given a hand, and make sure that within each team there are hands of the same color and same letters. When you say "GO!" they all dash to the center of the room (or yard) and start trading. (For smaller rooms, you can make this a low activity game by insisting

that everyone walks). They will carry hands back and forth from their base (the piece of cardboard) until they have a complete diverse set which spells love. Kids may carry only one hand at a time. As in the *Unity Dolls* game, teams may need to continue trading even if their set is complete to enable all teams to succeed. Preschoolers find this game very challenging—the idea of trading and consulting with each other so that they are not bringing back the same letters and colors to their home base is quite difficult.

Note: I once made the mistake of randomly handing out hands to a group of 20 kids, (5 teams). I had made 28 hands, enough for 7 teams and just mixed and distributed the first 20 from the pile. But b/c I had not created 5 eligible sets prior to distributing them by sorting by color and letter, the 20 I had chosen did not have the right number of letters and colors and only 3 teams out of the 5 could complete the sets. Thus, always pre-select the correct groups of hands before mixing them up and distributing them, unless you have the exact number of players as original hands made.

For a unit on life after death, one could emphasize that our hands were created to show love, and the more love we have shown with our hands, the happier we will be upon our deaths. Employ the following quote and play the same game:

It is clear and evident that all men shall, after their physical death, estimate the worth of their deeds, and realize all that their hands have wrought. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 171

Variation 1: Instead of handing out the hands, hide them throughout several rooms, in one large room, or outside. They should be visible, but not extremely obvious. Kids in teams of 1-4 place their cardboard signs in their chosen location in the playing area. That is their home base. Then they race to find the right combination of 4 hands. Team members can choose to pick up every one they find, regardless of whether they need that color or letter, and use it to trade with other teams. They can pick up and carry only one at a time however. The team members must call frequent meetings to see who has what.

Variation 2: Hands are hidden and cardboard signs placed, as described in Variation 1. Teams have 2-4 members. Team members must hold hands while searching. They search only as a group. If they find a color or letter they do not need, they leave it alone. Because they are together, they all know what colors and letters they already have.

Puzzle Pieces I ##

For this game I have cut into 4 straight segments various posters and pages from Tablet of the Heart –God and Me--Memory Verses Selected from the Writings and Talks of Abdu'l-Baha compiled by Leslie Lundberg, illustrated by Terry Ostovar. The illustrations are in color or black and white. And both the poster pictures and the book's contain messages that promote unity and spirituality. The posters came from a school supply store. Those segments of course are much bigger than the book's. To make the puzzles more sturdy, glue them onto cardstock or poster board before cutting them. They should be laminated after they are cut (if you laminate then cut, the edges are more likely to peel).

This version is more appropriate than version II (See Low Activity Games) if kids do not need to get to know each other—but it does have some competition in it. You divide the group into 2 teams—or if it is a huge group, more teams are fine. Have an even number of puzzles. Take one segment from each puzzle. For playing with 2 teams, each group gets one segment from ½ the puzzles. So if you are using 10 puzzles, each group gets 5 segments, one from each of their 5 puzzles. Make sure that each groups' segments do not belong to segments that the other group has. Then take the remaining segments of the 10 puzzles, mix them up, place them face down in the center of the gym or long room, or in the grass. Each team is standing at the opposite ends of the room (or yard), where their 5 segments are lying face up on the floor. When you say "GO!" team members race towards the center and flip over segments attempting to locate ones that go with their puzzles. All team members work on any puzzle on their team. Players must flip back face down unwanted segments. The rule is that each team member may carry only one segment at a time back to match up with one of their original segments. They must also promptly return to the center any pieces taken to their side by mistake—those which do not match any of their puzzles. Team members need to communicate and help each other. And to keep much older kids from dominating, you can make the rule that once you have carried a piece, you can't do it again—but you can help look, then ask another team member to carry it back who has not done so yet. The first team to get all their puzzles complete wins. Discuss the messages on the puzzles if the setting and time allow it.

This is a competitive game so beware of engendering disunity. Emphasize that boasting about winning is certainly not what Abdu'l-Baha would do! Also, especially if there are little ones playing and there are not enough segments for everyone to get to carry one segment back to the team's home base, there is the risk that a little one will get in a huff b/c they did not get a chance to carry. You can also make a rule that only children under a certain age get to be carriers—the older ones are finders and help place the segments. If there are many more segments than children, then let everyone carry back one segment at a time as many times as it takes to get all the puzzles done.

Also, it sometimes happens that one team does not immediately return a non-matching piece or erroneously places it w/in a set. Then other members think that it is one of their original segments and start putting together pieces that do not belong to their original puzzles, thereby preventing the other team from completing their puzzle. Neither team can complete it b/c each team is holding onto some of the same puzzle. This problem is solved by putting a distinctive bright sticker on the original segments belonging to *only one* of the teams. *The stickers go only on the first segments handed out at the beginning, not all the segments belonging to their puzzles.* Otherwise it would be too easy, the team would just select all the segments with a sticker on it, and the other team would carry back all the segments with no sticker on them. Thus, as the puzzles become more complete, if one of them does not contain one segment with a sticker, they know they have the other teams' segments and must promptly return them. Sometimes someone on the team w/o a sticker on their original segment accidentally returns one of the original segments to the center pile thinking it a stray non matching segment. Then they end up putting together 1 less puzzle than the other team. This can be remedied by placing a sticker of a different color than the other team's on each of their original segments.

Planet Pass I, II, III ## *

You need a ball for this—preferably inflatable, beach ball size. I call it Planet Pass b/c my ball is an "earth ball" and has the continents and oceans on it—and the countries are not shown—it looks like what astronauts would see from space. A great song to play during this game is Raffi's "Big Beautiful Planet" from his *Rise and Shine* recording. You can get earth balls from some school supply stores, but often they show the geo-political divisions and are not nearly as beautiful. Try the web-site in the resources guide. I explain that we all have the duty to care for, respect, and protect our earth b/c we are going to pass this precious planet onto the next generation . (Little ones do not understand the concept of generation. You can explain it or just not use this metaphor). So I explain that each person in the game represents a generation, and each are going to do the best they can to pass the planet on w/o dropping it—which would represent not being careful with it.

There are many versions of this game. If you feel that a little competition would be more enticing and not disunifying, you can take each version and create 2 teams and turn it into a race. If the ball is dropped or hands are used, it goes back to the beginning. Encourage kids to communicate with each other to inform when they have a good grip.

Version one: Everybody sits down (girls with skirts or dresses can't do this one) in a line, as you would on a toboggan sled. Then kids scoot a little to create some distance from each other and they lay on their backs and put their feet and legs up in the air. The teacher places the ball in between the feet of the first person in line, and the goal is to pass the ball all the way down the line to the last person just using the feet. One always passes to the person behind them and they rock on their back (no touching the ball with hands) and try to place the ball between the feet of the person behind them. If you want to continue and go the opposite direction, just have everybody rotate direction (remember the ball goes to the person behind you) and start with the person who was originally last.

Version Two: Kids stand in a line, and the goal is simply to pass the ball down the line w/o dropping it and w/o using hands and forearms. A lot of squeezing and contorting happens. Everybody helps move the ball—if 2 people next to each other are about to lose it, of course other people near them in line can use their bodies to support and guide the ball. People can also stand in a circle and do the same thing.

Version Three: Players form 2 circles. One is inside the other. The inside circle will thus need to be slightly smaller in number. The inside circle players face outward, the outside circle's players face inward—so the players in each circle are facing the players in the other circle. Place the ball between 2 people in the 2 different circles. The goal is to have the ball do one complete rotation around and between the two circles. Players may not use hands or forearms. One way they can move the ball is to completely rotate their bodies between members of the other circle and this has the effect of moving the ball along.

Cooperative Juggle ##*

This game is for older kids—they need to be at least 11. Get 6 tennis balls and a permanent marker. On one ball write a big "W" and this stands for work. On another write "R" and this stands for recreation. On another write "E" for education, then "F" for family, "S/E" for social--emotional, and "P" for personal. Then get a slightly larger and attractive, colorful ball and write "S" for spiritual. On this ball I wrote around the circumference the following words: prayer, deepening, obedience, sacrifice, service, teaching. For use with a non-Baha'i group you could write: Acts of kindness, building unity, service, promoting justice, caring for others, virtue development, and even prayer, (if not a public school).

You need at least 10 kids to play with these 7 balls or the movement will go too fast. Explain to the players that one of the biggest challenges in life is to be able to balance all the important aspects of their lives, and not neglect or "drop the ball" in any one area. It can often be a juggling act and it takes a lot of focus and concentration. You will definitely have

problems if you focus on other's faults and mistakes and not keep your attention on your own development. But if someone near and dear to us is having trouble, we may have to alter the pace or temporarily set aside one aspect of our lives to care for them. And the game shows this too. The most important aspect of all is the spiritual one.

So we all stand in a circle. I give the spiritual ball to someone and they toss it (emphasize slowly and underhand) to someone across from them. The person who catches it then tosses it to someone a good distance away (it does not work to toss it to players real close) and so on until every one has had a chance to catch the ball and it goes back to the first tosser. This pattern will be the only pattern used throughout the game with all the balls—in other words, you always receive any ball from the same person, and you always toss it to the same person. Then a second ball is introduced, and it begins to travel the same route as the spiritual ball, a few seconds behind. Players are exhorted to only focus on the person who tosses to them and the one they are tossing to. If they start to lose concentration and look at others or watch others who drop theirs, a ball will inevitably be tossed to them for which they are unprepared and they will miss it. This is the "mind your own business" aspect of the game and it goes nicely with the following quote from Shoghi Effendi:

Each of us is responsible for one life only, and that is our own. Each of us is immeasurably far from being "perfect as our heavenly father is perfect" and the task of perfecting our own life and character is one that requires all our attention, our will-power and energy. If we allow our attention and energy to be taken up in efforts to keep others right and remedy their faults, we are wasting precious time. We are like ploughmen each of whom has his team to manage and his plough to direct, and in order to keep his furrow straight he must keep his eye on his goal and concentrate on his own task. If he looks to this side and that to see how Tom and Harry are getting on and to criticize their ploughing, then his own furrow will assuredly become crooked. ~Shoghi Effendi: Living the Life, pages 3-4

Anyway, as each new ball is introduced, it gets harder and harder to keep all the balls flowing. If one is dropped, a person says "HOLD UP" and everyone freezes movement until the ball is retrieved and put back into play—otherwise, all the balls would end up falling as the person who is retrieving the dropped ball is not in position or ready. This correlates to the fact that sometimes we have to be flexible and alter our routines to assist others in need or trouble. The game can be really fun and intense. It is important to emphasize that the balls should be tossed underhand, slowly, and to communicate with your receiver if you see they are distracted. (See *Keep the Ball Rolling* for younger kid's version of this game.) One can also use bean bags instead of balls. They are easier to catch.

In the Dark

First I asked the students what might happen if they went on a walk through an unknown woods at night w/o a flashlight? They enjoyed thinking up a host of calamities such as: falling in a hole, getting lost, poked with a branch, running into a spider web, tripping over a log, stepping in bear poop, falling in a river, bumping into a tree, falling off a cliff, etc. Then we discussed how when we are born, we begin our journey of life. Like a light-less traveler, we are ignorant and unwise, we are in a kind of darkness—blind to the spiritual reality all around us. Parents and teachers can give us a little light, but we all need the light of God's Revelation—which is a shining torch:

.....kindle within your hearts the everlasting torch of divine guidance.
~Baha'u'llah: Persian Hidden Words, # 35

So we went on to talk about how life is kind of like a journey in the dark—it is one big unknown—we do not know what is around the next corner, and many of us avoid what is good for us and are attracted to things or beliefs that are spiritually harmful. We need a light to guide us through the darkness of our own ignorance, the darkness of falsehood, vain imaginings, idle fancies, etc.

.....the one true God knoweth all things, perceiveth all things, and comprehendeth all things, mortal man is prone to err, and is ignorant of the mysteries that lie enfolded within him....
~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 186

That which beseemeth man is submission unto such restraints as will protect him from his own ignorance, and guard him against the harm of the mischief-maker.
~Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 63

God's purpose in sending His Prophets unto men is twofold. The first is to liberate the children of men from the darkness of ignorance, and guide them to the light of true understanding.
~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, pages 79-80

In like manner, every time the Prophets of God have illumined the world with the resplendent radiance of the Day Star of Divine knowledge, they have invariably summoned its peoples to embrace the light of God through such means as best befitted the exigencies of the age in which they appeared. They were thus able to scatter the darkness of ignorance, and to shed upon the world the glory of their own knowledge. It is towards the inmost essence of these Prophets, therefore, that the eye of every man of discernment must be directed, inasmuch as their one and only purpose hath always been to guide the erring, and give peace to the afflicted.... ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, pages 80-81

Peace be upon him whom the light of truth guideth unto all truth, and who, in the name of God, standeth in the path of His Cause, upon the shore of true understanding.
~Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Iqan, page 43

Through spiritual education He (Baha'u'llah) led the people out of darkness and ignorance into the clear light of truth, illuminated their hearts with the splendor of knowledge,..... cultivated the virtues of humanity, conferred spiritual susceptibilities, awakened inner perceptions.....
~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 341

*I explained that we all need God's light to guide us in life and that His Messengers are the brightest and best source of that light—Their light protects us from getting hurt and hurting others through the darkness of our own ignorance. Their light enables us to see what is right and wrong, good and bad, and true and false, just as a lantern or flashlight enables us to see the right path and avoid pitfalls.

The root cause of wrongdoing is ignorance, and we must therefore hold fast to the tools of perception and knowledge. Good character must be taught. Light must be spread afar, so that, in the school of humanity, all may acquire the heavenly characteristics of the spirit.....
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of`Abdu'l-Baha, page 136

So then I explained, to illustrate all the above concepts, they were going to go on an obstacle course in the dark that represents the path of life. The obstacles represented those things in life that harm us if we come in contact with them and stumble over in the path of life towards God. I asked them for examples, and they came up with many good ones: The obstacles represented things like lying, egoism, stealing, drugs, greed, materialism, prejudice, hatred, violence, etc. If we do not have the light of God's teachings, we can be blind to their danger, not perceiving their influence-- and it is so easy to get hurt by them.

So each child was given 25 seconds to walk through the obstacle course in the classroom beginning at the closet door and ending at the wall on the opposite end of the room. (They begged for more time, but that would be spent gingerly and slowly feeling their way through, and take way too long). They were to whack the wall when they made it, so I knew they were finished. I used a watch to time them. Even with the darkening quilted curtain, duct taped to the window sill, and a towel stuffed along the bottom of the door, there was enough light to vaguely make out the forms of the obstacles so they had to wear sunglasses. I assured them that they would not get hurt, but would know that they had interacted with a symbol of something harmful by the loud noise it would make.

So throughout the pathway I had placed 45 objects. They consisted of different sized cans, pots, pans, boxes, and canisters all with marbles in them, (tennis ball cans on their sides work great), baby toys that make a bunch of noise when you bump them, small metal, plastic and woven wastebaskets with metal cups and small metal kitchen utensils in them, 2 plastic cups taped together with marbles inside, paper bags with marbles inside, an aluminum pot with a tambourine in it, a large clear plastic pretzel barrel with bells in it, a box with bells in it, a shipping tube on its side with rattles in it, a maraca, some rattles, a basket and a black garbage bag both w/ large clattery legos in them, black boots with bells attached to them, and a large black garbage bag filled with styrofoam (this does make a noise when bumped into and its great for protecting toes from table legs). The darker the items the better. Children should be wearing shoes for protection.

Nobody was able to get through it w/o bumping into, knocking over, or stumbling over an object. The kids outside the door found it hilarious to hear all the noise. The students took great pride in going through with a relatively small number of contacts. The player and kids listening on the outside of the room counted each contact as they bumped into each item. They asked to go through twice, but I said no, in the interest of time, and b/c you get to only go through the journey of life once. (However, during snack break, they loved rearranging and going through it again and again, with and without the light.)

After everyone had gone through once, each child was challenged to go through the course again with a giant black flashlight-- in under 10 seconds w/o touching anything. Some even did it in 4 seconds! They loved this challenge. The

flashlight had a fancy label on the area around the bulb that said in gold ink “The Light of Baha’u’llah”. I had decorated the whole flashlight with fancy star stickers and golden ribbon.

We processed a bit afterwards about how just as the flashlight guided them successfully through the course, the light of Baha’u’llah’s teachings guides us through life to what is good and towards God. I asked them “When you teach someone about Baha’u’llah, what are you giving them?” After some discussion, they got it—“a guiding light”, or “the light of Truth”. We ended the discussion with one of the quotes already shared—short and to the point:

I am the guiding Light that illumineth the way. ~Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 169

For a lesson plan on the importance and power of reading the Creative Word, write “The Creative Word” in gold ink on the flashlight label. Have the kids go through the course in the dark first, then *before* sending them through with the flashlight, use the slight alteration (below) to the dialogue above*:

We all need God’s light to guide us in life and that the Creative Word revealed by His Messengers is the brightest and best source of that light—Its light protects us from getting hurt and hurting others through the darkness of our own ignorance. It enables us to see what is right and wrong, good and bad, and true and false, just as a lantern or flashlight enables us to see the right path and avoid pitfalls.

Then before (or after) sending the students back to the course using the light, share these quotes: (Otherwise, they get too many quotes at once if you use the ones above about the darkness of ignorance, and they stop listening b/c they are too excited after hearing that they get to go through an obstacle course.)

The light hath shone forth from the horizon of Revelation, and the whole earth hath been illumined at the coming of Him Who is the Lord of the Day of the Covenant!
~Baha'u'llah: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, pages 133-134

In every age of great spiritual darkness, a light is kindled in the East. So once again the light of the teachings of God has come unto you. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Abdu'l-Baha in London, page 49

I ask you all, each one of you, to follow well the light of truth, in the Holy Teachings, and God will strengthen you by His Holy Spirit so that you will be enabled to overcome the difficulties, and to destroy the prejudices which cause separation and hatred amongst the people.
~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Paris Talks, page 27

If ye will follow earnestly the teachings of Baha'u'llah, ye shall indeed become the light of the world, the soul for the body of the world, the comfort and help for humanity, and the source of salvation for the whole universe. `Abdu'l-Baha: Paris Talks, pages 113-114

I emphasized the message in the above quote—that if the students follow the light of the teachings, they will become a light themselves that guides and heals the world.

Dungeons and Dragons #
Indoor Version: The students are wild about this game. As a matter of fact, former students always ask to play and bring their friends. (The only problem is that for over an hour before and after the game the kids are in an irrepressible state of excitement and have trouble focusing on other activities and listening). This game is basically a fancy version of hide n’ seek in the dark in which 2 youth play snarling, growling, blood lusting dragons using glow cream for make up and glow in the dark gloves or fingernail polish. Before the children hid, the dragons put on the glow paint in front of a mirror. Then they charged up their faces and gloves or glow in the dark nail polish with the high wattage lights in the kitchen while the children hid. Children wear long black pants and long-sleeved black shirts to play in. Some with blonde hair even bring black hats. And the really thorough ones also wear black gloves, socks and shoes. (The kids that have built in blinking lights on their shoes are definitely at a disadvantage!) The game ends when and if the dragons catch all the children or the dragons get too tired to hunt—generally in about 45 minutes. (If the dragons are too successful too fast, then another round would be done). So far, no one has been seriously hurt. But this game definitely does have that risk, which parents should know before agreeing to let their kids play.

To be more specific: In total darkness, children hide in various places inside of our house. We can barely see anything, and so sometimes the best hiding places are right in the middle of the room or right next to the dungeon door. The dragons go hunting by groping and clawing around the walls and furniture. (The dragons need to be told to not claw and grope too forcefully so they don’t hurt the hiders. And hiders should be reminded not to resist or strike the dragons no

matter how wound up they are.) Hiders can move quietly and stealthily around when they see a dragon coming their way but *they are never allowed to run*. And once they are touched they are poisoned and must go zombie- like to the dungeon. The "dungeon" is actually upstairs, in our dining room/kitchen area. Others that are uncaught try to set them free by touching them. The imprisoned ones are supposed to yell for help so those hiding know they need rescuing. Extremely scary music (from Alien 3) is played loudly on the stereo for effect and to make it harder for the dragons to hear the breathing or movement of potential victims. (Before the game, I shut all curtains to block out moonlight, unplugged all night lights, and shut off outdoor automatic lights that if triggered would shed light through the windows. I straightened up rooms and put into closets any items that players could fall or knock over.) Before playing, kids were taken on a tour of the house to note good hiding spots and also areas they could bump their heads or get hurt via protruding objects.

Then we laid down the rules-- like closets, outside, and the study, utility room and garage were off limits. Another rule is that hiders must wear shoes to protect their toes—which they greeted with dismay since most of them have white shoes. Captured hiders can't be freed on their way to the prison, they have to be in the prison in order to be freed. We also made a rule that if you are free, you may not hide in the dungeon. We have to do this b/c otherwise, a free hider goes and hides in the kitchen or dining room, or just pretends to be a prisoner (the dragons can't see or keep track of who they capture) and then just frees everybody every time the dragons leave the dungeon area. It often happens that someone is freed, but then a dragon appears and they can't leave the dungeon. These freed prisoners may not free any one else until after they have left the dungeon, even if just a few feet away. We also told them to close their eyes if they saw a hand coming at them, to avoid getting poked. More advice: Don't hide together in large groups b/c then too many get captured at once. Get drinks of water and use the bathroom before playing. If you have to use the bathroom during the game, don't turn on the light until the door is shut, and turn it off before opening. Lock the door and make sure no one is in there with you! (But no locking of doors during game, except for using the bathroom).

I asked the students what virtues were needed in this game, and they were right on: The virtues of wisdom, (knowing when to move, good hideouts, and calculating the best time to free others, etc) courage, (It can be pretty suspenseful, especially when trying to liberate prisoners), honesty, (not leaving the dungeon if you haven't been freed by another) and sacrifice (you risk getting caught when you free others).

If you want to make the game a spiritual metaphor, explain that the dragons are the beasts of the animal lower nature. Humans often become prisoners of the lower nature, and this is what creates so much injustice, greed, suffering, and selfishness in the world. Remind the players that in order to win this hide and seek game, they had to show courage in the face of danger—the possibility of being captured while trying to free others. Also, it often takes courage to triumph over the lower nature's power in this world. Especially when our friends and peers are popular or having fun being led by theirs and other's lower nature. We are all capable of being imprisoned or poisoned by the lower nature just as the hiders are by the dragons, and then become captives to these lower nature tendencies. And one of our main tasks in life is to avoid becoming captives of our lower nature and to rescue others from the lower nature also. But like any human, if we get too close to the beasts of the lower nature—we get poisoned and ensnared, even if we are trying to rescue others. I always ask the players: What is the best way to free others from the lower nature? And they always get it: Share God's teachings. Freeing captives from the dungeon is akin to teaching God's Cause.

After the explanations, I open the floor to questions. And kids often want to listen to a sample of the music before deciding whether they can handle it. It is important to have a room that is lit and away from the hunt for those who can't handle it. Its also a good idea to have books or a video available in that room. For several years, my Baha'i neighbor has offered her living room as a refuge. I escort kids over there with a flashlight, and she keeps her outdoor and main inside lights off so they don't shine into my house. There is no stigma attached to wanting to leave. Another option for children who find the game too frightening is to just watch the game by being a "dungeon nanny" with me in the dining room. Since we play the game on the last day of the second 5 day camp at my house, I am too whipped and my voice too tired to play a dragon. So I tell the players that I am a dungeon nanny who is a slave to my dragon masters. I tend to the human captives, making sure they are healthy—until they are to be eaten.

The players are so incredibly excited and chatty. So, before the tour and rule setting, I demonstrate a hand signal for absolute quiet. Then I tell them I will refuse to continue the tour or explain the rules, (thereby delaying and shortening their playing time) if they are talking while I am talking. It is very important that they know the rules and danger spots.

Most children under 10 find this game way too scary. That said, I have had a 7 year old girl who loved it, and a 12 year old boy who was terrified. Whether a child can handle it really depends on the individual. So many variables will determine if a child is thrilled to play or--- terrified. If a child associates the dark with bad things, if they have been exposed to suspenseful movies or drama—these factors and many others will be influential. When you describe the game to them, most parents will be able to make a good judgment call about whether their child will be able to handle it or not. I definitely don't support exposing young children to experiences (be they movies or amusement parks) that are scary and traumatizing. I want their hearts to remain tender as long as possible! As of 2008, I plan to do the indoor version of this game for jr. youth and up only, and not at the end of a week long day camp with younger kids. Then those who are too

young or afraid to play, end a great camp week with a feeling of exclusion and disappointment. And it's also a huge stretch for me to prepare the rooms on the last day given that I am really maxed out physically. I happen to know several Baha'i youth who have a lot of acting experience and some who are even professional actors. These guys make terrific dragons—and with older kids they can really showcase their talent.

For both indoor and outdoor versions, after explaining the rules, right before playing, its a good idea to ask for silence and to sing a prayer or play one on a CD to center the players and reinforce the spiritual message of the game.

Outdoor in the dark variation:
Rules are the same as indoors but for the outdoor version there is no scary music, which makes it a lot less intense. Thus children who would find the indoor version too scary can play. As in the indoor version, children that become too frightened can just hang out on the deck as "dungeon nannies". It is basically the same as the "Faithful Friends" game, also sometimes called "Courageous Comrades." The only difference is that when found, hiders cannot run, they must go submissively to the "dungeon" which in our case was a deck with 2 exits. Then they yell for help to alert others they are in need of rescuing. You can't have kids running through the dark in a game of chase. It's just too dangerous. Hiders can move quietly and stealthily around when they see a dragon coming their way but *they are never allowed to run*. Striking out at a dragon to avoid capture is also absolutely forbidden. Children wear dark clothing and each has a flashlight. They use the flashlight to locate a suitable hiding place within set boundaries, then they turn it off. Dragons can use giant glow sticks to search, and this also warns hiders of their approach. It also looks really magical. Depending on how scary you want it to be, dragons can hunt quietly or make sounds and snarl etc. They can also wear glow paint or not.

Tips and additional rules: Captured hiders can't be freed on their way to the prison, they have to be in the prison in order to be freed. Free hiders can't hang out on deck—this makes it impossible for the dragons to keep prisoners, and makes the game too easy for the hiders. (Dragons can't keep track of who is free and who is not in the dark, so this rule is needed). Dragons can, as a precaution, tag everyone on the deck when they deliver a prisoner, just to make sure someone is not undoing their hard work. It often happens that someone is freed, but then a dragon appears and they can't leave the dungeon. These freed prisoners may not free any one else until after they have left the dungeon, even if just a few feet away. Remind kids that one should not spend the whole game just hiding, the idea is that we care about our fellow players and are willing to risk our own freedom to rescue them. I explained that there was risk in rescuing, but if no one showed courage or caring, the dragons of the lower nature would win. I told them they would lose the game if the dragons got all the hiders on the deck at one time. The dragons are not allowed to continuously guard the prison, but do need to frequently come back to check on the prison. Advise kids not to hide in groups of 3 or more b/c then too many will be caught at once. My deck happens to have two exits, one at each end, and it took the rescuers awhile to figure out that they should come to the rescue together and go to each end—that way it was harder for the dragons to cover everybody. Also, those just freed and trying to leave the prison, were also game for the dragons again, but if they worked together and chose opposite exits, it was harder for the dragons to get them all.

Tour the playing area with the players while there is still some light, point out boundaries. Use sports cones to delineate playing area if not obvious. Clear pathways of logs, branches, etc. Have a bug spraying time right before the game, outside. Have multiple cans so everybody can be sprayed quickly. Dragons can wear goggles to protect their eyes if they don't already wear glasses. Make sure kids get a drink and use the rest room before going out to play. Have cups and a pitcher on the deck for thirsty players who get caught. Have a signal for those that need to stop due to fear, injury, or who need to use the restroom during the game. Explain that those going inside for a restroom break should not turn on lights that will shine into the yard and expose hiders—or use that grace period to free others on their way back out to the game. If neighbors are in ear shot, they should be informed ahead of time about the game so they don't call the police thinking that a child is in distress when the captives yell for help. It is advisable to urge kids to wear dark lightweight pants and long sleeved shirts if it is summer so they don't get too hot and can avoid bug bites and poison ivy. Dark shoes and socks are a plus, as is bug spray. Some kids even bring gloves and dark hats if they are light haired.

As in the indoor version, have a gathering before playing to go over the rules. Tell kids you will answer questions after you go over the rules. (Kids invariably will ask about scenarios you plan to discuss already, ---but often they bring up not previously thought of good points that need addressing.) Talk about the virtues needed: Wisdom, (knowing when to move, good hideouts, and calculating the best time to free others, etc) courage, (It can be pretty suspenseful, especially when trying to liberate prisoners), honesty, (not leaving the dungeon if you haven't been freed by another) self-control (no running in the dark) and sacrifice (you risk getting caught when you free others).

If you want to make the game a spiritual metaphor, explain that the dragons are the beasts of the animal lower nature. Humans often become prisoners of the lower nature, and this is what creates so much injustice, greed, suffering, and selfishness in the world. Remind the players that in order to win this hide and seek game, they had to show courage in the face of danger—the possibility of being captured while trying to free others. Also, it often takes courage to triumph over the lower nature's power in this world. Especially when our friends and peers are popular or having fun being led by theirs and other's lower nature. We are all capable of being imprisoned or poisoned by the lower nature just as the hiders

are by the dragons, and then become captives to these lower nature tendencies. And one of our main tasks in life is to avoid becoming captives of our lower nature and to rescue others from the lower nature also. But like any human, if we get too close to the beasts of the lower nature—we get poisoned and ensnared, even if we are trying to rescue others. I always ask the players: What is the best way to free others from the lower nature? And they always get it: Share God's teachings. Freeing captives from the dungeon is akin to teaching God's Cause.

One summer, we had 24 hiders, ages 5-20, using about an acre of wooded land. We started with 3 dragons, ages 15-20. I added a fourth halfway through the game b/c the prison was getting emptied too fast. They really got into their roles and were quite funny in their hunting dialogue. To discourage running, I stood on the deck with a powerful flashlight. If I saw a hider running, I shined the light directly on them, and called out: "Running Dragon Bait!"

15 inch glow sticks in various colors can be obtained from www.happyglow.com. 12 inch extra wide glow sticks in various colors can be obtained from www.theglowpro.com. Sometimes Michael's Arts and Crafts carries 12 inch ones covered in foam for $1 a piece—the best deal of all.

Log Pass *
This simple game is played thus: Children try to walk past each other standing on a log without knocking each other off. It requires a lot of coordination and cooperation. The goal is to get to the end of the line, using the support of all those you pass, and trying not to knock them off. Then the next person in line goes on down the line until everybody has done it. I also call it the "Excuse Me!" game, b/c you are trying to be polite and move down the log w/o disrupting others so that they fall as you pass. The log or beam should be on the ground to prevent injury.

Streamer Wrap #
Clump yourselves together and have a separate person tie one end of a crepe paper streamer to one person's wrist then wrap and weave the streamer all over the group—around your necks, between your legs, around your torsos, etc. and then wrap the whole group several times and give the end to one person to hold. Now try to move across the room as a group without breaking the streamer. You need to be totally aware of how your movement is affecting the whole streamer. Now try to untangle yourselves without ripping the streamer. Again, you have to be very conscious of how your pulling on the streamer affects someone else's segment. And finally, work together to untangle the streamer and to roll it back up, without ripping it. (If this whole thing is too easy—try it with a roll of toilet paper instead!!)

One major cause of conflict and violence in the world is that people do not think about how their actions affect others before they do them---or they do not care. This activity goes great with the story called Swimmy by Leo Lionni. It is about a school of tiny fish that learn to swim in perfect unity in the formation of a giant fish so that they are not eaten. We discussed how the fish all had to go at the exact same speed and in the exact same direction to maintain their formation.

This is also a great metaphor for how we are all really spiritually connected, how we are one in spirit. When we forget this, and act in ways that violate this truth, ----such as not being considerate to others and not thinking about how our actions effect them, ---then we "tear" the bonds of unity.

Be ye as the fingers of one hand, the members of one body. Thus counselleth you the Pen of Revelation, if ye be of them that believe. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 140

He Who is your Lord, the All-Merciful, cherisheth in His heart the desire of beholding the entire human race as one soul and one body. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 214

The spirit is as one great ocean and the waves thereof are the souls of men.
~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Paris Talks, page 84

The Shirt off Your Back ## *
I begin by explaining how often people engage in conflict over material things. Allowing the loss of unity for the gain of material advantage is not a value I want kids to have. (If doing a unit on service, I would instead begin by explaining how one very important way to serve others is by the giving and/or sharing of our material wealth). So I shared some stories of how Abdu'l-Baha would give His bed to someone without one, how His wife was always making Him a new cloak which He gave away promptly and instead kept His old worn one. He requested the European Baha'i women who came to Akka to dress simply--perhaps b/c their flamboyant hats, jewelry, and dresses exalted them in the eyes of the poor and made the poor feel poorer—it emphasized the extremes of wealth and poverty in the world. I told them of the story of when

Abdu'l-Baha was in America and encountered a man with very tattered pants, and He stepped under a bridge and removed His own pants from under His robe and gave them to the man.

Then I split the group into two and lined them up. The first person in each line puts on a large long sleeved shirt and turns to the person behind him/her and holds hands. The goal is to pass the shirt to the person you are holding hands with without letting go of each other's hands. (This symbolizes unity). The person has to completely remove the shirt and the other one has to completely get it on—then they let go and the second person holds hands with the third person in line and so on, down to the last person. *The only way to do this is to start by putting one's head through the neck hole.* If you let go at any point during the transaction, the shirt has to go back to the beginning of the line. Teeth can be used. It is really a funny game, and the teams came within seconds of each other for the last person. This is a cooperative/competitive game, but I explained that it is not important to be first except in service to God and the expression of virtues. So the "winning" team is the first one to share the shirt with all those on their team.

Note: The shirts used should be huge, with very large neck, waist and wrist openings. If the passing proves too difficult, talk about how hard it is to share our wealth and serve in a united fashion. Then allow kids to stay connected through only one finger on each hand so that the other fingers are free. (So for example, little fingers would be hooked together and must remain so during the passing.) Very large kids should be placed at the end of the line so they only have to receive the shirt. It is embarrassing for them to get the shirt stuck on them.

Happy the soul that shall forget his own good, and..... vie with his fellows in service to the good of all.....~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Secret of Divine Civilization, page 116

..... withhold not from the poor the things given unto you by God through His grace.
~Baha'u'llah: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 55

O YE RICH ONES ON EARTH! The poor in your midst are My trust; guard ye My trust, and be not intent only on your own ease. ~Baha'u'llah: Persian Hidden Words #54

For a lesson on more fair distribution of wealth, one can use the game as a graphic metaphor for sharing of excess resources. Throughout the Baha'i Writings we are encouraged to recognize the oneness and inter-connectedness of all peoples and to be concerned about the welfare of all humans everywhere on the planet, not just our nation's citizens. We are exhorted to have a world embracing vision and to view ourselves as world citizens and the earth as one country:

Let your vision be world-embracing, rather than confined to your own self.
~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 94

It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world. The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 250

If we ponder these deceptively simple statements deeply, we will soon realize what truly profound and radical concepts they promote, and what a huge change in the structure of society and of world order their implementation would create. Also, throughout Baha'i scripture, we are reminded that all that is in the kingdoms of earth and heaven belong to God.

All the kingdoms of heaven and earth and whatever is between them are God's, and His power is supreme over all things. All the treasures of earth and heaven and everything between them are His..... ~The Bab, Baha'i Prayers, p. 132

The kingdoms of earth and heaven are Thine, O Lord of the worlds! ~Bahá'u'lláh, Prayers and Meditations, CLXXXIII (End of Long Obligatory Prayer).

Thus, if all the world's resources belong to God and we are all His children, one human family, is it fair or right that one nation control and consume far more than their fair share?

With this in mind, play the game as above, with 2 equal lines, but at the end of each line ask a boy to play w/o his shirt. The big shirt that is being passed down the line represents resources, and each child a nation. Every nation has plenty (their own shirt/resources) so they are to pass it on to a nation w/o those resources that stands in great need. It is a race to see which group of nations can share/distribute their excess resources the fastest to the nation at the end of the line who is in dire need of the resources, i.e. shirt. One can also use this game on any lesson related to world peace:

"The inordinate disparity between rich and poor, a source of acute suffering, keeps the world in a state of instability, virtually on the brink of war."—The Universal House of Justice, from The Promise of World Peace.

We ask God to endow human souls with justice so that they may be fair, and may strive to provide for the comfort of all, that each member of humanity may pass his life in the utmost comfort and welfare. Then this material world will become the very paradise of the Kingdom, this elemental earth will be in a heavenly state and all the servants of God will live in the utmost joy, happiness and gladness. ~`Abdu'l-Baha: Foundations of World Unity, page 43

For quotes relating to being generous with the poor, and other games to reinforce the above concepts, see *Fair Share*, under Low Activity Games or *People of the Mountain* and *Chair Island* under Medium Active Games.

Preschool Version: First share with the kids the story about how Abdu'l-Baha gave away His pants to a very poor man whose pants were too raggedy to provide warmth. He did this discreetly, stepping out of view. Make sure you explain that His long cloak hid His bare legs, otherwise they may be horrified at the thought of Abdu'l-Baha's lack of modesty! Then pull out of a bag 2 large pair of sweat pants, or any stretchy pants with an elastic waistband. Divide the kids up in 2 lines and have them race to see which group can send the pants down to the last person the fastest by putting them on taking them off *over their own clothing*. They should take their shoes off before playing and they can help their team members if invited to do so. Adults should demonstrate before playing, encouraging the kids to pull the pants up to their waist at least. That said, little ones are not very rule oriented, can't keep a lot of rules in mind at once, and don't even notice when others are not perfectly abiding by the rules. (That comes around 7 years old). So no one should notice or comment if a child does not pull the pants up all the way. And the winning team should not be noted either.

Some little ones are very obsessed with privacy and the fact that one should only put on and take off pants alone or with family members. This is fine, and not a bad value. Since they are young, they may not be able to detach from this rule for the game, even though they are keeping their own clothes on. They can just watch. And based on experience, they enjoy that too, especially if adult helpers are playing also.

Shoe Mates ## *

Before beginning we discuss the meaning of "walking in someone else's shoes" and during or before the game one can play the song "Walk a Mile" from Vitamin L's *Walk a Mile* recording which is about walking in others' shoes. For hygienic purposes I handed out socks from a sock box of old unmatched pairs and asked them to put them on over their own socks. Then we all stood in a circle and dumped our shoes in the center. To begin everyone picks up two shoes which are *not their own* and *not matching* and puts them on or partly on if they are too small. They do not have to be correctly on—i.e. a left shoe can be on a right foot or one can have 2 rights or 2 lefts. Then, while supporting each other with our arms and hands, we are to maneuver our feet so that pairs are side by side touching. They do not have to be perfectly aligned as you would find on a shelf—the outside edge of the shoes can be touching instead of the inside edges. It looks a lot like that old "Twister" game from Milton Bradley. It can be very funny and very hard—but with cooperation and maneuvering, a child who needs to pair up 2 shoes which are totally across the group can do it. For very large groups, you may have to let them change their place completely with someone else, but with smaller groups (under 12) they should try to maintain their basic position in the original circle which now has become a tangled mess. Physical flexibility is a plus!

Cat and Mouse Self Control

This is a fun but competitive game in which one student was a cat and the rest were mice. All players, mice and cat, got 5 tokens each. This game can be played inside using a rug, (round works better than rectangular) or using painter's tape to make a circle. It can also be played outside, using a large circle drawn in chalk on pavement. (For outside, have kids hold hands in a circle and draw circle using their feet as guide.) The cat stands in the middle of the circle or rug. The mice stand facing inward on the inside edge of the circular line, or on the edge of the carpet. In the center of the circle or rug, I throw a large cardboard cube in the air that has 3 sides in green and 3 in red. If it lands so the green is on top, the mice need to get out of the circle or completely off the carpet as fast as possible--for the cat can tag them if they have any feet inside or on the tape or chalk circle or on the carpet. They are safe if both feet are outside the circle or carpet. The mice move by jumping backwards. If they are tagged they give the cat 1 token. If the cube lands on red however, they must keep both feet completely inside (not on) the tape or chalk circle or completely on the carpet --if they take even one off, they have to give the cat a token. But if the cat tags anyone completely in the circle or on the carpet, (If the cube is red side up), the cat has to give that mouse a token. There is no chasing in this game—once mice are in their correct location, they stop moving. To be successful at this game, one must practice extremely good impulse-control, also known as self-restraint or self-control.

With groups over 12 kids, 2 cats can be used. If students jumped out when the cube landed on red side up, they gave a token to the nearest cat, or to the cat that tagged them on green. The winner is the one with the most tokens, indicating

the most self-control. When mice lose all their tokens, they still continue to play, b/c they may get one from a cat who tagged them on red. My students enjoyed throwing or rolling the cube, so we went around the circle several times taking turns. If the cat runs out of tokens, he becomes a mouse. It is my experience that most want to be the cat at least once—which you can do if the group is small, or you just limit cat time to 5 tosses of the cube.

The Baha'i youth should, on the one hand, be taught the lesson of self-control which, when exercised, undoubtedly has a salutary effect on the development of character and of personality in general.....~Shoghi Effendi: A Chaste and Holy Life, p. 56

The exercise of self-control.....has a beneficial effect on the progress of the soul. (From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, January 12, 1973: cited in Messages from The Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973, p. 110-111)

Service Relay ##

This is basically a relay race game. Instead of batons however, teams had to carry trays with cups of water on them. (A tray with cups was chosen b/c it is such an obvious and concrete metaphor for serving others). There were 2 teams of 9 and they split up so 4 from each team was on one side of the yard and 5 on the other, which meant one child from each team had to go twice from the line with 4 in it. The first person on one side of each team was given a tray with 6 full cups of water. They walked as fast as they could across the yard trying not to spill any and handed the tray to the first person in their team's line on that side of the yard. This went on back and forth, and the goal was to be first team to make 10 traverses. But being first in service is not the only goal, so is excellence, quality, carefulness, and thoroughness. Thus, after the race, each team dumped their cups into a pitcher and we measured it. (Water in the tray does not count.) So if one team was first, but had less water b/c they spilled too much, it would be a tie. In this case the teams finished at the exact same moment, and one team had a tiny fraction more water than the other, so technically they were the winners (but I am loathe to dwell on such labels). You can make the game more challenging and dramatic by requiring that the players run with the trays. And it is also fun to just give the kids 2 large cups, one for each hand, and they can run easily with these—no trays needed. It's fun to do this with large cups of water on a hot summer day.

Before playing I shared these quotes and explained that "vie" means to compete. I emphasized that being first in a line or to get a material reward is not of spiritual value, but being first to serve or show a virtue, is.

Vie ye with each other in the service of God and of His Cause. This is indeed what profiteth you in this world, and in that which is to come. ~Baha'u'llah as quoted by Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 83

Happy the soul that shall forget his own good, and..... vie with his fellows in service to the good of all.....~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Secret of Divine Civilization, page 116

This game can also be made into an activity to support a lesson on UNICEF. The water just represents clean drinking water for those without.

This game can also be used to support a lesson plan on *teaching the Baha'i Faith.* Just explain that the water in the cups represents the "Water of Life", (the teachings of Baha'u'llah) and the goal is the first team to get it to all their members, who represent seekers. (See also *United We Serve*, *Let Me Refresh You*, *Bucket Brigade*, and *Pass the Water of Life* for similarly themed games.) Use these quotes:

The sincere among His servants will regard the precepts set forth by God as the Water of Life to the followers of every faith.....~Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 29

This new Revelation has in reality been the water of life unto the thirsty.....~Shoghi Effendi: Bahiyyih Khanum, page 188

Spiritual success can be won today, only by teaching the Faith of God. The people are seeking, dying from spiritual thirst. The Baha'is must disseminate the Water of Life freely, so seeking souls may find eternal life. ~Shoghi Effendi: High Endeavors, page 42

For a unit on *life after death*, one could employ the following quotes and play the same game:

I swear by God! That which hath been destined for him who aideth My Cause excelleth the treasures of the earth. ~Baha'u'llah, as quoted by Shoghi Effendi: The Advent of Divine Justice, page 84

*The fleeting hours of man's life on earth pass swiftly by and the little that still remaineth shall come to an end, but that which endureth and lasteth for evermore is the fruit that man reapeth from his servitude at the Divine Threshold. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha,* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 234

Horse and Rider
This is basically a balancing activity dependent on the unity of the horses and the agility of the rider. Two children get on all fours side by side and one shoe-less child stands on their backs, one foot on each back, and attempts to ride standing up while the 2 "horses" crawl across the grass or room. (Carpeting is really helpful if this is done indoors—move all furniture away from area in case of falling). The horses should go very slow and be very unified in their movements if the rider is to succeed. If this is too scary or hard, the rider can squat and hold onto the shirts of the horses. (Knees are not OK—they hurt the horses!)

Variations: There can be two riders, one on each horse, and they face each other standing up and hold hands and help balance each other. They can each put both feet on one horse, or one foot on each horse—one rider facing the front of the horses, the other the back. Its helps to spread your feet out for balance. Horses and riders should switch places—just like in Baha'i community life—sometimes we are supported by other members, and sometimes we support them. A big kid who wants to ride can lay on his/her stomach across each team of horses. You may need a team of three horses if the rider is tall—or the horses just put more space between themselves.

Balloon Gauntlet ##
Kids try to run down the center of two lines of kids while those in the lines try to tag them with their balloons. They get to keep going through until they are tagged. The tagger gets to then run through.

Balloon Relay Races #
Version One: In the first version pairs had to walk with a balloon between their stomachs without using hands and pass it to another pair at the other end of the living room who then had to move back to the start.

Version Two: ## Teams of 5 or more passing the balloon down a line using just feet, legs, and heads to propel it.

Version Three: ## An even harder version is kids can pass the balloon down the line using only kicks. Then back up the line using only heads and shoulders.

Unified Body Parts
This game goes with a story from Brilliant Star Children's Magazine, Nov./Dec. 1998 pages 16-18 called Ruby Red's Dream. It is a bizarre and silly story about how a pair of lips seeks out assistance in the form of a nose, legs, eyes, and hands to obtain a chocolate chip cookie. After the story I assigned groups of 3 and they had to get attached and move across the room to retrieve a chocolate chip cookie for each of them. The hard part was that while all 3 had to remain attached and move as a single entity, they all had to use different body parts to move. There are many ways to do this. For example: One child walked while holding a child by the ankles who used his/her hands, and the 3rd child held the ankles of the walking child and slid on his/her stomach. Or one child got on all fours, one child rode him/her while placing his/her feet on the floor and the 3rd child held the ankles of the child on all fours and slid on his/her stomach. Or, one scoots on her butt, (or walks on her knees), while holding onto an ankle of a child sliding on his stomach, who uses his arms and hands to pull himself forward. The 3rd child walks on his feet while holding onto the other ankle of the sliding child. It was really hilarious. I have also done this with groups of 5—one uses hands only, one uses feet, another knees, another must slide on his back, another can move only on her stomach. They also remained attached one way or another. Encourage kids to be creative in their formations.

He Who is your Lord, the All-Merciful, cherisheth in His heart the desire of beholding the entire human race as one soul and one body. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 214

Be ye as the fingers of one hand, the members of one body. Thus counselleth you the Pen of Revelation, if ye be of them that believe. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 140

Floor Designs # *
A group was to form shapes on the floor using their bodies together, such as a giant peace symbol or a heart. I challenged those on the floor to try to do it without using words, which proved most difficult, and then with using words—

pointing out how much easier it is to have unity and to solve problems when we can communicate with each other. You can tie this into the Baha'i principle of a universal auxiliary language. Letters and numbers are also interesting to make with bodies. For younger kids, keep the letters simple, like a capital "T" or "X". Specify whether it is in capitals or not. If they can handle simple letters, ask them to make simple words. The group must be larger for this and its really hard if they can't talk, but older kids can do it. Kids also enjoy rotating being the director who gets to determine what shape will be made and when it is sufficient. One can relate this game to obedience to our leaders. If our House of Justice or NSA ask us to form study circles or children's classes, or devotionals, we do our best, as diverse as we are, to conform and create a unified result.

Unity Rise *
We all sat down in a circle with our knees bent and our feet on the ground and then we linked elbows. The goal is to simultaneously raise ourselves up as one complete unit using the support of each other. It can be done with group facing in or facing out, pressing backs together. Facing in requires more arm strength. It can also be done in pairs or groups of 3 -5 only. Larger groups are much harder, especially if there is a big variation in size of the kids. Also a great metaphor for how a group or community is uplifted or achieves a goal only if everybody contributes, or pulls their own weight.

Silly Bones *
Kids are clumped together standing up. They are instructed to touch a nose, or an ear, or a head, etc. It cannot be their own, and once they do, they can't let go. They can use fingers, or any other part of their body such as foot or head to make the contact. They can't touch the same person twice. After about 3 or 4 contacts, they are hopelessly tangled and then they attempt to move across the room. Of course they fall apart, but that is part of the fun.

Hop Along # *
This game comes from China. Teams line up in a row and the first person holds the right leg under the knee of the person behind her with her right hand or elbow. It is important to get this pattern straight b/c it is a lot harder to balance if kids are picking up left legs with right hands or if some on the team are lifting right legs and some are lifting left. You can also do it with every one lifting left legs and holding with left hands. The important thing is that everyone is doing the same thing. The first person gets to walk on 2 legs and the last person of course is holding no leg. Kids should hold onto the shoulders of those in front of them with their free hand for balance. The tiniest children should be either last or first b/c they have 2 legs to walk on if they are first or no leg to carry if they are at the end. Also, the line should be formed tallest to shortest or shortest to tallest b/c little kids can't place their hands on high shoulders or have their short legs lifted too high by tall kids. I made this game a race across the room, with the goal to be the first team to have the front person touch my hand. I always emphasize that from a spiritual perspective being first is pointless and unimportant or even self-centered in some cases—but to be first to love, share, care, be courteous, cooperate, is praiseworthy. But I never reward or glorify "winning" teams when I do use competition. This game taught that those who cooperate and are most unified will be the winners. If a team member falls or drops a leg, that team has to halt until they are all connected again.

Shoe Drop # *
In this game children remove one shoe, drop it into the center of a circle, and while holding hands in a circle without letting go, pick up someone else's shoe, (not someone's next to you) and pass it to the owner who has to put it on. This all has to be accomplished without anybody in the group letting go of hands at any time.

Heart Motion
Students gathered in a group and each child was given 2 paper hearts. Each child had to touch 2 different people, one on the cheek, and one on the stomach, keeping the heart in place with their hand or finger on each spot. Then, after they were a tangled mess, I asked them to try to move a few feet as a group without dropping any hearts. It proved quite a challenge--but very funny. The game symbolizes how we are all connected and how hard it is to always maintain love and oneness between diverse people. The game can be made really hard by asking kids to touch a 3rd location (but don't also require that the 3rd location be on a 3rd person, it will likely be impossible.) This will require that they use a foot or nose or .....? because they will have used up their 2 hands on the first 2 locations. Maybe they can do nose to nose with their hearts in-between! But moving as a unit that way, w/o dropping any hearts, will be a small miracle.

Collective Jump *
One child at a time squats and grabs her ankles and tries to jump as far as possible. Where each child lands, another one begins his leap. We wanted to see how far as a class we could go, and to try to beat the distance of our first

collective jump, which we did, just barely. You can also play w/o holding onto the ankles---this makes the jumps much bigger.

Ring Toss

You need rope rings and dowels for this one. We used rope rings from a ring toss game. They can be used in several ways: Kids would toss the rings to those holding sticks, who try to catch the rings on the sticks. Then kids tried to catch thrown rings on their feet. Then others would hold their feet or hands and guide them to catch the rings like a puppeteer. One child even held two different kids hands and guided them into the tossed rings. Students switched places so all got a chance to be tossers and catchers.

Hula Hoop Pass #

Get children in a circle. Hook one or more hoops on the arms of some of the children. Then all hold hands and proceed to pass the hoops around the circle as fast as they can. Kids have to get their whole body through the hoop before passing it, *w/o letting go of the hands they are holding* in the circle. You can make this a race between two teams if you must—the goal is to get all your hoops back to the starting person first. It is more lively if more than one hoop is being passed around the circle, that way more than 2 kids are engaged at one time. We have even used one hoop for each child and that can get really fun---- and chaotic. I said the hoops represent a circle of friends and the individuals in the game are those who have been excluded. This goes with the following quote:

Bring those who have been excluded into the circle of intimate friends. ~Abdu'l-Baha: Education, p. 293

For our unit on *prayer,* we said the hoops represented prayer circles, and each child the hoop passed over was a person being prayed for in a prayer circle. I explained how there have been scientific studies which prove that those who are sick heal better if prayed for by a prayer circle, even if they and their doctors are unaware of this and those praying for them don't know them personally. The other metaphor one could use is that the circle of children is the prayer circle, and the hoops are the prayers being said by the members. The holding of hands symbolizes spiritual connection or unity.

The prayers which were revealed to ask for healing apply both to physical and spiritual healing. Recite them, then, to heal both the soul and the body. If healing is right for the patient, it will certainly be granted; but for some ailing persons, healing would only be the cause of other ills, and therefore wisdom doth not permit an affirmative answer to the prayer. .....The power of the Holy Spirit healeth both physical and spiritual ailments.
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, pages 161-162

Variation 1: This really works: Have 2 or more hoops going around each circle of children, *in opposite directions*, which must get back to their original starting locations. At some point, they have to pass each other. The hoops should have something to identify them (such as being a different color or marked with tape) so one knows that they have actually passed over each other.

Variation 2: We have also played a hoop toss game using the hula hoops. The students spread out in the grass in an open playing field and my helper and I flung the hoops through the air like frizbees, and students attempted to dive into them. To prevent hogging, I asked those who succeeded to give others a chance. The hoops can stand for prayers, (or prayer circles) and if you were encircled by one, then meant that you got the benefit of a prayer. Some kids enjoyed trying to dive into the hoops in pairs b/c that was even more challenging.

Variation 3: Students line up on one or both sides of an open playing area, a hoop is tossed very high, and a name is called and that child runs to try and dive inside the hoop. If that is too hard, the name can be called *before* the hoop is tossed. Some kids don't even try if the hoop is not right next to them. I admonished them that this is like having a prayer circle arranged for you, but then you don't act to make things happen. (According to Baha'i teachings, action is a critical part of effective prayer).

Variation 4: Another fun technique is to toss 2-5 hoops at once (they are stacked but spread out in unpredictable directions as they fly out) and see how many of the hoops kids can get inside.

For the tossing versions, Beamos (Described in the intro) are a bit safer to use b/c they are less hard. Those tossing should be old enough to have decent aim and be careful to toss high, slowly, and lightly, as hula hoops can really hurt an unsuspecting nose or mouth.

Ridvan Roses

For this game one needs to obtain real or silk roses. If you live near a Sam's Club—they have the best prices for real roses I have ever encountered—usually 2 dozen for $12.00. However, they are thick with thorns, which will need to be removed. Playing with real roses is my preference b/c the texture and smell of them reinforces the impact of the game. The more senses one can stimulate in any lesson—the deeper it goes into the child. First create a tent of some form outside—or inside if you must play indoors. You can make it as simple or elegant as you desire, using a real tent, or just draping cloth in a canopy. Adorn the space with a pretty carpet, an oil lamp, entwine vines around the outside, use flowers in vases, pretty beads or garlands, peacock feathers, whatever. Then determine approximately how many kids will be playing and thus how many roses you will purchase—at least one for each child, preferably more.

Hide the roses about outside or inside if indoors. They should be visible but not obvious. Explain to the children about how roses were picked for Baha'u'llah's tent as a token of love and that their goal for this game is to find roses to place in His tent. Decide ahead of time how many roses each child can find, and tell them that after they have found their allotted number, they can't go looking by themselves anymore, but must hold hands with someone who has not found their allotted quantity and assist them. This prevents the natural hunter-types from finding all the roses first and younger children from feeling bitterly disappointed that they found none. You want to make sure each child feels the thrill of discovery! The other rule is that as soon as you find a rose, you must bring it back to the tent and lay it in a predetermined spot (place a pretty tray or scarf in the tent for this purpose). Players can't gather up several before returning to the tent. This gives time to those with less visual discrimination skills to find some. When all the roses are found and placed in the tent, the game ends. Another way to end the game is to have a drum or gong or some sound to signal the passing of one day. The game concludes when 12 sounds have been heard, (one for each day of Ridvan). This adds a bit of excitement in that kids are now competing with time to find all the roses.

You can slow down or speed up the intervals between sounds depending on how fast the children are locating the roses, b/c no one will object that one "day" was shorter than the other! I play the game so that whatever comes first—the passing of 12 days, or the finding of all roses, ends the game.

A nice way to end the game is to give the roses to the children to take home, explaining that Baha'u'llah gave away His roses to be delivered to friends in Baghdad. Ask them to think of people they would like to give them to, someone they are teaching the Faith to, someone who needs some loving attention, someone they want to thank for something, or to their parents in gratitude for all that they do for them. One may also use the game as an opportunity to discuss metaphorical quotes about roses, such as Persian Hidden Words #3, or the one on pages 320-21 from Gleanings.

Laws Symbol Search

I told the students they would be going on a *Symbol Search* and that those symbols were found in the following quotes, which I read to them. I did not label the symbols, but trusted their ability to ascertain from the quotes what the symbols were. Some of the symbols are mentioned in several quotes, and some quotes contain several symbols. The symbols that I used are underlined. Most of the students quickly figured out what they would be looking for.

This is a Book which hath become the Lamp of the Eternal unto the world.....
~Baha'u'llah, The Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 87

This Book is none other than the ancient Lamp of God for the whole world.....
~Baha'u'llah, Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 7

O ye peoples of the world! Know assuredly that My commandments are the lamps of My loving providence among My servants, and the keys of My mercy for My creatures.
~Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 20

The sincere among His servants will regard the precepts set forth by God as the Water of Life to the followers of every faith, and the Lamp of wisdom and loving providence to all the denizens of earth and heaven. ~Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 29

The laws and ordinances that constitute the major theme of this Book, Baha'u'llah, moreover, has specifically characterized as..... "*the "fruits"* of His *"Tree,"..... "This Book,"* He Himself testifies, *"is a heaven which We have adorned with the stars of Our commandments and prohibitions."*
~Shoghi Effendi: God Passes By, pages 215-216

His ordinances constitute the fruits of the divine Tree..... ~Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 189

Shoghi Effendi describes the Kitab-i-Aqdas in God Passes By, page 213 as: "a treasury enshrining the priceless gems of His Revelation..."

This is the Treasure of God; if only thou couldst understand! ~Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 87

Observe My commandments, for the love of My beauty. Happy is the lover that hath inhaled the divine fragrance of his Best-Beloved from these words, laden with the perfume of a grace which no tongue can describe. ~Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, pages 20-21

Indeed, the laws of God are like unto the ocean and the children of men as fish, did they but know it. ~Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 6

.....the billows of the Ocean of Utterance surged, casting forth the pearls of the laws decreed by the Lord of all mankind. ~Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 28

The objects were:

1. A miniature glass oil lamp, with red oil in it.
2. A 16 inch golden, very elegant old-fashioned looking key
3. A small ornamental vase with blue water in it
4. A Mandarin orange
5. A 3 dimensional golden star, about the size of a man's fist, with about 20 points on it
6. A small and very beautifully decorated red box inlaid with mirrors and lovely designs from India. Inside it was a handful of Austrian crystals in different shapes and colors. It was tied on all four sides tied with a lovely gold and red cord. When opened it really shimmered and sparkled.
7. A bottle of perfume. I had removed the label and encircled it with photographic rose stickers. It contained rose and other fragrances.
8. A lovely blue wooden fish with brass accents
9. A handful of large pearls inside a real shell on a blue silk cloth.

I told the students that they would be looking for 9 objects. The clues were in the quotes, and if you did not get them all, that was okay, b/c it would be obvious when you came across something that was not created by Mother Nature. None of the objects were pine cones, leaves, rocks, or sticks! I told them that they could be anywhere in the commons, our front or side yard. I also informed them that the objects were not under or inside anything,--they were visible but one had to look carefully b/c they could be in trees or behind trees or bushes, tucked in between roots, etc. There were only 9 symbol objects, but there were 15 kids, and I knew everyone would want the thrill of finding one. So I put most of them in pairs, and that way everybody would have a chance to find something b/c I also made a rule that once a team finds something and brings it inside, they can't retrieve any more objects. However, so they are not just sitting around being bored, they can still hunt,--they just can't tell anyone or touch an object if they find another one. More rule details: When a pair found something, they were to bring it inside and place on the living room table. They were not to run with any of the objects b/c they could fall and hurt themselves or break the object—some had glass parts. If they found the object that was tied with a golden cord, they were not to open it—I would do that at the end. As each object was found, I would announce it and yell to the seekers how many were left. Every child in the class would get a prize for hunting that represented one of the objects.

An assistant stayed with the students while I hid the objects.

They loved this activity and were so thrilled when they found something. When all the objects were found, I summoned the kids inside, and re-read the quotes, while they were to point to the relevant object. This was very easy, but helped to reinforce their memory of how special the laws are. We also briefly discussed their meaning. For the fragrance quote, each child got to spray some on their arm or hand if they wanted it. They were delighted by the shimmering crystals in the treasure box. Then I presented their "reward" for their hunt: A miniature set of 3 ornate metallic keys attached to a thin silk red or purple ribbon to be worn as a necklace, hung, or given away as a gift. I asked them what it stood for, and they remembered:

O ye peoples of the world! Know assuredly that My commandments are.... the keys of My mercy for My creatures. ~Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 20

We discussed how keys open or unlock things, and how we all need to "unlock" God's mercy because we all do things that are wrong or hurtful to ourselves or others at times. We are all imperfect and have a lower nature that often influences us. (The keys can be found at places that sell charms or arts and crafts stores. Mine were actually in the scrap-booking

section of a Michaels' Arts and Crafts store.) To end the activity, I asked them what these objects symbolized, and they of course got it—the laws and/or the Kitab-i-Aqdas.

Ego-Balloons

This game was created for our lesson on humility. I explained that egos and lower selves can become too large and inflated, like a balloon. We need to keep them "under control" and "in line". So for this game, 2 teams would each be given an equal sized blown up balloon. Each team lined up across from each other. The goal was to be the first team to get the balloon down their own line w/o it hitting the floor or going out of reach. It is hard to control the lower self and the ego, so to make it hard to control the balloon, the team members could only use heads and feet to maneuver the balloon. Each team member could touch the balloon with their head or feet as many times as needed to get it to the next person. No one is to be skipped. If hands or arms were used, or the balloon hit the floor or went out of reach, it was brought back to the start. Youngest ones can be placed at the very beginning and end of the line, since the first one begins the race and the last one catches it, these are the easiest spots to be in.

Please note that the age and number of the children and the size of the balloon will greatly influence control. The less air, the faster it will fall. Teams should have different colored balloons so they never get mixed up. Encourage the winning team to show humility by not boasting. You can also completely dispense with the race idea, and just make the control of the balloon the only challenge.

Variations:

Same rules apply—if the balloon goes out of reach or hits the ground, it goes back to the beginning.

Team members sat down on the floor, and could use hands and feet. They could slide about in their efforts to control the balloon. (Older groups may be able to use only feet for this version and the one below.)

They then did the same as above, but had to be on their backs, with their legs in the air. They could also scoot if necessary.

Team members laid on their stomachs, and could use only hands. They could slide on their stomachs if needed to.

Team members stood in their lines and were allowed to use hands—but each could only bat the balloon once. No child was to be missed. If this proves too hard, let them hit it twice.

Team members stood up and had to pass the balloon down the line by squeezing it between their stomachs. No hands or feet could be used.

Team members stood up and had to pass the balloon down the line by squeezing it between their knees. No hands or

feet could be used.

Spread team members out down the line. Members have to hold balloons between their knees and hop to the next person in line. Or they can hold it between their ankles and hop. You can also try it as a relay race across a distance.

Do the same as above, but no hopping is allowed. Team members must therefore waddle, and it looks really funny. You can also try this one as a relay race across a distance.

Team members sit down (girls with skirts or dresses can't do this one) in a line, as you would on a toboggan sled. Then kids scoot a little to create some distance from each other and they lay on their backs and put their feet and legs up in the air. I then placed the balloon in between the feet of the first person in line, and the goal is to pass the balloon all the way down the line to the last person just using the feet. One always passes to the person behind them and they rock on their back (no touching the balloon with hands) and try to place the balloon between the feet of the person behind them. (If you want to continue and go the opposite direction, just have everybody rotate direction, and start with the person who was originally last.)

Students were divided up into groups of 2 or 3. They stood facing each other very close, with arms around each other. The balloon was placed at the bottom of their feet between them, enclosed by their bodies. No hands or forearms were to be used. The goal was to squirm and wiggle it up so that it was between their faces. Taller kids just bent lower at the end point. If the balloon escaped, they had to start over.

One day, there were only 3 kids, so we improvised. I also played, to make 4. We spread out, and had to get the balloon down the line, then back up again to the first person. There was no race, but keeping the balloon under control was challenge enough.

The ego is the animal in us, the heritage of the flesh which is full of selfish desires. By obeying the laws of God, seeking to live the life laid down in our teachings, and prayer and struggle, we can subdue our egos. We call people 'Saints' who

have achieved the highest degree of mastery over their ego. (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 8, 1949)

.....the ego can and should be ever-increasingly subordinated to the enlightened soul of man. This is what spiritual progress implies. (From a letter dated 14 December 1941 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

Traveling with Truthfulness

This game is based on the following 2 quotes:

Say: trustworthiness is the sun of the heaven of My commandments, truthfulness is its moon, and praiseworthy attributes are its stars. ~Baha'u'llah: Trustworthiness, page 6

Without truthfulness, progress and success, in all the worlds of God, are impossible for any soul. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Trustworthiness, page 12

It can easily be made into a *Low Activity* game by making a no running, only walking rule. *Also, one can greatly simplify the materials used and still get the metaphor across.*

Because this game was designed specifically for our class on truthfulness, we focused on obtaining moons. But it could easily be adapted for classes on trustworthiness using suns and/or "praiseworthy attributes" (virtues in general) using stars. Students would then have to obtain 1 of each (sun, moon, star) to progress to each new world. Or if the class is focusing only on trustworthiness or virtues in general, students would hunt for suns or stars instead of moons. However, it is only truthfulness that is mentioned in terms of progressing in the worlds of God, and that is central to the visual metaphor we used. That said, I think it is reasonable to surmise from a thorough reading of Baha'i scripture that trustworthiness and other virtues are also essential for progression.

So, the first thing I did was search for what I would consider really attractive moons. I found yellow or blue painted crescent ones in craft stores, but the yellow ones looked just like bananas, and the blue ones were not luminous enough for my tastes—and besides, our moon is never blue! They were also at least 50 cents a piece, and I needed 4 for each student. Since the moons were to represent truthfulness, they had to look really beautiful and special. So I bought 1 ½ inch wooden circles and pearlescent (shimmering white iridescent color) fabric paint, iridescent shimmering glitter glue, and glow in the dark glitter. First I mixed the fabric paint and glitter glue, then painted one side of the discs. While still wet, I sprinkled the glow in the dark glitter (which is mainly white sparkles with a touch of light green phosphorous) on each moon. (When painting, do not lay the discs on newspaper—the edges will stick and then you have to spend a lot of time peeling newspaper from each moon. Lay them on disposable plastic). When the discs were completely dry, I did the other side the same way. If you can't find glow in the dark glitter, its not that critical—the game is played in the light for safety. Its just that the kids found the moons even more desirable and cool when they discovered that they glow in the dark if allowed to soak up some artificial light for a few minutes.

Then I had to make a symbolic representation of "the worlds of God". I decided to make 4 worlds of God. I wanted the players to get a sense of progression or movement through the worlds of God. So I found 3 cardboard boxes that created a staircase effect. I needed one more for the top box, but did not have one big enough, so I used a wooden tray table on tall legs, with a box taped securely on top of that. Then I spent several hours trying out different silk and exotic shimmering, iridescent, and sparkling cloths on the boxes. There was a different cloth for each level. (Underneath the top cloths, I used really large silk cloths on the bigger boxes and standing tray so the sides were completely covered. I happen to own many very unusual cloths that I use again and again in my curriculum. Fabric stores often have great sales, so keep an eye out for those). I also covered the bookcase and some other furniture in the room so that the worlds of God structure would not have clutter in the view. Thus, the whole room seemed special. However, one can simply lay some elegant cloth on stairs that are not used for running up and down during the game. Then each stair represents another world. You can specify the number of worlds by which ones are covered with cloth.

Using push pins behind the boxes, I also strung a string of brass stars that hugged the flat horizontal and vertical surfaces, these representing the stars of praiseworthy attributes. On the fourth level, I placed a giant 3 D gold-leafed many pronged star that also looks like a sun (which is a giant star anyway). This represented the sun of trustworthiness. I sprinkled each layer with shimmering white very fine glitter.

Then I found a greatest name card that was shiny green on a gold background. I cut it out so it was not a boring rectangle, and taped it to the string of stars on the first level, which stood for this world of God.

Finally, I happened to have an extremely long and narrow shimmering blue cloth that my sister gave me. That was laid underneath the green cloth of the first box , then tucked under that box, then spread out leading to the door of the room, like a pathway.

Also on the first level/box, on the vertical surface touching the floor, I wrote a sign in metallic blue marker that said "Four of the Worlds of God." I had used fancy trim scissors to give the sign a more elegant feel, making the edges in a pretty pattern. The sign was made out of a gorgeous mylar sheet called "Shimmer Sheetz" They really do shimmer and have different colors layered on top of each other and look very mystical and unique. The pattern that struck me as most befitting for my color scheme is called "Light Blue and Purple" Item # 8006 from the following web-site: www.franticstamper.com. Click on their search page and type "shimmer sheetz" in the box. Or you can find them at other locations by doing a Google search. (But any attractive sign made out of paper or colored foil will do. I am just obsessive about ascetics, in case you have not noticed).

And finally, I used small cards (3 X 4 ½ inches) of various colors to make the symbols of the students. On each card was an outline of a person made of holographic sticky back paper. Using a permanent marker on the backside, I had traced a small paper doll onto this holographic paper then cut them out and stuck onto the cards. (I told the students that this stood for their "soul-body", b/c after the 1st world, people no longer have a physical body). The students were highly delighted with them. I use this holographic paper a lot for materials that I want to look mystical, ethereal, and spiritual or just dazzling. The designs are from the same set purchased for the rain drops in the *Sacred Rain* game. But I did not use the ones that looked like water, or the geometric angular patterns—too man made looking. The ones I did use had circles, stars, spots, feathering, etc. and they are so magical looking in light—changing colors with a very high intensity reflection. There are 2 different sets, and they are available from Nasco Arts and Crafts Catalog. (800-558-9595, www.eNasco.com, item #s 9706595 & 9714401.) Underneath the outline of each holographic person shape, was a removable white label. The students were to write their name on their card on this label. It could then be peeled off after the game and replaced with a blank one for the next time. I would have loved to let the students take their cards and moons home, but given the time and expense involved in creating them, that was not acceptable.

To me, this is an indoor game. The moons are just too much work to risk losing outside, plus the worlds of God structure needs to be set up well before the students arrive, and rain would ruin it. However, it can be played outside if one has time to set up the structure the day of class, or can build it in a sheltered area. It will be quite hard to find the moons unless you strictly limit the search area to no more than an acre and lay them in obvious places.

Before beginning, I sprayed the room containing the worlds of God structure with rose oil perfume, to add to its beauty and special-ness and to utilize an extra sense in the teaching of a concept. Baha'u'llah refers to *" .....the divine fragrance of My worlds."* The Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 61

So here is how it was explained to the students: First, I read them the 2 quotes (above) about the moons of truthfulness and needing truthfulness to be able to progress in the worlds of God. Next, they were asked to choose a soul-body card and write their name on the white label. Then I collected the cards b/c I knew they would be captivated by the light reflections and so not be listening well. Next, the students were told that they needed to find 4 moons b/c they were going to attempt to progress through 4 of the infinite worlds of God. (*Know thou of a truth that the worlds of God are countless in their number, and infinite in their range. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, pages 151-152)

The moons would not be inside any drawers, cabinets, or closets, nor under or behind anything—just camouflaged by their color and size. (I put them mostly on light colored surfaces, not too high up so kids could see them. For example, one was in full view in a shoe, another on top of books standing upright on a shelf on the white pages, another on the top of a white bottle, etc.) The moons would be in 3 rooms only, the living, dining, and play room. There are hidden only 4 moons for each player.

Next I showed the students the worlds of God structure and they oohed and aaahed, so I know they liked it. They also liked the fragrance. Then they placed their cards on the blue pathway right in front of the first world, but not on it, since they had to find a moon to progress through that world, which represented this physical world.

Then I passed out small heart shaped canvas bags/pouches with handles. (Heart shaped boxes would also do, or one can dispense with these receptacles and the moons can just be placed next to the cards).

Then I told the students that when you find a moon, immediately place it in your heart pouch. This represents having truthfulness in your heart. Then stop searching and go to the worlds of God structure and move your soul-body card up one level. This means that you have progressed in a world of God with truthfulness. Then resume searching. You can find only 1 moon at a time. To reiterate: Upon discovery of each moon, place it in your heart pouch, and move your "soul-body" up one level to another world of God. Then go search for another. When you have found all 4 moons and have therefore progressed to the 4th world, you still have work to do: Help others find moons, guiding them to the location of another one. You can't touch or carry any more than 4. When half of the students have reached the 4th world, the monster of dishonesty and deceitfulness comes out and starts stealing them from their locations. I showed them an ugly monster mask, and exclaimed that this is what we look like spiritually when we lie or are dishonest in any way. I know

where the moons are hidden, so I will collect them quite fast. So, you might want to follow me around and notice where I am heading and try and snatch one before I get to it. I will walk in a kind of lumbering, rocking, slow gait, making yucky noises. So you do have a chance to spot and grab a moon before I get to it.

This aspect made the game more thrilling. But since the kids so badly wanted to get to the 4th level/world, those that did not make it were given a second chance. I shut all the students in the room with the worlds of God, and re-hid in new places in one room only, all the moons I had grabbed as the monster of dishonesty and deceitfulness. Then I gave them 60 seconds to find those moons—everybody searched so that all could be successful, though sometimes just in the nick of time. I counted out loud in the doorway wearing the mask, to add to the pressure. At the end of 60 seconds, I come barging in seeking to snatch moons. You will notice that in the vast majority of my games, the rules are such that students who are successful in the goals are required to help the others succeed. (I do this b/c the world so badly needs this attitude which is the opposite of competing to get the best or most for oneself—an attitude that when played out in larger settings than games, I think leads to extreme materialism, greed, selfishness and mass suffering for the less privileged).

Also, if possible, station a helper at the door inside the room with the worlds of God structure to make sure the players do not run, shove, or get rough with the structure, etc., in their hurry to progress to the 4th world. I called this person a guardian angel of the worlds of God.

Optional extension teaching for older kids: It was explained that the Greatest Name laying on the first world was to represent belief in Baha'u'llah. I explained to the kids that this was also necessary in addition to truthfulness for success and progress in all the worlds of God. I read and explained to them the following quote to back this up, noting how being truthful is a commandment of God, but obedience to God's laws is only ½ of the twin duties. This is the first paragraph in the Most Holy Book, The Kitab-i-Aqdas.:

IN THE NAME OF HIM WHO IS THE SUPREME RULER OVER ALL THAT HATH BEEN AND ALL THAT IS TO BE: The first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws.....Whoso achieveth this duty hath attained unto all good; and whoso is deprived thereof hath gone astray, though he be the author of every righteous deed. It behoveth everyone who reacheth this most sublime station, this summit of transcendent glory, to observe every ordinance of Him Who is the Desire of the world. These twin duties are inseparable. Neither is acceptable without the other. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the Source of Divine inspiration. ~Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 19

Trustworthiness Tug

Cleave ye at all times to the cord of trustworthiness and hold fast the hem of the garment of truthfulness.... ~Baha'u'llah: Trustworthiness Compilation, # 27, page 7

Cleave ye to the hem of the raiment of virtue and keep fast hold of the cord of piety and trustworthiness. Have regard to the good of the world and not to your own selfish desires. ~Baha'u'llah: Trustworthiness Compilation, # 19, page 5

.....We gazed on one of the Beauties of the Most Sublime Paradise, standing on a pillar of light, and calling aloud saying: "O inmates of earth and heaven! Behold ye My beauty, and My radiance, and My revelation, and My effulgence. By God, the True One! I am Trustworthiness and the revelation thereof, and the beauty thereof. I will recompense whosoever will cleave unto Me, and recognize My rank and station, and hold fast unto My hem. ~Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, pages 37-38

Every student was to think of a situation in which they struggled to be trustworthy. Then I showed them a long, silky, shimmering blue cloth that was to represent the "cord of trustworthiness". (I did not use a cord b/c of the potential for friction burns). I talked about how often we all struggle with our lower nature and its selfish desires when we find it hard to be trustworthy. We feel the *pull* of our lower nature. I then took out a devil-face mask and said I was going to wear it and I would stand for their lower nature and selfish desires. Then we went outside and formed 2 teams—balancing weight and size as best as possible. Each team took a good hold of each end of the cloth. We positioned ourselves in a line between 2 cones, so that half of the length of each side of the cloth was on each side of the cones. This meant that the starting point was fair and even. I was in the front of the side that represented the lower nature, since I was wearing the mask and was the strongest. Then we had an old-fashioned tug of war game, which of course symbolized the tug of war we all have between our lower and higher nature, usually on a daily basis. We did this several times, alternating team membership

and numbers, so all could be on both sides and test their strength against different people. I even let 2 kids tug it out b/c we had time. The kids really got a kick out of this very simple game. The winning side was the one that pulled the other side past the cones.

If studying truthfulness, just replace trustworthiness with truthfulness in the description, and make the cloth the *"hem of the garment of truthfulness."*

Find the Cornerstone

We did this one in conjunction with our unit on the Baha'i House of Worship, after reading the story of Nettie Tobin. I wanted our play stone to be beautiful for several reasons: It would make finding it more rewarding. But mainly b/c I wanted to highlight and symbolize how special the stone is b/c it represented the loving desire of a very materially poor soul, Nettie Tobin, to contribute something to the building of the Temple. She also displayed remarkable fortitude and determination in getting the stone to the building site. And Abdu'l-Baha Himself, laid this stone in its place. The stone is only a material object, but its a symbol of love and desire to serve. I could not use a stone that was the same size as the real one b/c it would be too heavy, so I chose one that was the largest and heaviest that a child can carry. Weight and size, along with beauty, can be used to make impressions on children. So, I spray painted a large stone with pearlescent glaze, rubbed silver shimmer powder all over it, then sprinkled it with fine white iridescent glitter, then sprayed it with an acrylic clear coating to seal it. It really did shimmer and sparkle. I also sprayed it with rose oil, to stimulate another sense.

We played a hide and seek game in which pairs or individuals try to locate the stone. The one or pair who found it gets to hide it for the next round. (Its a good idea to approve of the hiding place so its not too obvious, too hard, or too muddy).

We talked about how locating the stone requires the virtues of determination and perseverance, which Nettie Tobin certainly demonstrated in hauling the stone the considerable distance to the building site.

The shimmer powder is available at www.discountschoolsupply.com/ item #BISL. The other materials are available at Michael's Arts and Crafts stores.

Go to the Source

Verily, the words which have descended from the heaven of the Will of God are the source of unity and harmony for the world. ~Baha'u'llah as quoted by Shoghi Effendi in The Advent of Divine Justice, page 37

Through the power of the words He hath uttered the whole of the human race can be illumined with the light of unity.....~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 286

I explained to the students that they were the Baha'i teachers. (Can use term "spiritual teachers" if in secular or interfaith setting). They know what the source of unity and harmony for the world is, what alone has the power to banish evil from the face of the earth. Its the Word of God. But its hard work to bring the world to the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, many are prejudiced against new religions or just not interested. And Baha'is can't do it alone, we need to work together in unity with people of all Faiths as well as with each other. We need to be unified ourselves if we are to accomplish this awesome task. And being unified with each other is hard and challenging in its own right! We don't get to choose who the members of our Baha'i community are—God does.

So, 4-5 students were to form a circle. They were all to either face outward or inward, but all had to be facing the same way. I deliberately chose teams that had wide variations in height and age. I explained that these variations represented the diversity of maturity in a Baha'i community. They could not use their hands. If facing inward, hands were to be clasped behind their backs. If facing outward, clasped in front. This was done to make the activity hard—just as teaching in unity is. Then I placed a large inflatable earth ball in the center of their bodies. They were to hold it there, using their chests or stomachs, w/o dropping it, while moving as fast they could as a unit. They were to move to a bar stool that had a silk cloth over it, upon which a book called The Writings of Baha'u'llah was standing upright in a brass frame. I asked the students why the silk cloth was blue. They got it: b/c one of the frequent metaphors for Baha'u'llah's Revelation is the Water of Life.

I wore a devil mask, and represented evil, disunity, war, etc. The goal was to have one member of the team touch the book before I reached them. To make it fair, they got about a 6 foot head start. If done inside, I slither on the floor, pulling myself along with my arms. If done outside, or on carpet, I crawl. If I crawl, I move a bit faster, so I give them about a 10 foot lead. I also make snarling and growling noises as I pursue them. If I touch one of them, I won that round. They love it.

Tips: Let the group have at least two chances, trying each facing inward and outward. If there are more than 5 or 6 kids, have 2 balls and 2 monsters, or just have teams take turns. Each team member should be touching the ball, otherwise their participation is only token. If they just can't seem to do it, have them link elbows if facing outward, and wrap arms

around each other's shoulders if facing inward. But this makes it much easier. To make it harder, give them less of a head start, or insist that w/o using their hands or dropping the earth ball, they must maneuver the ball to touch the book. The book should probably being lying flat in that case, or they will likely knock it over.

More relevant quotes on how the world needs the Word of God to achieve peace and prosperity:

....were men to abide by and observe the divine teachings, every trace of evil would be banished from the face of the earth. ~Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 176

....the establishment of peace is unachievable save through the power of the Word of God....
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, pages 295-296

*Note thou: could these fevers in the world of the mind, these fires of war and hate, of resentment and malice among the nations, this aggression of peoples against peoples, which have destroyed the tranquillity of the whole world ever be made to abate, except through the living waters of the teachings of God? No, never! `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 53
Everyone who truly seeks and justly reflects will admit that..... the teachings of Baha'u'llah are the very healing of the sick world, the remedy for every need and condition. In them may be found.....the cause of the happiness of the world of humanity, ...the basis of unity for all nations, the fountain source of love amongst mankind, ...the means of peace and harmony, the one bond which will unite the East and the West. `Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 440

Make Firm Our Steps
Make firm our steps, O Lord, in Thy path and strengthen Thou our hearts in Thine obedience. ~Abdu'l-Baha, Baha'i Prayers, p. 69

This game can be used for a unit on obedience to God's laws, firmness in the Covenant, or on the virtues mentioned below at the end of this description. If you have Joe Crone's CD *Immerse Yourselves*, its great fun for the students to hear the verse to music while doing this activity. It's a very upbeat, boisterous melody, and thus encourages one to move quickly—which adds to the challenge of this already somewhat difficult task. Students were to follow a narrow and winding path made with wooden planks. The path was shaped like a lollipop on a zigag stick. The first section consisted of short rectangles placed in a zigzag pattern in a narrow hallway. Then it became a large somewhat circular pathway. Some of the wood pieces were short wide rectangles, and some were quite long and thin. One even was a very thin and long triangle which was warped so it swung around like a pivot. Most of the planks were spaced far enough a part so that kids had to stretch a little, some even had to jump a bit to get to the next one. They were also placed on a wooden floor so they slid. And some were so thin, they could flip if one did not place their feet squarely in the middle and kids really had to focus on balancing. Going back to the first plank was especially challenging b/c I had deliberately arranged the first 5 planks so that, students would have to be able to pass another going in the opposite direction on the second round. These planks were placed in a narrow hallway, so students could use the walls for balance. The wooden pieces were numbered so that it was clear in what order students were to proceed.

The first time students were to just move along at a clip dictated by the music. The second time they were to attempt to do it w/o ever placing a foot off the planks. And the third time they were to try to do all that, but also not use the supports of the walls or furniture with their hands. (For this round, children went individually so there was no passing to get back to plank 1). This was really hard. I gave them an extra round. (One can make this activity impossible to do w/o the supports of walls and furniture, and then explain that we cannot stay on the path of God w/o the support of community, prayer, deepening in God's Words, etc. But the kids so enjoyed the challenge of doing it w/o support, that I decided not to use that metaphor). It is a bit easier if the kids wear shoes, but they enjoyed the challenge doing it barefoot. If this is done outside on grass, then the boards should be placed far enough apart so that students need to jump—otherwise there is not much of a challenge for 7-10 year olds b/c the boards will not slide on grass.

The kids loved this obstacle course-like game. We talked about what virtues were needed: Determination, perseverance, focus, patience waiting for those in front, and excellence if you wanted to do it perfectly. During break students really learned the concept that "practice makes perfect." We also discussed how being firm in the path of God is challenging, and we all slip off sometimes, we all need the virtues of determination, perseverance and patience to succeed in following the guidance (path) of God's teachings.

Righteous Rollers
2 students were chosen to sit on roller boards. (These are plastic or wooden squares on wheels). I put on a monster mask and blindfold. As usual when I wear a mask, I represented the lower nature and all its negative attributes such as greed, selfishness, anger, cruelty, etc. I made the pursuit more dramatic by making growling and snarling noises, and speaking in a menacing tone about hunting for victims, etc. Other students stood or kneeled around the perimeter of the designated playing area—basically a large circle delineated by our furniture and walls. They were to keep me from bashing into furniture or falling down the stairwell. They also were to make sure that the 2 player children did not stray outside the proper area while being pursued. The sound of the wheels on the wood floor would guide me, but if the players were really quiet, I would have to sweep the entire area. To make it fair, since the space was quite small, I crawled on all fours, and when my knees got sore, waddled on my feet with my knees bent. Otherwise, it would be too easy to catch the roller boarders, especially if I can hear them move. When caught, their turn was up and another was chosen. If they were exceptionally skilled at avoiding the lower nature, after 3 minutes, they were pronounced victorious, and got to choose the next player(s) so others could have a turn. (We used 2 timers, one for each rolling child). If you have enough kids, roller boards, and space, there can be more than two attempting to avoid the lower nature, and more than 1 lower nature, and/or the lower nature can move on his or her feet. The kids absolutely loved this game.

The spiritual metaphor for this game: All Manifestations have taught that we should strive to avoid becoming prisoners of self and passion, corrupted by our very persistent lower natures. We should avoid listening to and succumbing to this aspect of our selves, and instead strive to have our higher natures dominate our choices and actions. Being led by our lower natures is really a result of ignorance, which is a sort of blindness, being unaware of our spiritual purpose. Thus, the lower nature is blindfolded. When grabbed, that means that we allowed our lower nature to capture us in that moment—and as in life there are consequences for that. The consequence in the game is that one's turn is over.

The root cause of wrongdoing is ignorance.....
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of`Abdu'l-Baha, p. 136

Characterize yourselves with the characteristics of the people of divine morality. Shun all manner of vices as you shun a poisonous snake..... ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Excellence in All Things, page 376

Vices are expressions of the lower nature, and so to shun, (avoid) them means to shun our lower natures.

God has created man in order that he may be a dove of the Kingdom, a heavenly candle, a recipient of eternal life. God has created man in order that he may be resuscitated through the breaths of the Holy Spirit and become the light of the world. How debased the soul which can find enjoyment in this darkness, occupied with itself, the captive of self and passion, wallowing in the mire of the material world! How degraded is such a nature! What an ignorance this is! What a blindness! How glorious the station of man who has partaken of the heavenly food and built the temple of his everlasting residence in the world of heaven! ~Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 185

Where to obtain roller boards: Go to www.discountschoolsupply.com, Item# 8WWROLLIT.

Admit My Soul
This game is based on this quote:

O LORD! Enable all the peoples of the earth to gain admittance into the Paradise of Thy Faith, so that no created being may remain beyond the bounds of Thy good-pleasure. ~The Bab: Selections from the Writings of The Bab, page 191

This game was created for our unit on Life After Death. We studied numerous quotes that related paradise to the good pleasure of God. For example:

As to Paradise: It is a reality and there can be no doubt about it, and now in this world it is realized through love of Me and My good-pleasure. ~Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 189

Paradise signifieth first and foremost the good-pleasure of God. Whosoever attaineth His good-pleasure is reckoned and recorded among the inhabitants of the most exalted paradise and will

attain, after the ascension of his soul, that which pen and ink are powerless to describe. ~Baha'u'llah: The Tabernacle of Unity, page 62 (See also page 46)

Indeed no paradise is more glorious in the sight of God than attainment unto His good-pleasure. ~The Bab: Selections from the Writings of The Bab, page 103

Before playing, I shared the first quote above and asked that if one has the good pleasure of God, one can experience _____? (paradise). Thus paradise and being w/in the bounds of the good pleasure of God is nearly the same thing.

Using beautiful long saris from India, we designated an area of land as the Paradise of God's Faith. (However, any reasonably attractive cloth or rope would do). I stuck 8 green metal plant supporters in the ground in a large circle about 7-8 feet in diameter and tied the saris around them about 3 feet off the ground. The Sari cloth hung in a scalloped pattern and looked really lovely.

I asked the students what prevents people from being admitted into the paradise of God's Faith and interferes with souls remaining within the bounds of God's good pleasure---(which we learned is necessary to achieve paradise)? They got it right away: The lower nature. Thus, my assistants or myself wore devil masks that stood for the lower nature.

Students were given 6 special flying discs that had a holographic star-like design in the middle with a light. (They are much more beautiful to see at night). The main body of the discs is clear with a rubber rim in yellow, red, blue or green. These are called Aerobie Skylighter Lighted Discs. (Available at www.amazon.com). The lower nature people stood around the area designated as paradise, on the outside, not the inside. The lighted discs represented one's soul, and the goal was to get the discs into the designated area. If you threw it, and it was not intercepted, and it landed w/in the boundaries of the Paradise of Gods Faith, w/in the bounds of His good pleasure, then that student triumphed over the lower natures. Students were to rotate who got to throw since there were more students than discs. (Also, having 6 of these coming at the lower natures at once was plenty—any more could make injury more likely, especially if one hits the face. A hockey mask or football helmet and shin guards may not be a bad idea for the lower natures to wear.) Students try to achieve as many entries as possible by the end of the game and they keep track of their own scores.

The designated area of land that represented paradise can be open to entry on all sides if you have enough lower natures. It can be square, oval, rectangular, or circular. For groups under 8, we used 1 lower nature and had the students line up behind an invisible line marked by 3 cones, so there were 6 facing the lower nature at once. The players soon discovered that if they threw in groups, they were more likely not to be thwarted by the lower nature. The lower nature was kept pretty busy---but its hard to aim so the discs would land inside and also not be intercepted. Its key that when one plays this game, there are just enough lower natures to make it challenging (as it is in real life—paradise and the good pleasure of God are not that easy to attain) but not impossible. The number of lower natures needed depends on how athletic and coordinated they and the kids are, how large the designated area is and how many discs and kids are in the game. If intercepted, the lower nature simply tosses it back to the kids for another try. If a disc is not intercepted, and lands w/in the boundaries, it is still given back so others can use it, (after acknowledging the victory) as well as if it passes over or lands out of bounds. One will also need to experiment with size of the paradise area---too large and its too easy (unless there are many lower natures) and too small and its impossible. Also, it really is essential and moves the game along when you have a person or two designated as retriever of the discs b/c the lower nature(s) needs to keep busy thwarting. The retriever person should fling the discs back to the line of kids low to ground so a child does not get hit in the face or neck.

One can also use regular frisbees, one for each child, preferably a different color for each one. The kids could even decorate their own with permanent markers. But then the designated area needs to be smaller, b/c the lower natures could easily become overwhelmed with 10-15 or so frisbees being tossed into their guarded space at once.

Another really fun option is to play this game at night if you have the Aerobie Skylighters and some large glow sticks. Create the boundaries with the glow sticks lying or stuck in the ground. Its magical and the kids will love it.

Indoor Version:

For playing in an inside space other than a gym, one will need lighter weight discs for the souls. I used miniature 3 inch diameter balsa wood circles that had adhesive glitter foam affixed to each side (different color on each side) and an iridescent plastic 3D circular sticker in the center on one side. Each circle had a different combination of colors so players could easily remember which one was theirs. (However, the game goes much faster if kids just grab the closest disc flung back to them and not use the same one). Kids dipped their hand into a blue velvet bag with sparkles on it to retrieve their particular soul disc. If they did not like the color combination, they could trade if someone else wanted to exchange with theirs'. The paradise area was delineated by a purple sparkly cloth laid on top of our raised black slate hearth.

My assistant or myself wore a mask that stood for the lower nature and attempted to keep the souls out of paradise. (Only one lower nature is needed for the indoor version, unless you have 10 or more kids. You can also use a shield to help

block, such as a towel, tray or garbage can lid). The lower nature stands in front of the paradise area. Players stand in a zone designated behind a carpet and try to fling their soul-discs into paradise as many times as possible, keeping count. If a player threw their disc, and it was not intercepted, and it landed w/in the boundaries of the Paradise of Gods Faith, w/in the bounds of His good pleasure, then that symbolized that the student triumphed over their lower nature.

Also, it really moves the game along when you have a person designated as retriever of the discs b/c the lower nature(s) needs to keep busy thwarting. The retriever person should fling the discs back to the line of kids low to ground so a child does not get hit in the face or neck.

The round ended when one child reached 19 admittances. For the second round, just for fun and as a memorable reinforcing visual aid, I laid on my stomach on the floor in front of the raised hearth that was the area of paradise. I kept my mask on and asked my helper to sit on my rear end. I told the kids that it is so much easier to achieve paradise (by gaining admittance into the bounds of God's good pleasure) if our higher nature dominates our lower. So my assistant represented my higher nature dominating my lower nature by sitting on or putting their foot on me, while I flailed about trying to snatch the ankles and pant legs of the students coming to retrieve their soul-discs (since my retriever was occupied by dominating me). They thought this was hilarious and we all had a good laugh. Sure enough, every player had more admittances than the previous round. Just make sure that the area is long enough so that all the kids coming to retrieve their soul-discs don't act as inadvertent barriers and make the admittances even harder than when the lower nature was not being dominated by the higher.

LOW ACTIVITY GAMES

Synchrony Straw Pass # *
Sit in a circle and put a straw in your mouths, and without the use of hands, try to pass a ring around the circle just using straws. One can not touch the ring or straw with hands at any time. The ring should not be so big that its too easy, nor so small that 2 straws can't fit in it at the same time. It takes a lot of synchrony—knowing just when to lower and raise the straw. Synchrony is an expression of unity and cooperation—think of acrobats, synchronized swimming, dancing, etc. –it means moving and working together in a planned, harmonious way, like fingers on a hand. (Demonstrate two hands moving in synchrony, like mirror images or as in climbing a ladder.) Synchrony does not necessarily mean doing the exact same thing at the same time, though in some cases it does. Unity and synchrony in relationships means adjusting one's behavior to another's and being sensitive to feelings. For example, you would not choose the day in which your friend got chewed out by the teacher to complain to her about something you don't like in her behavior. Being "in synch" would mean that on that day, you would be especially loving and kind.

Tips for the game: Do not lower the straw until you are sure the other person has it hooked. You can lower and raise your bodies physically to use gravity. You can use straight or bendable straws. The bending of the straw makes the ring less likely to fall off, but it also makes it harder to get the ring off onto another straw! Think of the ring as representing love, and that one of our main goals in life is to share our love with others—and this is not always easy. People will annoy and frustrate us, and some people are difficult to show love to. When we are out of synch with others, it is almost impossible for them to feel love from us. If playing with 2 teams as described below, 2 identical rings with hearts on them would be ideal equipment for this game. I used little brass heart lockets which I hung from each ring by a gold thread. If playing with one team, one heart on a ring will suffice, of course. One can also call this game *A Labor of Love.*

If you want to add a competitive aspect and you have enough kids, create 2 teams of equal numbers of kids sitting in a circle and of course the goal is to be the first team to get the ring around the circle back to the starting player. If the ring falls or someone uses their hands, the ring has to go back to the starting player—but it can go around either way—which makes sure that all kids get a turn.

.....love God by loving His servants.... ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Secret of Divine Civilization, page 40

Pass the Good Things #
I used sparkly pom poms to represent "the good things". I divided the group into 2 equal teams and each child got a really large plastic cup. Then each team got in a line and each player put the cup in their mouth and their hands behind their backs. The first in each line had a cup full of 19 pom poms, and I said that each pom pom stood for something that makes the world a better place—such as love, kindness, peace, respect, (the virtues). I said the goal is to fill each other's cup on down the line—to pass these good things on to others. I pointed out that it is often harder to be unselfish, loving, kind, etc. to all peoples, than their opposites, so that is why this game would be hard. The goal is to be the first team to

pass the good things to everyone and have all 19 pom poms poured into the last child's cup. As usual, I pointed out that being first is usually not important or admirable except when it came to expressing virtues—being first to show kindness or to give up your seat, etc. is definitely a plus. If a child drops his or her cup, or uses their hands, the team has to start over. If your team is first but has fewer pom poms left than the other team, its a tie. This game is hard and demands a lot of contortions but is fun. The children can't use their hands and only mouths and teeth are used to tip the cups and catch the pom poms. If the group can't be evenly divided by 2, then the front person can go twice by going to the end of the line. You can also remove the race aspect, and the winning team is the one with the most pom poms at the end, regardless of when the last cup is filled.

Pass the Water of Life #*

This is basically a wet version of the above game, except that it is not a race. Relate the water to the "Water of Life" (Baha'u'llah's Revelation), and sharing that with others as best we can. I divided the group into 2 equal teams and each child got a really large plastic cup. Then each team got in a line and each player put the cup in their mouth and their hands behind their backs. The first in each line had a cup full of water. I said the goal is to fill each other's cup on down the line—to pass these teachings on to others. I pointed out that it is often hard to share the teachings in a world so obsessed with unspiritual things and resistant to the unfamiliar--so the game would be made hard by the inability to use any hands. The goal is to be the team to have the most water left in the last cup—it is not a race. This game is a challenge and demands a lot of contortions but its quite enjoyed during hot weather. Pouring to the side is the best technique. If the group can't be evenly divided by 2, then the front person can go twice by going to the end of the line. I shared the following quotes to go with this game—which are the same ones used for *Let Me Refresh You.*

The sincere among His servants will regard the precepts set forth by God as the Water of Life to the followers of every faith.....~Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 29

This new Revelation has in reality been the water of life unto the thirsty.....~Shoghi Effendi: Bahiyyih Khanum, page 188

Spiritual success can be won today, only by teaching the Faith of God. The people are seeking, dying from spiritual thirst. The Baha'is must disseminate the Water of Life freely, so seeking souls may find eternal life. ~Shoghi Effendi: High Endeavors, page 42

For a unit on obligatory prayer, one could use the following quotes, suggesting that every time some water is spilled, a prayer was missed.

Thou hast written concerning the Obligatory Prayer. Such prayer is mandatory and necessary for everyone. .....it is the cause of ascent for the souls. It is .....living waters from the gardens of paradise. It is a clear duty prescribed by the All-Merciful. In no wise is it permissible to postpone or neglect it. ~Abdu'l-Baha: The Importance of Obligatory Prayer and Fasting, page 17

Obligatory prayers and supplications are the very water of life.....Take great care with this, and call on others to recite the obligatory prayers and supplications.
~Abdu'l-Baha: The Importance of Obligatory Prayer and Fasting, page 19

Puzzle Pieces II ###

For this game I have cut into 4 straight segments various posters and pages from Tablet of the Heart –God and Me--Memory Verses Selected from the Writings and Talks of Abdu'l-Baha compiled by Leslie Lundberg, illustrated by Terry Ostovar. The illustrations are in color or black and white. And both the poster pictures and the book's contain messages that promote unity and spirituality. The posters came from a school supply store. Those segments of course are much bigger than the book's. They should be laminated after they are cut (if you laminate then cut, the edges will be more likely to peel).

To begin this game I ask "How many of you have ever worked on a puzzle? Ever notice how each piece is different and unique, but each piece is important b/c each contributes to making the puzzle whole and complete? The idea is to connect or unify all the separate pieces so we get one complete picture. People are kind of like puzzle pieces—each person is unique, different, and important b/c each contributes to our one world to make it more beautiful and complete. When we all unify and connect hearts like puzzle pieces, we will have one beautiful, unified world."

This is a large group –get to know you-- mixer-ice breaker game. One must know how many people are playing and have the right number of puzzle segments. Thus, its a good idea to always have extra in a bag. The leader and some assistants pass out the segments—making sure they are really mixed up. The goal is for people to find those with the other 3 segments and complete their puzzle. They are asked to stay with their group until all are done and learn the names of the people in their group and 1 or 2 things about each person. You can point out that the messages in the puzzle, if practiced, will bring unity and joy to our world.

Unity Dolls ###
(Variation requires only 8 children.)

For this game you will need to have little paper dolls of different skin colors. School supply stores carry them. Call me if you can't find any. The number you make depends on how many players you anticipate having. I place the dolls in sets of five, and each set has dolls of different skin colors. On each doll in each set, I place a red heart or you can use a bright colored circle sticker, and write either "u" "n" "i" "t" or "y" on the heart or circle. So each set will spell unity and consist of 5 different colors. If you want them to last, laminate them or cover with clear contact paper. With older children, you can challenge them to play this game w/o speaking, and they really have to use body language and gestures to communicate. Then you can let them play again using words and point out how much easier it is when we can communicate—which is why Baha'u'llah taught that we must have a universal auxiliary language to foster world unity.

Anyway, divide the group into teams of five. (The game can be played with groups that are not divisible by 5, it just means that some kids will start with 2 dolls instead of one). If there are under 20 kids, (4 teams) it may be too easy. Ask the team members to group together and then you hand each member a doll, making sure that within the team there are a lot of the same letters and colors of the dolls. The goal is to come to the center of the room and trade until your team has 5 different colored dolls which spell unity. It is important to point out that it may be that 2 or 3 teams have the correct combination, but one team does not—so the game has not succeeded until all teams have the correct combination. What this means is that even a team which has the correct combination may have to trade some more to enable all the teams to succeed. Its OK to switch dolls as long as the one the other team is giving you does not ruin your combination. You can make the game even more exciting by having them race the clock or a timer. The amount of time you give them of course depends on the size of the group. Five minutes should be enough for a group of 25. You can ask them to better their time and play again. A version of this game for younger children is below, and one called *Loving Hands* in the medium active section.

Variation: Instead of handing out the dolls, hide them in a room or outside. They should be visible, but not extremely obvious. Teams of 2-5 children then race to find the right combination of 5 dolls. Teams members pick up every one they find, regardless of whether they need that color or letter, and use it to trade with other teams. The team members must call frequent meetings to see who has what. Game ends when all teams have sets of 5 different colored dolls that spell "unity".

Diverse Face Game ##
This is very similar to the above game but is more suited to smaller and younger, non-reading groups. For my particular version, I created 4 sets of 4 faces. In each set there was a dark brown, yellow, tan, and red face (though you can use less stereotypical colors—multi-cultural construction paper is now available which was not when I made this in the early 1980's). Also in each set the faces are different sizes and shapes. For this game, there is really only one way the sets can be correct b/c the goal is not only to have 4 different face colors in a group, but also the faces must be different size or shape. I also created one green face with 3 eyes—that is an extraterrestrial and can go with any group. It is useful for odd numbers of kids or the birthday child can have that one. This is a good mixing game to get kids to interact. Each child gets one face and the game ends when everybody is in their group with 4 different colored and sized faces. Kids should be encouraged to learn each other's names and 1 or 2 things about each other.

This is how I made the faces: 4 yellows: one long and skinny, one very large and round, one tiny and round, one medium round. I did the same for the browns, tans, and reds. Thus a correct set would be one very large round tan face, one medium round red, one long and skinny brown, one tiny round yellow. Another set would be one very large round yellow, one medium round brown, one long skinny red, one tiny round tan. You get the idea. Just make the sets I suggested and it will become clear how they fit together. The challenge is that not only must the faces be different colors in a set, they must not have 2 tiny rounds, or 2 long and skinnys. This game reinforces that diversity is good and desirable. I made it b/c I noticed that a lot of games encourage kids to match and find things that are the same. We want our children to think in terms of seeking out differences!

Myriads of Mystic Tongues *
First I would share and as best I can try to explain the following quote:

Myriads of mystic tongues find utterance in one speech, and myriads of hidden mysteries are revealed in a single melody; yet, alas, there is no ear to hear, nor heart to understand.
~Baha'u'llah: Persian Hidden Words, #16

I told them that God speaks to us all the time in many different ways, but we often don't hear or understand b/c we are too distracted or filled with material thoughts. Also, He speaks in human language through His Messengers, but we often don't recognize the voice of God in Their speech b/c we don't like what They say or we don't believe in Them. We often don't understand what He is saying b/c we are blinded by our own beliefs and prejudices.

So with that, I explained that half the class will be the interpreters. The other half will be the mystic tongues. The "tongues" stay in the room and the interpreters are told to go out into another room and read or play quietly.

For this activity, you need to decide on a simple phrase for the group. If you have only a handful of kids, it can even be one word, as long as it has at least 3 syllables. (Otherwise its way too easy.) The phrase or the word should contain some spiritual truth. You must have at least one child for each syllable in the word or phrase. Assign a syllable to each child. If you have a large group, pairs or triplets can have the same syllable. They are to sing their syllable only, and those with the same syllable stand together. The first syllable kid stands first on the left, the second syllable kid stands next to them on the right, and the 3rd syllable next on the right, etc., so that they are physically in line with the way the word or phrase is said and written. For example, for "Humanity is one" we needed at least six kids b/c there are 6 syllables total in this phrase. So the first child in line sang "hu", the second sang "man" and the third sang "i", etc. They practice singing their syllable *simultaneously*. Then the interpreters come into the room and on the count of 3, the mystic tongues begin their "melody", all singing at once their assigned syllable. The interpreters try to decipher the word. Its more challenging if 2 or more are singing each syllable. Please remember that the ones singing the same syllable should stand next to each other and its important that the first syllable singers are first in line, second syllable are next, etc. otherwise it will be too difficult to decipher.

If the singing group can handle it, each can sing their syllable to a simple well known melody, like "Happy Birthday" or "Row, Row, Row Your Boat." That makes the whole presentation more melodious.

Peace? ## *
Another game is a spiritual twist on a famous cooperative game called "tweetie" or "prui". I renamed it "peace?" We discuss how there would be more peace in the world if people would listen to the voice of God within them. They could not hurt others if they were in touch with the voice of God. But we can not hear the voice of God very easily if we are too busy, noisy, distracted,--talking on the phone, playing video games, etc. So in this game, when everyone is quiet, we have peace, and the game ends. I also pointed out that we will have peace in the world when every one feels connected, when every one recognizes that spiritually we are one, we are connected like waves on an ocean, like leaves on a tree.
The game goes as follows: Everyone gets in a circle and closes their eyes. I walk around behind them and squeeze some one's shoulder. That person is the peacemaker. I walk around several times so they can't tell when I have chosen the peacemaker. When I say "Begin" everyone starts to mingle—keeping their eyes closed throughout the entire game. Everyone but the peacemaker is searching for peace and walks around the room holding their hand out asking "Peace?" The peacemaker, although they can wander around also, is totally silent throughout the entire game. If you find the peacemaker you know b/c they do not answer back. So you hold their hand or arm, or whatever you happened to touch first, *and you also become quiet and do not answer back*. If you are not the peacemaker, or you have not found anyone connected to the peacemaker, you always answer back with "Peace?" The game ends when everyone is connected and the room is quiet. It can be quite powerful and moving, (especially with large groups) to walk and encircle the sightless, connected, silent group while reading the following quote of Baha'u'llah's: (It can be recited in a secular setting if you skip reading the last sentence.)

The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established. This unity can never be achieved so long as the counsels which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed are suffered to pass unheeded. ~Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 286

All of Us All at Once*
2 different teams had to work together to design a machine, object, plant, animal, or whatever, using everyone's body in the group. Then the other team had to guess. Sound effects are fine as long as they don't make the answer too obvious. Kids have done car washes, swing sets, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, roller coasters, etc. in the past. Its a good game to illustrate how individual parts are important to the functioning of the whole, unity in diversity, and even systems theory.

The Golden Rule
Then we played a hiding game, which is designed to teach children that although religious revelation is progressive and changing, there are eternal and non-changing teachings that one finds in all the religions, and which are relevant to all time periods, from Abraham to Baha'u'llah. Film vials were used and each vial contained a quote from one of the Founders of the major religions. Each quote expressed the golden rule--hence the quote was written on a strip of gold paper. Each vial was also wrapped in a different colored foil and had the name of the religion written on it. The first vial said "Abraham's Religion--unknown" on it. It was hidden so that it was visible, but not obvious. Then kids entered the living room, and who ever found it got to read the message inside and hide the next vial which had "Hinduism" on it. The first vial's (Abraham's) message was blank because I could not find anything in the Bible about the golden rule coming from Abraham—(please let me know if you have a reference). If a child was not reading yet and they discovered the vial, they appointed some one else to read--but they still got to hide the next one. If a child found 2 or more, they chose someone else to hide it, because I wanted as many as possible to have that pleasure--which they really coveted! Vials were hidden in the order of the appearance of the Manifestation. Kids were instructed to hide the vials in a discreet place that was visible in the living room only--- and still it took several minutes for the others to locate it.

Also, the act of searching for the vials was related to the fact that every soul must seek and discover the Word of God for his day and age. Before opening the vial, kids had to try to guess Who the Manifestation was that revealed the religion written on the outside of the vial. (If you write the Manifestations' name instead of the religion on the vial, then say it is our duty to seek and find God's current Messenger for our day and age. Then kids will guess the relevant religion instead.) At the end of the game, I would call out a religion and kids would say Who revealed it, and then I would call out a Manifestation and they would try to guess what religion He founded. They really loved this game!

Abraham: religion unknown--scripture lost--hence gold strip is blank
Krishna, Hinduism, *"Good people proceed while considering that which is best for others is best for themselves."*
Moses, Judaism, *" And thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."*
Zoroaster, Zoroastrianism, *"Whatever is disagreeable to yourself, do not do unto others."*
Buddha, Buddhism*, " Hurt not others with that which pains yourself."*
Christ, Christianity*, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."*
Muhammad, Islam *" No one of you is a believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself."*
The Bab, Babi *"Regard ye not others save as you regard your own selves."*
Baha'u'llah, Bahai*, "Lay not on any soul a load which ye would not wish to be laid upon you, and desire not for anyone the things ye would not desire for yourselves."*
Unknown Future, blank.

The first aspect of the revealed religion of God is that which concerns the ethical development and spiritual progress of mankind..... These ordinances are changeless, essential, eternal. The second function of the divine religion deals with material conditions, the laws of human intercourse and social regulation. These are subject to change and transformation in accordance with the time, place and conditions. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, pages 97-98

Baha'i Charades
Students had to pantomime The Garden of Ridvan, Mount Carmel, The Primal Point, The Dawn Breakers, The Siyah Chal Dungeon, The Gate, The Letters of the Living, The Most Great Branch, Tahirih, The Greatest Holy Leaf, The Guardian, Universal House of Justice, God, and Mount Carmel. In the Baha'i Faith it is not appropriate to impersonate or portray the Central Figures or God, so kids would act out the metaphor, not the person. Participants were told ahead of time that the subjects would be limited to people, places, and titles. Remember to inform the group that by cupping an ear, this means "sounds like" and they can act out a rhyming word. Also, one can indicate with fingers how many key words are in the answer (not including "the", "of", etc.).

If the group is 10 years old and up, you can even get more complex by indicating syllables. I am not sure what the traditional technique is for indicating syllables, but we would tap the same number of fingers on the wrist as syllables. So

for example, for “The Primal Point, “ the actor would hold up 2 fingers to indicate 2 key words. Then he would hold up one finger to indicate that a clue for first word was about to be provided, then tap 2 fingers on his wrist to reveal that it is 2 syllables. Then he would tap one finger on the wrist to indicate that a clue for the first syllable is about to be given. Next, he’d cup the ear to indicate “sounds like”, then point to a watch to suggest “time”. Then for the second syllable, hold up one finger to remind that this is the first word, tap 2 fingers on the wrist to inform that a clue for the second syllable was about to be provided. Then he would cup his ear to show that this was a rhyming word. Next he would pretend to bounce a ball. To make sure that the audience is following all this, the actor should not proceed until the audience calls out what he is trying to convey. So for example, when he holds up 2 fingers, the audience says "2 words”, when he holds up 1 finger, the audience should say “1st word”, when he taps his wrist with 2 fingers, the audience should say “2 syllables”, when he taps his wrist with 1 finger, the audience says “1st syllable”, when he cups his ear, they should say “sounds like”. He can indicate yes and no by the shaking of his head to guide the audience.

Sculptionary with Playdoh

This is basically pictionary with clay. Teams can be 2-3 kids. When we did it, teams of 3 got a container of playdoh and a popsicle stick for sculpting. One member was the sculptor, the other 2 were the guessers. Each round, they switched. For every round, all sculptors went into a separate room and were shown the same word, such as cupcake, ribbon, or trash can. After all sculptors had seen it, they returned to their teams and I would say “Begin now!” and they would attempt to shape it. Words and sound effects and pantomime were not allowed. The goal is to have your team be the first to perceive what the object is—but all guessers can look at anyone’s’ sculpture. I actually encourage this b/c it so clearly illustrates how different the pictures that we all carry around in our heads are from each other. And if one is baffled by their partner’s sculpture, looking at all the other creations really helps to clarify things and is like having additional puzzle pieces. One of Abdu’l-Baha’s points in consultation is how the group is more effective than an individual.

....the views of several individuals are assuredly preferable to one man, even as the power of a number of men is of course greater than the power of one man. ~`Abdu'l-Baha: Consultation, page 97

I explained that this was a game to enhance their ability to communicate to others, to try to share your perceptions in ways that others can relate. I emphasized the use of detail and context (for ex. A bathtub looks like any other receptacle until you put a person or spigot in it, a ribbon looks like a snake until you tie it in a bow or put it on a head, a helmet looks like a bowl unless you put it on a head and add a body with skates or a bike.). I also pointed out the diversity of the sculptures, noting that everyone sees things differently. Children tend to be egocentric and this game helps them step outside their perceptions in an attempt to get their teammates to see the sculpture as they do. They really enjoyed this game and it was often a real challenge for them. B/c the sculptors had knowledge of what the object was, they tended to project this awareness onto their teammates and assume that their teammates could understand their creations no matter how crude they were. When children share stories or descriptions of events or of their religion with others, they tend to do the same thing—assume their hearers understand as they do. (For example, using the term “Feast” w/o explaining that this is not a bountiful meal in our religion). They leave out critical details and contextual information so that their hearers are not getting a clear understanding. Thus, this game teaches kids to step out of themselves and try to see the object from someone’s perspective who has no prior knowledge. We did not keep score, b/c inevitably someone will use their points to exalt themselves over others.

Behind My Back #

This game is a metaphor for how the pictures we share of others get distorted as they are passed around, and that usually we are not getting the "whole picture" in gossip. It’s helpful to have a board you can draw the original on, but a piece of paper and marker will suffice. Players all sit down in a line. Just using her finger pressure, the leader draws a picture on the back of the last person in line, and then that person draws what they interpreted on the back of the person in front of them and so on up the line. The last person to get drawn on is the first person in line. That person then draws on a dry erase or chalk board or piece of paper what they felt was drawn on their back. Then the leader draws the original picture for all to see and it is compared. It is always very different. This is a sensorial version of the classic game “telephone” in which a message is verbally privately sent through and repeated by many players and then compared at the end to the original. A good design is a square filled with an "x" and a dot in two of the quadrants formed by the “x.” If the design is too hard, kids won’t enjoy it and will be frustrated and irritated. But if its too easy, and the end product is identical to the original, then the lesson will not be conveyed and it will be anti-climatic. Obviously, the fewer players there are, the harder the drawing should be.

.....regard backbiting as grievous error, ... inasmuch as backbiting quencheth the light of the heart, and extinguisheth the life of the soul. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 265

O SON OF BEING! How couldst thou forget thine own faults and busy thyself with the faults of others? Whoso doeth this is accursed of Me. ~Baha'u'llah: Arabic Hidden Words, # 26

Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner. Shouldst thou transgress this command, accursed wouldst thou be, and to this I bear witness. ~Baha'u'llah: Arabic Hidden Words, # 27

Magical Clay # *

Out of the wastes of nothingness, with the clay of My command I made thee to appear.....
~Baha'u'llah: Persian Hidden Words, # 29

Out of the clay of love I molded thee..... ~Baha'u'llah: Arabic Hidden Words, # 13

First we talked about how we should strive to have our lives and souls as clay in the hands of God, molded by His teachings and wisdom, not by the media or by selfish or unwise people. This means allowing that we be guided by God and not by our lower nature, knowing that God knows best, sacrificing our lower nature to our higher, spiritual natures, and giving up our will to Gods' when we are tempted do wrong or behave selfishly.

Those students who were to be clay were to be totally selfless/submissive as clay is, surrendering their will to the artist, letting oneself be molded by the artists' vision and will. This is a metaphor of how we should allow our lives to be molded by God's will, surrendering our will to His, so He can mold us in His image, direct and change us the way He sees fit.

Aid me, O my Lord, to surrender myself wholly to Thy Will....~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 311

*Help me to be selfless at the heavenly entrance of Thy gate, and aid me to be detached from all things within Thy holy precincts. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, pages 319-320

Self-sacrifice means to subordinate this lower nature and its desires to the more godly and noble side of our selves. Ultimately, in its highest sense, self-sacrifice means to give our will and our all to God to do with as He pleases. Then He purifies and glorifies our true self until it becomes a shining and wonderful reality. ~Shoghi Effendi: Living the Life, pages 18-19

Children volunteered to be artists and then requested a certain number of others to be their clay. The artists were asked to mold them into a new creation which illustrated a virtue such as love or kindness, a Baha'i principle such as unity, a thing from nature, or man-made object. No one knew what the creation was, ----not even the clay children knew what they were being molded into. After the artist was done, we had to guess. Some of the positions were hard to hold and harder still to interpret, but we had a pretty good time any way. If we just could not guess, the artist gave us clues as to whether it was a virtue, natural, or man-made object. Another option to make it easier is to limit each artist session to one of the categories mentioned above. There is also a lesson in this activity for the sculptors---to be gentle and not abuse their power in any way, as humans often do when given authority over powerless people.

Baha'i Service Pictionary

Teams of 3 each had one older student. (Teams can be as small as 2.) The older student from each group went into another room and I showed all of them at the same time a card which had the description of some sort of service written on it. After it was clear that everybody understood, they returned to their other team members at the dining room table. When I said "Go!" they began to draw it. As in the real pictionary, words were not allowed to be said or drawn. The team who guessed what the act of service was first won that round. (Though we did not keep score on purpose). The acts they had to draw were: *care for the sick, care for young children so parents can attend study circle, make friends with someone who is lonely, make refreshments for a Feast, Holy Day or Devotional, pick up litter, give money to your religion, teach the Baha'i Faith, decorate for Ayyam-i-Ha or Holy Day.*

Variations for large or mixed aged groups: This game and the one below can be played with a dry erase board and one large group. The first to guess what the picture is gets to be the next artist---or to make it less competitive and more inclusive, people can just take turns drawing, w/o having to be the one who guessed the picture. The competitive version does not work well with a wide age range b/c the little ones can never interpret fast enough. Kids as young as 6 can draw a picture of something concrete like picking up litter, but they are slow and they are not good at illustrating any abstract concepts such as the oneness of humanity--- as would be required in the game below. The last time I played it was at a feast, and it was a big success—judging by the laughter of all, the hilarious interpretations and wise cracks, and

eagerness of the children. But since it was a large group and I wanted the game to go at a fast clip, I made the rule that only 10 years and up could be drawers, and only 9 and under got to be the interpreters. The child who guessed correctly got to choose an audience member 10 and up to be the next drawer. I quickly went through the cards with the chosen artist (so the audience could not see the cards) and they chose the act of the service they felt they could draw. The audience knew ahead of time that the drawing would represent an act of service a child or adult could do for the Baha'i community or for humanity, and that helped greatly with interpretations. As with all games, if a child or adult has already drawn or guessed, and there is a sizable group of participants who would like a turn, don't give second turns.

*Like a candle must ye shed your light,.... illumine the hearts of humankind..... In the darkness of the world be ye radiant flames.... Now is the time to serve, now is the time to be on fire. ~`Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, pages 266-267

Arise thou to serve the Cause of thy Lord; then give the people the joyful tidings concerning this resplendent Light whose revelation hath been announced by God through His Prophets and Messengers. ~Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 241

Strive thou day and night to serve the Cause of Him Who is the Eternal Truth, and be thou detached from all else but Him. ~Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 245

Man's merit lieth in service and virtue and not in the pageantry of wealth and riches. ~Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 138

*Think ye at all times of rendering some service to every member of the human race. ~`Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 3

Baha'i Pictionary

This game is the same as the one above, but b/c of the topics, it is really only suitable for kids 9 years and up, who have some Baha'i background and training in virtues. They draw quick sketches that represent virtues or Baha'i principles like: *All religions are one, the equality of men and women, elimination of prejudice, no backbiting, the oneness of mankind, world unity, there is only 1 God, religion and science agree, universal education,* and *unity in diversity*. In secret, drawers are all shown the same word and then begin drawing at the same time. The goal is to have your partner(s) be the first to guess what the picture is about. Some virtues are easier to draw than others—*cooperation, obedience, generosity, helpfulness, cleanliness, courtesy, patience*, and *moderation* can be depicted with a little thought. If the kids know ahead of time they will be looking for virtues or principles, that helps a lot. But they are not allowed to just rattle off all the virtues or principles they know in hopes of getting a match. If you think that is happening, ask the student to explain the picture to see if they really interpreted it. See Variations in the *Baha'i Service Pictionary* game above. It applies to this game also.

Kindness Pictionary

This game helps kids realize that kindness can be shown in so many ways. It also illustrates that the showing of kindness is really the expression of many other virtues such as generosity, helpfulness, compassion, service, thoughtfulness, caring, love, and consideration etc. B/c this is not an art class or art game, and I wanted the game to move at a quick clip, I decided that only I would draw the pictures. It is also my experience that kids under 10 have a hard time depicting concepts through drawing that others can decipher—especially when they can't do it at their own leisure.

Ask your group to try and guess what the specific act of kindness is that is happening in the scene you draw. If the kids are old enough, (10 and above) the person who guessed it correctly gets to draw the next scene. This often presents the problem of just a few getting to draw, however, b/c they happen to be very good at deciphering pictures. Then the others feel left out or frustrated. Its best to make the "one time" rule—if you guess it correctly more than once, then instead of drawing, choose someone who has not done so yet. Just make sure that if someone raises their hand to draw, that you ask them if they have their picture in mind, so the group does not get bored waiting for the artist to compose an image in his/her mind. Another way to handle this is have the scenes, like the ones below, written on little cards, and let the artist secretly choose which one they wish to depict. Or, if they prefer their own scene, that is fine too—just ask the group not to do repeats. Otherwise, based on experience, one gets a lot of scenes of caring for the sick.

The scenes I drew with rudimentary figures were the following:

Visiting old/sick
Giving a gift

Inviting excluded one to play
Picking up trash in elderly person's yard
Sharing food with someone who forgot lunch
Letting someone have the last cookie
Carrying part of a load for someone already overloaded
Helping someone who is lost
Giving a back rub
Letting a younger sibling play with your new toy
Helping someone with their homework
Donating blood
Collecting for UNICEF

Highly Active and Medium Active Variations: See descriptions of *Virtue Pictionary Tag* (under Highly Active Games). These variations are played exactly the same except scenes are just acts of kindness like the ones described above, and one does not need the virtues poster. Explain that you will be drawing simple pictures of acts of kindness being shown, and the first team to have any member guess what the act is chases the other team and tries to tag them. To make the game more challenging, accept only a fairly accurate description. Also, b/c the answer involves an explanation, (instead of just one word), it is necessary to require those who wish to answer to raise their hand. (Otherwise it turns into a garbled shouting match.) I would try to call on those who had not recently answered, and would go back and forth between the teams until a member got it right. Since I was drawing and therefore often could not notice whose hand went up first, that was not a criteria for being called on. (However, if one has an assistant or child who is not playing, their role can be to inform who raised their hand first). It's helpful to advise the kids not to impulsively raise their hands, but to be sure to have an answer ready before doing so. If someone could not answer upon being called on, I immediately called on someone from the other team.

Ye dwell in one world, and have been created through the operation of one Will. Blessed is he who mingleth with all men in a spirit of utmost kindliness and love. ~Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, p. 333

My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart, that thine may be a sovereignty ancient, imperishable and everlasting. ~Baha'u'llah: Arabic Hidden Words, # 1

.....let your heart burn with loving kindness for all who may cross your path. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha, Paris Talks, page 15

*It is your duty to be exceedingly kind to every human being, and to wish him well.... until ye change the world of man into the world of God. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of`Abdu'l-Baha, page 90

Blocked Communication
This can be very challenging. Give teams of 2, two sets of 6 identical blocks. The person being the builder/communicator sits behind the receiver/builder and builds a simple 6 block structure. Then using very precise language, he/she tries to describe the position of the blocks so accurately that the receiver/builder can re-create the same exact building without the receiver seeing the original structure. (The builder/communicator can also guide the receiver/builder as he/she is building instead of waiting until its done.) Also, the builder/communicator should not try to see what the receiver is actually doing with the information and make corrections. Then they should switch roles. After each student gets to be the builder/communicator, the pairs can do another round, but this time the receiver can ask clarifying questions, and this will really help in accuracy. We all learned that asking questions makes it easier to understand and to clarify matters and that communicating one's perceptions and actions accurately is very difficult indeed!

A Tangled Mess
I gave the group a very long and tangled rope. I told them that this tangled mess represented some world problem such as poverty or hunger. Each child represented a nation. They were to untangle the rope without using words and w/o getting into an argument. Predictably, it was nearly impossible and many gave up in frustration. I then told them that this is one reason why Baha'u'llah taught that we need a common world language—so we can communicate. It still will be quite hard, because each nation has diverse ideas on the proper course of action, just as each child will have his or her own ideas on which way a section of rope should be maneuvered. But using a common language and the virtues prescribed for consultation (patience, detachment, courtesy, self-control, sacrifice, calmness, moderation, purity of motives, respect, etc.) it is possible. I reminded the students to remember that every tug of the rope effects the whole rope and everyone else's section, just as every action we do in life has an impact in world, and on others, either directly or

indirectly. And the students did finally succeed in untangling the rope--- after much effort. This game goes very well with the next one.

Rope Shapes

An activity with a large loop of rope to teach 3 concepts: 1) Interdependence—how everyone's actions effect every one else. 2) the power of a common language, and 3) the importance of a common vision. Students were taken outside on our driveway and asked to stand around the rope, holding onto one section. They were asked not to move from their position. Then I asked them to form one giant fish on the ground—without talking, using only body gestures. It was very difficult, some even gave up. I pointed out how every time you pull on your section of the rope, you effect someone else's section (interdependence). They discovered they were making 2 mouths, and often pulled out each other's fins. A fish-like creature eventually evolved, but your average person may not have been able to guess what it was. Then I brought out a dry erase board with a large outline of a simple fish on it. I reminded them how when they were playing sculptionary with playdoh they all had a different vision of what a cupcake or ribbon looked like. I said now they had a common, shared vision of the fish—for fish can be sharks, long and thin like a barracuda, fat and wide, with many or few fins etc. I also told them they could now talk and consult. In a much shorter time they created a fish that looked very much like the drawing. Its a good idea to put the group on a time limit for each version. For a group of ten, 5 minutes is about right. At the end of the activity, I took a picture of the kids with their fish—some were pretending to be the meal inside it, others pretended their feet were being consumed by its mouth.

We discussed how one of the goals of Baha'u'llah's revelation is to provide a common, shared vision of justice, human rights, and laws for a peaceful and spiritually healthy world. Without this, it will be very difficult for nations to achieve unity and to accomplish goals that are world embracing. I also explained how Baha'u'llah taught that we must adopt a universal auxiliary language, to be taught in all schools in addition to the mother tongue—so that we can talk and communicate with each other. How much easier it was to form the fish when we could talk to each other. And Baha'u'llah also taught that we are the waves of one sea, the leaves of one tree—we are connected and our actions effect many more people than ourselves, just like our movements of the rope. To elaborate further, I used the human body as an example, pointing out how impossible life would be if the different limbs of our body were not unified with our brain. Because the limbs are connected, unity is essential for well being, effectiveness and reaching our potential. Its the same with the human world—we are more connected than we realize and our potential as a unified world is beyond imagination. We are so undeveloped and crippled by our disunity. This led right into the next quotes.

How much the organs, the members and the parts of the body of man are intermingled and connected for mutual aid and help, and how much they influence one another! In the same way, the parts of this infinite universe have their members and elements connected with one another, and influence one another spiritually and materially. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Some Answered Questions, pages 245-6

It is obvious that all created things are connected one to another by a linkage complete and perfect, even, for example, as are the members of the human body. Note how all the members and component parts of the human body are connected one to another. In the same way, all the members of this endless universe are linked one to another. ~Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 47

The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established. ~Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, p. 286

The Spiritual Path

The kids were presented with a pie tin which had a circular maze pathway drawn on paper pasted onto the tin. At the beginning of the pathway, near outside rim of the tin, was a monkey sticker. That was a symbol for our animal natures. Sitting on top of the monkey was a thumbtack minus the sharp point with a smiley face stuck on it. That represented them. At the end of the circular pathway in the center of the tin, was a shiny star sticker. That represented spiritual enlightenment and radiance, having the higher nature in control. The pathway was the spiritual path, the lines represented boundaries and spiritual exhortations and laws. (Some examples of laws in the Baha'i Faith are daily prayer, no drinking alcohol and no backbiting, some exhortations are obedience to parents and modesty). The object was to guide the smiley face through the path to on top of the star without crossing the lines, i.e. being steadfast. Crossing over the lines was likened to crossing boundaries or disobeying laws and exhortations. (I called them teachings for simplicity's sake.) A magnet was held underneath the pie tin to guide the face. It had to be done slowly, and I pointed out that spiritual growth can be very slow and gradual. The magnetic force that pulls the face along represents our will, which has free choice to stay within the boundaries or not. The monkey sticker kind of stuck out on the second ring of the circular path. It was hard to get the face over it. So we talked about how the major obstacle to spiritual growth is our lower animal nature.

Every child did succeed, though some definitely were on the verge of "crossing over", just like in real life--we often flirt with limits. Some relevant quotes:

Teach them, by Thy Name, the All-Knowing, the wonders of Thy wisdom, that they may cleave steadfastly to Thy Faith and walk in the ways of Thy pleasure.
~Baha'u'llah: Prayers and Meditations, page 120

.....in the path of Thy good-pleasure set firm my steps, O my Maker.....
~Baha'u'llah: Prayers and Meditations, page 258

Follow in the footsteps of Abdu'l-Baha, and in the pathway of the Abha Beauty.
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 246

Assist Thy loved ones to be firm in Thy Faith, to walk in Thy ways, to be steadfast in Thy Cause.
~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Will and Testament, page 15

O Lord, make firm their feet on Thy straight path....
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 317

Make firm our steps, O Lord, in Thy path and strengthen Thou our hearts in Thine obedience.
~`Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i Prayers (US edition), page 70

Keep the Ball Rolling
This is a slower and easier version of the slightly more active game for older children, *Cooperative Juggle.* This one is for younger kids, ages 6-12. We all sit in a circle. I explain to the kids that this game will test their ability to focus and mind their own business. I roll a ball to a child across from me and they roll it to someone across from them. The person who catches it then rolls it to someone across from them and so on until every one has had a chance to catch the ball and it goes back to the first roller—me. This pattern will be the only pattern used throughout the game with all the balls—in other words, you always receive any ball from the same person, and you always roll it to the same person. Then a second ball is introduced, and it begins to travel the same route as the first ball, a few seconds behind. Players are exhorted to only focus on the person who rolls to them and the one they are rolling to. If they start to lose concentration and look at others or watch others who miss theirs, a ball will inevitably be rolled to them for which they are unprepared and they will miss it. This is the "focus and mind your own business" aspect of the game and it goes nicely with the same quote by Shoghi Effendi from *Cooperative Juggle:*

Each of us is responsible for one life only, and that is our own. Each of us is immeasurably far from being "perfect as our heavenly father is perfect" and the task of perfecting our own life and character is one that requires all our attention, our will-power and energy. If we allow our attention and energy to be taken up in efforts to keep others right and remedy their faults, we are wasting precious time. We are like ploughmen each of whom has his team to manage and his plough to direct, and in order to keep his furrow straight he must keep his eye on his goal and concentrate on his own task. If he looks to this side and that to see how Tom and Harry are getting on and to criticize their ploughing, then his own furrow will assuredly become crooked. ~Shoghi Effendi: Living the Life, pages 3-4

Anyway, as each new ball is introduced, it gets harder and harder to keep all the balls flowing. If one is missed, a person says "HOLD UP" and everyone freezes movement until the ball is retrieved and put back into play—otherwise, all the balls would end up piling up at one spot as the person who is retrieving their missed ball is not in position or ready. This correlates to the fact that sometimes we have to be flexible and alter our routines to assist others in need or trouble. Also, balls will inevitably collide and thus throw each other off course. The game can be really fun and intense. It is important to emphasize that the balls should be rolled slowly and to communicate with your receiver if you see they are distracted. The number of balls a group can handle is dependent on the number of players. I have found that a group of 8 kids can barely handle 4 balls going at once, but maybe that's only b/c several of my students are easily distracted. It helps to use foam balls, which are slower, if kids are rolling too fast to keep control.

Psychic Sacrifice
I created this game to go with a lesson plan on sacrifice. We discussed 3 things that assist us in being able to sacrifice for a higher good. They are prayer, reading the Creative Word, and love. We then decided on 3 hand positions to represent

these 3 things: Hands together in prayer mode to symbolize prayer, hands open with sides touching to represent an open book, and hands over our heart to stand for love. We stand in a circle, facing outward, and close our eyes. Then we choose a hand position and do it. On the count of 3, I ask everyone to turn around so they are all facing inside the circle and open their eyes once they have completely turned. The goal is to have everyone doing the same hand position, to be one. You could also make it harder: If one has numbers divisible by 3, seek unity in diversity by requiring that there must be an equal number of each position. So, for example, if there are 6 kids, 2 each of praying, reading, and love. If the numbers are not divisible by 3, then come up with a 4th position, or use only 2 positions, etc. This game works best with under 10 players b/c its too difficult to get unity and to count positions for big groups. Larger groups can be divided up into separate groups.

Love Pass ##

This game can be played outside or in a room with high ceilings using helium filled heart-shaped balloons on a ribbon. I explained that one of the most important ways to serve God and imitate Abdu'l-Baha is to try our best to love other human beings. It is our obligation as spiritual beings to share and give that love to others as much as possible, even to those who it is difficult to love. Since teams were competing, I also explained that it is not important to be first to do anything except when it comes to showing love, service, and expressing virtues. It is good to be the first to show kindness or love to an excluded child, to give up your seat for an elder, etc. So in this game, 2 teams lined up and the person first in line was given a balloon and the goal was to be the first team to pass it on to the last person in line—without using hands or forearms. The difficulty this created represented giving love to those who it is not easy to do so. Kids stepped on the ribbon string, used their knees, their stomachs, their teeth etc. We did lose one to the sky. It is more suspenseful if players know that once the balloon is released, it is gone for good.

Indoor Only Version: This version is actually more physically active than the outdoor version, thus kids like it even more. We took off the ribbons. Ceilings need to be low. Kids were divided into 2 teams. (If there is an uneven number, one child from the smaller team can go to the end of the line and interact with the balloon twice.) The rules were to pass the love (helium heart shaped balloons) down the line to others, but you could not grab or hold it or use both hands. As in the above version, the difficulty this restriction created represented giving love to those who it is not easy to do so. Players can only bat their balloon with one hand—however, they could do this as many times as they needed to in order to control & pass the balloon. If it floated to the ceiling, the last person to hit it had to get it down by batting it and this was only possible if other team members held them on their backs or shoulders or lifted them up in their arms. The last person in line was allowed to grab and hold it. The winning team is the first to get their balloon to the last person, without skipping anyone. In other words, all players had to make contact with the balloon.

If a rule was broken or a child could not get it down from the ceiling, the balloon was taken back to the beginning of the line and they had to start over. One time, one of the balloons popped. So teams played one at a time, and I timed how long it took them to get the balloon to the last person. They then try to beat each other's times. They also played as one team, trying to beat their previous times.

For all versions, kids should have practice sessions before actually competing. It's good to rotate first and last positions in line for each round b/c those players are not both sending and receiving, which is the most fun.

The last time we played this, the students just loved it and asked to play again and again. We had some big kids and small kids and 2 adults watching. When the balloon escaped to the ceiling, the smallest child on each team was the designated retriever and sat on the shoulders of an adult and batted the balloon down to the person in line whose turn it was next to receive the balloon. The littlest ones did this whether they were the ones that let it escape or not, b/c as 2 very middle-aged women, we were not about to try and hoist a hefty 11 year old on our shoulders!

Because the students did the race so many times, they really learned to control the balloon. They preferred to dribble it gently along the floor. After awhile that became too easy, so I made the rule that they had to move the balloon down the line *without it touching the floor*, batting it with one to two hands but never holding it. That was much more challenging. To make it even harder, they tried batting it with one hand only, not touching the floor. The balloon is big, and often hitting it with one little hand made it tilt and begin to escape.

To make it more exciting for the last person in each line, these were to stand about 5 feet away from the end wall, and when they got the balloon they too had to bat it until the balloon or their foot touched the wall. Otherwise, it's boring just to be the one who catches it. Kids need to be spaced out according to space availability and numbers, but it's good to give them at least 5 feet between each other in which to move and control the balloon. Team members next in line were allowed to come to the rescue if the previous player was losing control.

.....love humanity with all your heart and soul. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 291

.....my heart is happy when the friends of God love each other....
~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 237

.....love God by loving His servants.... ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Secret of Divine Civilization, page 40

Fair Share #
This is basically a simpler, less creative, but also less labor intense version of an activity found in the Creative Dramatics Manual entitled "Zymic Zelda". It's about fair distribution of "wealth" and goes nicely with the following quotations:

Be fair to yourselves and to others, that the evidences of justice may be revealed, through your deeds, among Our faithful servants. Beware lest ye encroach upon the substance of your neighbor. Prove yourselves worthy of his trust and confidence in you, and withhold not from the poor the gifts which the grace of God hath bestowed upon you. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 278

..... withhold not from the poor the things given unto you by God through His grace.
~Baha'u'llah: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 55

O YE RICH ONES ON EARTH! The poor in your midst are My trust; guard ye My trust, and be not intent only on your own ease. ~Baha'u'llah: Persian Hidden Words #54

We ask God to endow human souls with justice so that they may be fair, and may strive to provide for the comfort of all, that each member of humanity may pass his life in the utmost comfort and welfare. Then this material world will become the very paradise of the Kingdom, this elemental earth will be in a heavenly state and all the servants of God will live in the utmost joy, happiness and gladness. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Foundations of World Unity, page 43

.....voluntary sharing, the freely-chosen expending of one's substance, leadeth to society's comfort and peace. It lighteth up the world; it bestoweth honour upon humankind.
~Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 114

This can be played with 2 teams competing to be the first to have all members possessing their fair share, or with one large group. With younger children, there is enough challenge in the equal distribution aspect and competition would detract from the enjoyment. For kids over 6 you can make it quite challenging by insisting that the game be done w/o talking at all. (In that case it may be wisest to *not* have 2 competing groups---they will feel too much pressure to speak.)

Then you can re-do the game allowing talking, and point out how much easier it is to succeed when we can communicate with each other. This of course illustrates why Baha'u'llah commands us to develop a world language to be taught in addition to our mother tongue. It will be much easier to solve poverty and any problems when we share a common language.

How much verbal preparation you give is up to you. This goes great with any unit on service to the poor, justice, fairness, equality, a more balanced distribution of wealth, or unity. We can't have world or community unity if there is grossly unfair distribution of wealth: "The inordinate disparity between rich and poor, a source of acute suffering, keeps the world in a state of instability, virtually on the brink of war."—The Universal House of Justice, from The Promise of World Peace.

To promote a global perspective and the concept that the rich nations should share excess national resources, have each child represent a nation. The substance used can represent the most valuable natural resource, or you can pretend that it is a supernatural resource that can be magically turned into food and water or give good health.
Throughout Baha'i scripture, we are reminded that all that is in the kingdoms of earth and heaven belong to God.

All the kingdoms of heaven and earth and whatever is between them are God's, and His power is supreme over all things. All the treasures of earth and heaven and everything between them are His..... ~The Bab, Baha'i Prayers, p. 132

The kingdoms of earth and heaven are Thine, O Lord of the worlds! ~Bahá'u'lláh, Prayers and Meditations, CLXXXIII (End of Long Obligatory Prayer).

Thus, if all the world's resources belong to God and we are all His children, one human family, is it fair or right that one nation control and consume far more than their fair share?

For the material resource, use playdoh, clay, dry beans, dry noodles or even uncooked rice, or the kid's favorite, Gooze. (Gooze is a slimy, rubbery, stretchy, really enticing substance for children, available in toy stores such as Toys R Us.) Use a material you think would be most meaningful to your group. If land distribution is an acute problem where the children live, even dirt could be used to symbolize fertile farmland or property. If hunger is an issue, then the food substances might be most pertinent. Wood stuff or clay would be a good symbol for housing. Edible food is always appreciated as a reward for a job well done, so in this case candy is preferred over dried beans! If the substance is something that can be counted easily, and the goal is to have every child end up with one, then count it out before the game. Otherwise, kids won't know what to do if there are 10 kids, but 15 pieces of candy. And especially if they can't talk, this can lead to confusion. Or, you can use a substance that can be broken in pieces, and for older groups, see if they can get creative with how to be fair. Sometimes, the students give the extra to the teachers, or a dog.

Put children in a circle. Direct children to hold out both their hands, cupped together to form a bowl. Then distribute the substance around the circle, giving some kids mounds of the stuff, some medium amounts, some a small amount, and some none at all. (With preschoolers, its best to give everybody something, or you may have a tantrum on your hands!) Just make sure it is obviously unfairly distributed. Then say nothing and see what happens. Or if you think they are baffled or need a little guidance, suggest to the children they show fairness or show justice or to be caring, or to promote unity. They will quickly realize that in order to do that, a more fair distribution of the substance must occur. With younger kids, you may have to be more direct, and say something like "now I want you to make everybody happy by sharing what you have so all have a fair share." And with older kids, its always great to first try it w/o allowing the children to talk. Just encourage them to use body language and not be selfish.

Glow in the Dark Version: This was really fun when we did it. We used glow in the dark Gooze (or you can paint your substance with glow in the dark paints). No talking was allowed. First I charged it in the light for about 5 minutes, and then made the classroom very dark. Then I distributed the Gooze unevenly (everyone had to have at least a little speck, otherwise their empty hands could not be seen) and in total silence, they were to demonstrate fairness and caring. If they succeeded—and I knew they would, they could then take their portion home in a film vial. It was such an interesting sight—seeing these glowing globs moving around in the dark and changing sizes. Some kids, without the visual cues of body language, could not resist whispering to others about their Gooze, but I hushed them, and they managed. It's helpful to some children who may not know to explain how to "re-charge" the gooze at home by holding it under incandescent light for at least 5 minutes.

Lately I have had trouble finding Gooze other than in cartoon character molds. Another source for slime, which is what Gooze basically is, is Physlink.com Science eStore. They can be contacted at 888-438-9867, www.physlink.com. Their glow in the dark slime is item # 10192. It comes in 4 different colors and costs anywhere from $2.00-3.00, per 3 ounce jar, depending on whether its on sale. I could not find the non-glow in the dark kind on their site. However, at www.fatlion.com/science/slime.html there is a recipe on how to make your own. Another source for glow in the dark slime is www.orientaltrading.com . They offer it for $11.95 per dozen for 2 ½ inch containers. I believe the containers are about the same amount as 3 ounces. Item # IN-12/2100. If you don't care about it being glow in the dark, Oriental Trading also offers an iridescent rainbow colored putty that is totally cool. It's called Rainbow Putty Balls, (though its only ball-shaped b/c the container is) Item # IN-12/2130. It's around $8.30 per dozen. Also available at Amazon, $6-12.00 per dozen. Another product called Mars Mud is available at www.amazon.com. The Mars Mud comes in both plain and glow in the dark versions. It has the same consistency as the Rainbow Putty and is multi-colored in its plain form.

See also *Essential Rights, Service Relay,* and *United We Serve* under Highly Active Games and *Shirt off Your Back, Stand Up, Beamo Toss (Food Distribution) Chair Island, and People of the Mountain* under Medium Activity Games and *Together* under Mainly Cerebral Games, for additional games and quotes that teach about more fair distribution of wealth/resources and/or caring for the poor.

Parent Power II

(Part I is under Highly Active Games.) This time we were to focus on the role of *support* that parents give. We briefly discussed all the ways in which parents support their children (financially, emotionally, educationally, spiritually, physically, etc.—by paying your bills, driving you places, comforting you, attending your sports or drama events, taking you to the doctor, getting you to school, buying your school supplies, praying for you, etc.) I want children to be cognizant of and grateful for their parents' support. The more they recognize and appreciate parents' efforts, the more they will honor and respect, ---and hopefully obey--- them.

To illustrate how important your support is to achieving one's goals, I asked the kids to do the following:

Try to walk on this bamboo pole w/o any help and make it across to the other end w/o falling. The distance of the pole represents your childhood, 0-21 years. Even if you do make it, it will be much harder. You must wear shoes or be bare-footed. Socks are too slippery.

Now try it with a girl and a boy, each representing one of your parents supporting you, by you holding onto their hand or shoulder. It will still be a bit hard---life is that way, but you can succeed w/o getting hurt or falling off.

(The pole was about 7 ½ feet, but longer would have been better to challenge the highly coordinated ones. On Saturday's class, one child was able to cross it w/o help, after many tries during break, and by practically jumping to the chair the pole rested on, thereby limiting the distance crossed. In Sunday's class, 2 children with experience in gymnastics were able to do it the first time. During break, they also succeeded alone several times, but also fell sometimes. At which point I pointed out that with support they were more likely to succeed consistently.)

To make the pole stronger, my husband built a support structure out of wood to fit in the center of the pole. The ends of the pole rested on two children's sized (i.e. low down) chairs, with the ends tied to the bars on the chair to keep it from sliding off. Duct tape would have been better, b/c once the pole did slip out from the rope. Duct tape also limits the rolling of the pole.

Children love challenging their bodies in this way, and asked to try again and again.

Parent Power III

This version focuses on the *guidance* role of parents. I told them that one of the major functions of parents is to guide their children. Parents attempt to guide their children in many ways, but for this game we were going to focus on four areas in particular. Responsible and devoted parents try to guide their kids towards Faith and away from faithlessness, towards virtues and away from vices, towards education and away from ignorance, and towards good choices and away from bad ones.

For each positive and negative subject mentioned above, I showed the students an object:

Faith—a flat wooden heart with both sides covered in a radiant holographic paper, with a sparkling gemstone in the center of each side. This represented illumination and spirituality.
Faithlessness—a flat wooden heart with both sides colored black. This represented a dark heart, not illumined by the light of faith.
Virtues—a pretty silk flower head. We use flowers for symbols of virtues all the time in class b/c Baha'i scripture is full of the use of this metaphor. (The garden of the heart, the rose of love, the hyacinths of wisdom, etc.)
Vices—a weed (real or silk will do)
Education—a large red cardboard "A" to represent excellence and achievement in school. (About the size of an adult hand.)
Ignorance—a large red cardboard "F" to represent lack of learning and failure to achieve knowledge. (Same size as the letter "A". I realize that grades in school don't always represent a child's level of learning or of wisdom, but this was the simplest most concrete object I could think of. You may think of better symbols.)
Good Choices—a flat round wooden disc with a smiling face on one side, and "Good Choices" written on the other side. Drawn in bright red ink.
Bad Choices—a flat round wooden disc with a frowning face on one side, and "Bad Choices" written on the other side. Drawn in black.

I explained that each student would get to play the son or daughter, and that I would play a parent. The child playing my son or daughter would wear a blindfold b/c children are relatively blind and unaware compared to their parents, just as we all are blind compared to a Messenger of God. That child would also hold a heart shaped box with the lid off, which represented his/her inner self. (The box is approximately 7 inches wide and 7 inches long.) For children who were not sure if they always knew their left from right, I wrapped a braided hair tie on their ring finger on their right hand. I told them to think: "Go right with the ring side."

I had laid out 8 one foot by one foot foam squares along a corridor on our deck. (The house and railings provided a natural boundary. On Sunday, since it was bitter cold, we played it inside.) We played with different patterns—jig-jag, symmetrical, etc. The non-blindfolded students would each stand on a square, and could not step off it. The length of the corridor represented 0-21 years.

After the blindfold was placed on the child playing my son or daughter, each student would choose one of the objects from above and then choose a square to stand on. Just to make sure the child with the blindfold on could not see, I ask him/her to turn around. Then I asked the children on the squares to hold up what objects they had. (Sometimes I forgot, so during the game I had to ask again, so I knew which way to guide the blindfolded player. If the corridor you are using is very

narrow, then you may have to make sure that 2 negative items are not directly across from each other, thereby making it impossible for the kid to avoid them no matter how well they follow your directions.)

At the start of each round, I would stand next to the blindfolded child at the front of the corridor. The goal was to guide him or her through the path of childhood and youth towards the good things and away from the bad things. I remained at the beginning of the corridor and loudly and enthusiastically exclaimed where the child should go—right, left, straight, diagonal, forward, backward, etc. The extent to which the child accurately and faithfully followed my guidance, i.e. was obedient to my commands, determined how successful he/she was in acquiring the good things and avoiding the bad. If she got close enough to any child standing on a square, she received that child's object, be it good or bad, in the heart box. Children standing on the squares could lean over to deposit their item, rotate in any direction, but both feet had to remain on the square. They could not give any hints about whether they had a good or bad item. The goal was for the blindfolded child at the end to look into her heart box and see only 4 good things.

It is easy to alter the level of difficulty of this game: You can use a timer and make the kids go through faster, put the squares closer together, or make the corridor narrower. You can not allow any going backwards, so if a good item is passed up, too bad. You can allow the children on squares to toss their items—which means its harder to avoid the bad ones. And finally another way to really challenge the students--have a boy and a girl play the parents. They each shout out directions, but can't give two directions in a row. For example, if the boy says "go right", he can't guide until after the girl has spoken. They have to alternate, and this kind of unity in guiding is hard for kids—and parents! I suspect that kids under 10 would find this a bit too hard.

If you don't have enough kids to have all 8 squares occupied, just fill the front ones, and give the kids 2 or 3 items. As soon as the child passes them, they run to a square farther back and present their second or 3rd object.

A Weighty Complement #

We counted off by twos, and held hands in a circle. (For our theme, it would have been ideal if we had equal numbers of both sexes, so that all the 1's were girls, and all the 2's were boys or vise versa.) At a signal from me the 1's leaned in and the 2's leaned out and the counter weighting was to support us all--and then we reversed and tried to get a rhythm going. It was pretty funny and not very easy. I explained the idea of how women and men complement and balance each other, as in this game.

The world of humanity consists of two parts: male and female. Each is the complement of the other. Therefore, if one is defective, the other will necessarily be incomplete, and perfection cannot be attained. ~`Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 134

The happiness of mankind will be realized when women and men coordinate and advance equally, for each is the complement and helpmeet of the other.
~`Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 182

Among the teachings of Baha'u'llah is the principle of equality of man and woman. Baha'u'llah has said that both belong to humankind and that in the estimation of God they are equal, for each is the complement of the other in the divine creative plan.
~`Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 280

Body Sculptures ##*

When we did this, I split the group into 2 teams, one all girl, and one all boy. The boys were asked to leave the scene. The girls were instructed to form a body sculpture/formation using their bodies, with everybody touching at least 3 other girls with their hands or feet or rear ends or legs or whatever. All bodies needed to be connected into one group, with no separate groups. Then the boys were invited back in. They were to then form a sculpture within and around the girl's without touching the girls, and they also had to be completely connected. That was a challenge. Then the girls were instructed to detach from each other, and w/o touching the boys, remove themselves from the boy's sculpture. They then were to appreciate the boy's formation and notice the space they had created by their leaving.

Another version of this game could be to simply instruct the group to make a formation in which every hand and every foot is connected to another person. You can make it even harder by requiring that it be 4 different people that one is touching. You can request that it be only hands and feet making the 4 contacts, or allow other body parts to be included. This version would probably make the formation too dense for another group to come in and incorporate itself into the same formation.

Relevant quotes:

He Who is your Lord, the All-Merciful, cherisheth in His heart the desire of beholding the entire human race as one soul and one body. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 214

Be ye as the fingers of one hand, the members of one body. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 140

We, verily, have come to unite and weld together all that dwell on earth. ~Baha'u'llah: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 24.

Incorporations ##*
Ask the kids to form groups quickly based on your instructions. If a group can't do it, just move on. The game should move at a quick clip. Kids were instructed to form groups where everyone had on the same color, (or shared 2 colors in common) then form groups in which everyone was born in the same season and to link pinkies, then groups of 2+3, then groups of 3 lying on the ground to make a capital "H", then groups of 3 to form a bridge, then form groups based on having the same pet, such as dog, cat, or other, or none, (if you have both choose the pet you have had the longest) then a staircase of 3 by kneeling on all fours in ascending sizes, etc. Another suggestion: Join hands with 1-2 people who share at least 2 letters in common from your first and/or last names, then jump up and down together while moving in a circle.

This game and the one called *Floor Designs* can be used when discussing the importance and challenge of obeying and fulfilling the guidance of the Manifestations. In this day and age, Baha'u'llah has given us the extremely demanding task of unifying diverse people under a common vision and then cooperating in building a new world order. We succeed only through our love of Baha'u'llah and of His institutions, and the practice of virtues such as? (Sacrifice, service, steadfastness, flexibility, cooperation, detachment, forbearance, and obedience).

Whale Rescue #
This game is based on a book called Humphrey The Lost Whale by Wendy Tokuda and Richard Hall. The book is a true story about how many people cooperating saved the life of a Humpback whale that got lost and stuck in a river system on the West Coast. We used this game, (along with *Cats and Mice* under Parachute Games and *Creature Capture* under Highly Active games), for our lesson on kindness to animals. See the other 2 games for relevant quotes.

Depending on the number of students, there can be 1-3 children who play the whales. The whale children are blindfolded. They are like Humphrey the lost whale who could not find his way through the river system to get back to the ocean. He was in a sense blind, b/c all his normal navigating cues were absent. These children are placed at the far end of large playing area. The goal is to find their way back to the ocean, using the auditory cues of the human helpers. As in the real story, there are obstacles: Pairs of children form openings by standing a few feet apart. They can join hands, and when the whale gets near, they can raise them up to let him through. These pairs of kids represent the bridge pylons Humphrey had to wiggle through. The blind children have to locate these pairs of children (who are distributed in various staggered locations throughout the playing area) and walk (swim) through each successive pair to the opposite side of the playing area, which represents the wide open ocean. The children who represent the pylons play a double role (unless you have plenty of extra kids): They make whale sounds so the blind whales can locate them. In the real story, marine biologists lowered microphones into the river which emitted whale calls to lure Humphrey in the right direction.

There should be at least one or more escorts to make sure the blind whales don't collide with something dangerous. They can gently block the whale children from walking (swimming) into a tree or whatever. If you use only one whale child at a time, the teacher or another student can also help guide by whacking 2 wooden dowels or banging on a can to warn the whale child that he is moving in the wrong direction or away from the pylon openings. This also mimics what the humans did in the real story of Humphrey—they made unpleasant underwater noises by banging metal pipes together behind the whale to keep him from turning back and to guide him away from wrong turns. Because whale kids will not know who the abrasive sound is intended for, this aspect can only be used if there is one whale in the "river" at a time.

Some Tips: To make sure the whale children are truly blind, they should have a dark hat or scarf over their face that allows breathing. On top of this they wear a standard blindfold. Without the hat or scarf, kids can tilt their heads backwards and see below. Without the blindfold, most scarfs and hats are see-through. Also, for players ages 7-10 years, the whale sounds should be very faint—otherwise its too easy for kids to find their way. And you can make it even harder if you have all the pylon children making sounds at the same time. This will make it more challenging for the whales to isolate their location. The first time we played the game, only the first group of pylon children made whale sounds, then

when the whale got through, they became silent and the second group made their sounds, and so on. But this proved too easy for the whales, so I asked the pylon children to be more faint. The age level you have will determine how hard to make it.

You can also have a time limit, which makes it more intense. Never insist a child to be blindfolded who is not comfortable with it. They can just be pylons or escorts. Also, if you don't have an uneven number of kids, then you won't have pairs of pylons for one whale to go through. In this situation, I asked one of the first pylon children to pair with the last pylon child after the whale had passed through the first pylon pair's opening.

Before playing, we gathered around my computer and listened to whale sounds so they could try to mimic them for the game. This also enriches the whole story. One needs media player installed to do this. We heard Humpback whale sounds from this website, but you can easily find them by Googling "whale sounds".

http://www.ibiblio.org/pub/multimedia/sun-sounds/whales/

Sleeping Grump Board Game
A great game from Family Pastimes. Good for ages 4-8. I like this game very much because in order to win the game, players must share and/or trade treasures with other villagers, show generosity, cooperate, and be kind to the grump. The game also teaches that equal distribution of wealth is best, and everybody helps everybody to retrieve the stolen treasures from the grump—but leave him one of each as an act of kindness to change his heart.

Granny's House Board Game
Yet another excellent game from Family Pastimes for ages 4-7, but 8-11 year olds like it too. I turned this game into a metaphor for teaching. The object is to get to Granny's House with a gift via a path full of obstacles. The group has to use creative problem solving to overcome these many different obstacles (such as a bear, a high fence, deep river, etc.) using "good things" (such as a dog, a wooden box, food, rope and sticks, etc.) to reach their destination. We pretended that we were going to Granny's to share spiritual teachings, (the gift, but for the actual game, players are to present her with at least one of the good things). We discussed the obstacles people encounter in real life in teaching (insecurity, fear of rejection, materialism, too busy, prejudice towards other religions, etc.) and the "good things" we can use to assist us (prayer, deepening in the Creative Word, love, faith, virtues, good deeds, etc.). Fortunately, I had another copy of this game, so we played 2 separate games in teams of 4. They seemed to really enjoy it. The game is originally for 4-7 year olds, but one can make it much harder by requiring that the travelers also make it back home with a gift (one of the good things) for the whole family, and also by not allowing the good things that have been used once to be used again. So there are a very limited # of good things and one has to be very creative in using what one has left to overcome the obstacles. (In reality though, we never run out of good things to assist us in spiritual teaching.) A team starts with 4 good things and earns them as they land on red diamond shapes. But there are a whole lot of obstacles!!

One can make the game harder for older kids by allowing only 2 good things to start with and not allowing good things that have been used to be used again. Also, on several occasions, teams have worked really hard and creatively and cooperated well, but still have no good things to get them through the final stretch to Granny's house or don't have a good thing left for Granny. I then say: Say a prayer for remover of difficulties and see what happens. At the end of the prayer, I take a good thing that has already been used or not yet earned, and make it descend through the air to the player whose turn it is. I explain that in real life, Baha'i teachers have often experienced miracles and blessings when striving to deliver God's Message. But they have to pray and ask God to help. There are many Baha'i writings which promise Divine assistance to those who arise to teach.

Verily, We behold you from Our realm of glory, and shall aid whosoever will arise for the triumph of Our Cause with the hosts of the Concourse on high and a company of Our favored angels.
~Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas page 39

Sky Travelers Board Game
Another beloved game from Family Pastimes. For ages 8 and up, but some younger kids can get into it. Sky people have crashed on a planet and have to find 4 certain elements to repair their scout craft so that they can fly up to meet the mother ship as it passes over head. The mother ship moves across the sky with the roll of a special die. The sky people possess supernatural powers and never use violence—or their being evaporates. They use these powers to overcome the UTOC's (ugly things out of control) while searching for the elements they need for repairing their scout craft. Kids practice creativity in explaining how they will use their power to overcome an UTOC. The UTOC's and the 4 elements and all but 4 of the 10 powers are hidden face down on a board that takes players through land, water, forests, and

mountains. Every kid who has ever played it loves the game—even though it is almost impossible to succeed. Actually every time I have played the game, the mother ship passes by and the sky travelers have not got all 4 elements back to start so they can join it. Which means the game is lost. So now, I change the rules a bit and allow the kids to use a power three times instead of once before putting it in the used pile--- and it is still really hard to win.

Before playing I explain to the kids that the mother ship is like God—spiritually we have to soar up to meet Him and leave this earthly plane behind. He will take us to the hidden worlds and mystical realms, just as a mother ship would take us to hidden worlds in outer space. The scout craft is our injured and imperfect souls. The 4 key elements that enable ascension of the soul/craft are virtues, prayer, studying God's teachings, and service to His Cause. The mother ship's movement through the sky represents our lifetime—and when it is over, if we have not repaired/developed our souls enough, we miss our opportunity to have the honor of being near Him and His paradise in the next life. Often the Baha'i writings refer to hidden worlds and the court of His nearness and paradise—which have to be earned through spirituality. The UTOC's of course, are racism, hatred, greed, etc—and in the game many of the UTOC's reflect the ones in real life such as those. This game goes well with a unit on life after death or perseverance.

This game takes at least an hour to play, and we were all very engaged! With some of rule bending, all teams eventually joined the mother ship. Normally, I would not allow rule bending, but this game is almost impossible with the rules as is, and the students were so passionate about fixing the scout craft and joining the mother ship. Also, it is best not to read all the rules to the students before playing—it overwhelms the kids and they feel too insecure to play. Just read an overview and a few basics, and introduce the rules during the game as they apply.

About Family Pastime Board Games: All are cooperative, and most teach moral values as well. I also highly recommend **Harvest Time** and **A Beautiful Place** both for ages 4-7 or 8, and **Eyes of the Jungle** for ages 8 and up. Harvest Time players can only succeed if they pitch in and help their neighbors with their gardens, and the other two are environmental awareness games. Older kids (9-10 and up) will be challenged by their games called **Earth** and **Community**. These games teach social justice issues. See "Resources" section to find out where to get these.

PARTNER GAMES

Partner Games go well with a unit on the Equality of Women and Men. This is because over and over again in the Baha'i Writings the concept of partnership, helpmate, and complementation are used to describe male-female relationships. We discussed what it means when someone or something complements another and that it is not the same as *compliments.*. Many of these games have no other symbolic/metaphorical meaning other than they are just about creating unity and synchrony with another human being. The virtues of respect and consideration are also exercised, which of course relates to equality. When doing a unit on the Equality of Women and Men, I try to use male/female pairs when possible.

The quotes under *Equality of Men and Women Balloon Game* are relevant for almost all partner games when relating them to how women and men should relate to each other. Also, these 2 quotes apply to most of the games below:

Be ye as the fingers of one hand, the members of one body. Thus counselleth you the Pen of Revelation, if ye be of them that believe. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 140

He Who is your Lord, the All-Merciful, cherisheth in His heart the desire of beholding the entire human race as one soul and one body. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 214

Tie the Knot*

Partners sit down on the floor facing each other and try to tie a knot with a string--each child using only one barefoot. (This is also a slang term in America for marital engagement.) For a unit on the equality of women and men, have the partners be a boy and a girl. Handicap the girl by having her wear a sock or keep her shoe on. It will be much, much harder, if not impossible. Expound on how any goal is hindered when girls and women are handicapped by lack of education and oppression. (The Baha'i writings use the concept of the bird of humanity being unable to achieve its potential when one of the wings (women) is handicapped). Then have the boys handicapped so they can empathize with how frustrating it is. For the third round, neither is handicapped. The goal is still a challenge, but its much more attainable.

Block Buddies
Partners try to walk across the room holding a wood block between their noses w/o dropping it. No hands allowed.

Toe Towers
I put them in teams of 2, and asked them to take off their shoes and socks. Each team then chose 10 blocks and laid them beside them. (Each team had identical sets of different size blocks to make it fair b/c smaller blocks are harder to work with.) Team members sat opposite each other, facing, knees bent and toes almost touching. On the signal "GO!" they were to race to build a tower of 10 blocks, together, just using their feet—no touching with hands or fingers allowed. For every block, players had to use feet from both—i.e. both players had to have at least one foot on each block picked up. However, they could decide, based on the size of the blocks or size of their feet, if they would utilize all 4 feet or just 2. I told them that for straightening a block out on the stack, it was OK to use just one player's foot. Blocks had to be stacked one on top the other, not placed side by side. I encouraged them to not place them on end b/c of course this is less stable and makes the tower extra high—and the higher the tower, the harder to get blocks on it w/o knocking it down. Very rarely do I allow races, but in this case it was really OK and a heck of a lot of fun. Of course I did not reward first place, and acknowledged 2nd--5th place with hoopla too. Kids enjoyed it so much they asked to try 12 blocks and most succeeded—w/ a lot of crashes too. It was really funny to watch but also suspenseful—a team would have one more block to place and that one would knock the whole thing down!

We did this game in our lesson on cooperation and unity. We also did it for a lesson on the virtue of determination, after reading a story about a disabled boy who relies on determination every day to do simple tasks we take for granted. The students had also viewed photos of people who painted pictures and performed other amazing tasks with their feet b/c they had no arms.

Variation based on following quote:

And when He desired to manifest grace and beneficence to men, and to set the world in order, He revealed observances and created laws; among them He established the law of marriage, made it as a fortress for well-being and salvation..... this is one of My commandments unto you; obey it as an assistance to yourselves." ~ *Bahá'u'lláh*, Baha'i Prayers, p. 103

The name of the game is changed to *Fortress for Well-Being*. As in above, blocks were laid flat on the floor next to a pair. Each set consisted of 4 rectangular and 1 square block. Team members sat opposite each other, facing, knees bent and toes almost touching. On the signal "GO!" they were to race to build a "fortress" consisting of the 4 rectangular blocks set on end, forming an enclosed tower, with each block being one side or wall. The square block would be put on top to form the roof. I pointed out that it was quite difficult b/c it is also quite challenging for men and women to be successful in creating an equal relationship and building a "fortress for wellbeing". (If you have lots of blocks and want the experience to last longer, give each pair 10 rectangular blocks. Eight would be used for the 4 sides/walls. Each wall would have 2 blocks stacked lengthwise, on their edges and the roof would be the remaining 2 blocks laid across the top of the walls).

Stick Structures
This game uses the same concept as *Toe Towers* but pairs use yardsticks, or any long sticks. They attempt to build a tower using two sticks to pick up, hold, and place their blocks. Each child gets to hold one stick, near its end. If that is too hard,--which it usually is, then each child can grasp one end of both sticks for more stability. This works quite well, especially if the sticks are flat like yard sticks or rulers. Depending on the age of the players, you may want them to figure out on their own the most effective procedure, giving hints if necessary. The players simply squeeze the block between the two sticks. Number of blocks used, the way you ask that the blocks are stacked, (standing on ends, flat, etc.) and length of stick (yard or ruler) depends on skill level and ages playing. Experiment to see what works best with your group. This game is versatile in terms of level of challenge.

Roll Over Variations
Teams of two touch index fingers lying on the floor facing each other on their stomachs. Try to do a complete rolling over in unison without separating your fingers. No hooking of fingers allowed. Usually it takes a few tries. Want to make it harder? Try it with pinkies only. Harder still? Place pennies between your touching fingers and try to roll w/o dropping them. And now for the super challenge: place a small flat object such as a coaster (those things one puts their drinks on so they won't stain the furniture with moisture) between your noses as you roll over. This one is really hard b/c especially if you look at each other as you do it, you start to laugh and of course that causes you to lose your grip! It's easier if one

of you starts on your back, the other on their stomach. You can also play this game on your backs with bare feet and attempt to roll over keeping toes connected or something held between them. See if you can keep your arms straight and flat at your sides, i.e. don't use them to guide the body.

Leaping Lizards*

This game is kind of a metaphor for striving to be equally advancing partners, to be aligned and coordinated with one another. It was inspired by the following quote:

The happiness of mankind will be realized when women and men coordinate and advance equally..... ~`Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 182

It can be played indoors or outdoors. If played outdoors, set up a corridor, and show each partner which side they should run and leap on. We played it during our Equality of Women and Men unit. For this unit, I renamed it *Jumping Jacks and Jackies*. This game is also a good metaphor for cooperation, in that both jumpers are working together to be aligned.

The game can also be used to illustrate that positions can be physical poses, ----or mental opinions and viewpoints, and it promotes unity if one tries to bring folks closer together in their positions on things.

Partners ran towards each other and when I gave the cue, leapt and attempted to land on 2 feet right next to each other. The goal was to land as close to your partner's side as possible. A girl stood at one end of the hallway, and her male partner at the other end. I emphasized that they had to remain on their own "track" to avoid a mid-air collision. We had talked a lot about how women/girls and men/boys are the same and different. So I emphasized how each were going to do the *same* movement, but each had *different* tracks and ran in *different* directions. When I said "GO!" they started to run towards each other, and halfway down the hall I shouted "NOW!" and at that point they would leap and strive to land on 2 feet as close to each other as possible. Each team got 3 tries and chose the best of 3 in terms of alignment.

Harder Version: Jumpers try to also "high five" (slap open palmed hands together) each other as they are leaping in the air, still attempting to land as close as possible.

Equality of Men and Women Balloon Game

This is a partner game in which one partner could use the top half of their body and its limbs and the other partner the lower half and its limbs. The goal was to try to be the team who kept their balloon up the longest. If your balloon hit the floor, your team became still for the rest of that round. (Rounds go very quickly.) Also, you can't hit the balloon twice in a row. It must alternate equally between partners. Otherwise, the upper body person gets far more interaction with the balloon—and this is a game about equality!

After each round, I would yell "now switch" and partners changed who got to use their top half and who got to use their bottom half. I related this to the partnership of men and women; we are different but we should work together, be helpmates, and complement each other's strengths, just as the top of the body complements the lower part and vise versa. Together each team was more complete than if just half of the body was used. If the balloon is low, then the bottom half is best suited for retrieval, if it is high, then the top half is most effective. And just like in life, some situations women are more suited for, and some, men, b/c we tend to have different strengths and abilities in many areas. Should the balloon symbolize children and the need to keep them spiritually lofty or is that stretching metaphor just too much?

A fun way to end the game: the entire group attempts to see how long they can keep all the balloons in the air, with half of the group using their upper half, and the other half of the group using only their lower halves to maneuver the balloons. If that is too hard, then every body can use all parts. But its best to keep the rule that one can't hit the balloon twice in a row. This eliminates hogging and forces more cooperation and sharing.

Tip: If teams are older, like 12 and up, they will keep the balloons aloft longer. So they can be made to switch who uses what part in the middle of a round. Balloons need to be fairly large round ones for this to work with kids under 12. The small ones fall too fast.

The world of humanity consists of two parts: male and female. Each is the complement of the other. Therefore, if one is defective, the other will necessarily be incomplete, and perfection cannot be attained. ~`Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 134

The happiness of mankind will be realized when women and men coordinate and advance equally, for each is the complement and helpmeet of the other.
~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 182

Among the teachings of Baha'u'llah is the principle of equality of man and woman. Baha'u'llah has said that both belong to humankind and that in the estimation of God they are equal, for each is the complement of the other in the divine creative plan.
~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 280

We discussed what it means when someone or something complements another and that it is not the same as *compliments.* When something complements, it completes, harmonizes, balances.

Freedom of Expression
Students were put in teams of two and told to stand facing each other with about 2 feet between them. One partner was designated the "dominator" and he or she was to try and block with his or her arms the movements of the other's arms. The other was the "expresser" and he or she was to wave and wiggle his or her arms in the air in front of him/her—but not too fast or hard. Otherwise someone could get hurt. The expresser tried to get around the blocking motions and be as expressive as possible with out getting touched by the dominator. In the second round, pairs switched who was the expresser and who was the dominator. In the third round, both waved and wiggled their arms. Both attempted to be very aware of each other's movements so that they never touched one another, and allowed complete freedom of movement. It takes a tremendous amount of other-oriented focus to do this. It is hard. I tied it into the suppression of women's rights and freedoms around the world.

I pointed out that it is also very hard for those in power to let others who are less empowered to finally be equal and to have the liberty to express their hopes and dreams. It can be especially threatening to men in male dominated societies to get out of the way of women and let them change the world, respecting and valuing their contributions.

Tandem Two's*
A synchrony game: Students lie on their backs in pairs with feet touching and try to get a smooth cycling motion going without ever losing touch with their partners' feet. When they think they have it down, place a flat object between both partner's feet and see if they can do the pedaling w/o dropping the object.

Feather Float
Teams of 2 or 3 attempted to keep a feather aloft the longest just using breath. Then I made it harder and teams members had to hold at least one hand of another team member and move and blow in unison to keep the feather up.

Balloon Maneuvers I
Pairs stand facing each other with their feet touching. Team mates should be as close in height as possible. Place a round balloon between children's pairs of legs at the ankles on top of the feet. Kids must hold their hands behind their backs. The goal is to twist, push, kick and squeeze the balloon so that it ends up between their two faces. If the balloon escapes from between them, they can pick it up but it starts over at the ankles again. They can try it back to back also, but this is quite a challenge! I point out that each person in the pair has to complement the other in pressure and movement, they must be equalized in order to control the balloon. The balloon can represent spiritual growth, and this is much more achievable with unity between souls. This game would not be appropriate with teens. Goes well with the quotes used in *Equality of Men and Women Balloon Game* if pairs are of the opposite sex .

This may be taking metaphorical inclinations to the extreme—but if pairs are male and female, the balloon can represent their child. Their job is to raise him/her up to lofty heights—which is not easy in the game or real life. Parents have all sorts of impediments like materialism, poverty, the glorification of self, drugs, an irreverent culture, etc., and the inability to use hands represents those hindrances.

Balloon Maneuvers II
The goal was to be the pair that kept their balloon up the longest. Each pair could use only their legs and feet. That proved pretty darn hard, so as a variation, I added shoulders and heads to the allowable list and that was easier. We

ended with the whole group seeing how long they could keep all 4 balloons up in the air, with everybody helping everybody, using all body parts except hands and forearms.

Mirroring*
I explained that in any healthy relationship, sometimes the woman leads, sometimes the man--because they often have different abilities and skills. In a really unified relationship, it should not be that obvious who is leading. So in male/female pairs, facing each other, one would lead movements very slowly and the other would follow. But if they were very sensitive to each other and focused on their partner, it was difficult to guess who was leading, and who was following. The audience was to guess--and sometimes we were wrong.

Partner Back Ups*
Pairs sit on their behinds back to back and link elbows. Feet must be firmly on the ground with knees bent. The goal is to have both rise up simultaneously w/o using hands or leaning on calves or thighs—just the equal distribution of pressure against their backs. It is not easy. Another version is to do it w/o linking elbows—relying on synchronized back pressure only.

Rock Me*
Facing partners sit on the floor with their knees bent and sit on each other's feet, grab the other's shoulders and try to get a rhythmic rocking motion going. With a little encouragement, they can really get rocking high, and its quite fun. Pairs can also try to race other pairs, by using the rocking motion to move forward, (though one in the pair will be moving backward.)

Pantomime Pairs
These are basically mini-skits and the rest of us had to guess what 2 things they are. The children were put in teams of 2 and given cards which described a scene with 2 objects or people. The 2 things each child was to represent were underlined. Each team got to do 2 scenes. These were the scenes:

a person reeling in a fish
a mother trying to get her baby to smile
a child playing in the waves
a soul departing from a dying person
a cat playing with a ball of yarn
a person chasing a fly with a fly swatter
an artist sculpting with a piece of clay
a bird pulling a worm out of the ground
a kid climbing a tree
a leaf dancing/swirling in the wind

Round Robin Drawing
Then we did "round robin" or cooperative drawing in which teams of two share one piece of paper and do not talk or use body language to influence each other. Each person gets one marker of a different color than their partner. One person draws one continuous line in any shape and their turn ends as soon as they lift the marker up. Then the partner takes his or her turn and so on. They do this for about 5 minutes. At the end, each team shares with the group their creation. There were some really unusual looking creatures!

Round Robin Sculpting
You can use playdoh or clay. The last time I did this with students I asked them to use the theme of creatures, but told them that the creatures can be totally imaginary and fanciful. I have found that when I don't give students a theme, such as animals or buildings, their creations are so abstract that the kids can't relate to them. (Though sometimes even w/o a theme, a pair becomes united in their vision b/c the creation begins to remind both of them of the same thing, and so they begin to mold with a common goal.) I put younger and older kids together in pairs, and designated each member of the pair as "A" or "B" person. The only rules were they could not talk to each other and they could not alter the other person's shapes. However, they could alter their own previous shapes, and affix their shapes to any other shape, their own or their partner's. All shapes by the pair had to be connected to form one entity. Each child received a different colored ball of playdoh. (That way, each pair could easily discern his or her contribution to the whole.) Then I said, "A" children may now

begin. After a few minutes, I said, “A” children stop, and “B”s may now begin. This goes on for 10-15 minutes, alternating who is doing the sculpting. I encourage them to use their contribution to the whole sparingly so they don’t run out of playdoh, and to try and establish a front, rear, head, and mouth--but w/o talking. So basically one pair member would make a shape with part of their ball, the other would add to it, then the first one would add to that, and so on. I warned them when they only had 2 rotations left so they could do finishing touches. They really got into it.

When the time was up, I gave each pair a piece of paper and pen, and instructed the pairs to now consult and decide on a name for their creature, where it lives, what it eats, and how it moves. I gave each pair a paper plate to put their creation on, so they could carry them upstairs and share their new creatures with the adults, along with the description of them. They had fun coming up with creative names, sometimes combining syllables from the colors used or from their own names. So, for example, a creation by an Oliver and a Nadia, became an “Olinad.” Another creature that glided through the water and was yellow and purple, became a “Glidyelpur”. The adults got a kick out of these cooperative creatures too.

This activity is a simplistic metaphor for building a new world order: Diverse thought, ability, and desires and inclinations come together in unity to create/mold a new form. With the students, this new form is their common creation. The diversity in humanity must unite to create/mold a new pattern of civilization---a much more daunting enterprise I must say!! But we can help the process by training children to work together for a common end, rather than constantly socializing them to compete for mutually exclusive ends.

Waddle as One
This can be done as a race or just an attempt to make it to a goal post w/o falling over or disconnecting. A pair of kids squat down right next to each other, and the inside hand of both kids grabs the back of the other person’s inside ankle. The outside hand of each child is holding the outside ankle of his own leg. They then try to move across a room or playing field like this, staying connected. Its quite a funny sight to race like this!

Rolling Duo
One partner stands and the other lays on her back and places her head at the standing person’s feet and grabs the standing person’s ankles. The person on the ground then raises her back, rear, and legs off the ground and allows the standing person to grab her ankles. Bending knees and tucking them is important. With the right synchrony, they can become a rolling wheel by propelling themselves forward, sort of like a giant somersault. And big and little kids can do this together. Sometimes the bigger person has to provide the momentum. Its really a neat thing to see and do. The two quotes under the heading of *Partner Games* are quite appropriate for this game and *Waddle as One*.

MAINLY CEREBRAL GAMES

Perfect Principles
This one is essentially a group discussion/activity about how Baha’u’llah’s teachings have the power to spiritually transform and heal the world.

Using a dry erase board, I drew symbols of several of the most basic Baha’i principles/teachings: A dove with one wing labeled “M” and the other “W” for the equality of men and women, (a frequent metaphor used in the Baha’i writings that each sex is like the wing of one bird, the bird of humanity, and only when both wings are equally developed can the bird fly). A tree with leaves that were human stick figures to represent the oneness of humanity, (Baha’u’llah teaches that we are all the “leaves of one tree”). A globe with a book inside it to represent universal education. A sun with rays extending to 9 mirrors to represent progressive revelation and the oneness of religion, (God is like the sun, the Messengers are perfect mirrors reflecting His light and beauty). The word “peace” in several languages to represent the need for a common world language in addition to our mother tongues. A large chord note, with religion written on one note and science on the other to represent the harmony of religion and science. An open book encircled by many stick figures to represent universal education. And two people, one happy with a heart radiating light, the other sad with a heart with a dollar sign in it, to represent that purpose of life is grow spiritually, not material possessions.

Then I would describe a problem in the world, and children had to guess which teachings were applicable to the problem. The idea is that the world’s problems are fundamentally, at their root, a lack of spiritual vision and practice. If we want to transform the world, we need to apply spiritual solutions in addition to the material ones. So for example, I would say, in some parts of the world, people are killing others b/c they believe that the victims are evil b/c they belong to a religion the

aggressors do not accept. The kids were very good at pointing out that the oneness of humanity and the oneness of religion were relevant. When people injured or stole or killed for land or material things, the spiritual purpose of life in addition to the oneness of humanity was relevant. I gave many examples of past and present atrocities, such as the crusades, the persecution of the Baha'is and of early Christians, the Middle East conflicts, translation/communication problems, sexism, abuse, abandoned children, prejudice, the victims of those fighting the civil rights movement, the Taliban, poverty, pollution, evolution, creationism, etc. We even got into a discussion about how Baha'is do believe in miracles, even though to outward seeming they conflict with science. I explained that someday, when we understand spiritual laws better, those miracles will make perfect sense, just as an airplane does today, but would have been seen as a miracle over a hundred years ago b/c people were unaware of certain physical laws. I also asked the kids to share problems that bothered them and then the class found the appropriate teachings/principles.

The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established. This unity can never be achieved so long as the counsels which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed are suffered to pass unheeded. Through the power of the words He hath uttered the whole of the human race can be illumined with the light of unity... ~Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, p. 286

Everyone who truly seeks and justly reflects will admit that..... the teachings of Baha'u'llah are the very healing of the sick world, the remedy for every need and condition. In them may be found.....the cause of the happiness of the world of humanity, ...the basis of unity for all nations, the fountain source of love amongst mankind, ...the means of peace and harmony, the one bond which will unite the East and the West. `Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 440

.....today these heavenly Teachings are the remedy for a sick and suffering world, and a healing balm for the sores on the body of mankind. They are the spirit of life, the ark of salvation, the magnet to draw down eternal glory, the dynamic power to motivate the inner self of man. ~Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 61

Indeed, the chief reason for the evils now rampant in society is a lack of spirituality..... ~Shoghi Effendi, Directives of the Guardian, page 86

Baha'i Password I

We played a Baha'i version of this old TV game show. I chose 5 teams of 3 and took one person from each team into another room and showed them a word. Their goal was to be the first one to get their other team members to guess what that word was, using only one word synonyms and related words to clue them in. The roles rotated in each team, so everyone got to be in both the describing and guessing roles. Pantomime, using a phrase or combining words, or a word that had the key word embedded in it were not allowed. Only one word at a time could be shared. The kids really enjoyed it more than I expected. These were the words: *courtesy, soul, manifestation, unity, virtues, prayer, deepening, service, detachment, Ridvan,* and *consultation*. For example for "courtesy" one might say: manners, polite, considerate.

Reverse Baha'i Password

(This is called Reverse Password, b/c kids know the word, but they have to describe its meaning or significance. In regular password, the word is not known, but clues relating to its significance are given.)

I explained that there are many types of knowledge—Then I pointed out that the game they were going to play next required a different kind of knowledge than wisdom—the kind you get from remembering facts and history. I explained that as teachers of the Baha'i Faith, they needed to know some basic facts about their religion in addition to having virtuous behavior and spiritual perception. Otherwise, they would not be able to answer questions posed to them by interested seekers.

For this game, I divided the group into 2 teams, trying to balance them with kids who were very knowledgeable and experienced Baha'i-wise with the newer and younger kids. In a decorated wooden box, I call "The Question Box" I put tabs of cardstock with words written on them. All the words were used in the time line on Baha'u'llah's life presented a few classes ago and many of them also were discussed in the books they made on Baha'u'llah. If the word was about something holy, like "Bahji" it was written in gold ink and the edges trimmed with fancy edging scissors. Baha'u'llah's name was written in gold on red velvet, with a gold ribbon on the underside holding the velvet around the cardstock. It was also perfumed with rose oil.

Each team got a small lacquered container. I had a bag of little metallic suns. For each correct answer, a sun was placed in their container to symbolize rays of truth. This is how the game is played: A team member would blindly choose a tab from the question box and this child was to try and describe the meaning or significance of this word. For ex. for "Baha'u'llah" they were expected to say He was the founder of the Baha'i Faith, or the Manifestation of God for this Age, and His name means "The Glory of God." If the child was stumped, he/she could call on one other team member for help. But if that child got it wrong, the word passed to the other team and they also got 2 shots at it. Each child got a chance to choose from the question box. The words were as follows: *Baha'u'llah, November 12th 1817, Tehran, Siyah-Chal, Baghdad, Sulaymaniyyih, April 21st-May 2nd 1863, Constantinople, Adrianople, Akka, The Kitab-i-Aqdas, Mazraih, Bahji,* and *May 29th 1892.*

Baha'i Password II

I divided the group into 2 teams, trying to balance them with kids who were very knowledgeable and experienced Baha'i-wise with the newer and younger kids. I presented a decorated wooden box which I call "The Question Box". Tabs of cardstock with words written on them were inside. (All the words were used in the time line on Baha'u'llah's life presented in previous classes and many of them also were discussed in the books they made on Baha'u'llah, as well as in the stories we have been reading). If the word was about something holy, like "Bahji" it was written in gold ink and the edges trimmed with fancy edging scissors. Baha'u'llah's name was written in gold on red velvet, with a gold ribbon on the underside holding the velvet around the cardstock. It was also perfumed with rose oil. Each team got half of a small lacquered box. I had a bag of little metallic suns. For each correct answer, a sun was placed in their container to symbolize rays of truth.

This is how the game is played: I would choose a tab from the box and give clues about what it said and the first team to guess what was on the tab would get a sun. Here are the words, and the clues I gave (clues are in apostrophes): *Baha'u'llah,*--"Perfect Mirror", *November 12th 1817,*--"birthday", *Tehran,*-- "birthplace, city", *Siyah-Chal,*---"dungeon, Black Pit", *Baghdad,*---"declaration city", *Sulaymaniyyih,* ---"mountain wilderness, 2 years" (nobody ever gets that one, so I make it worth 3 suns), *April 21st-May 2nd 1863,*--"Ridvan, Most Great Festival", *Constantinople, Adrianople,*---"2 Cities, exiled to", *Akka,*---"Prison City", *The Kitab-i-Aqdas,*--"Book of Laws," or "Most Holy Book", *Mazraih,* --"charming spot after Akka", *Bahji,*--"Burial site, shrine", and *May 29th 1892*—"ascension, death." When the answer was to be a date, I told them ahead of time that I was looking for a month and a day—and not to worry about the year.

Searching for the Promised One

First we discuss that many enlightened people were actively searching for the Promised One, The Bab, in 1844, though they did not know who He was, what He looked like, or His given name. The first 18 to find Him independently were His disciples, whom He called "Letters of the Living." (They were not allowed to tell anyone until 18 had found Him on their own). Mulla Husayn was the first. For this game, I had hung 9 iridescent cardboard stars at equal height with green ribbon in a separate room. The goal was for each student to find the star that represented The Bab. I chose stars b/c Siyyid Kazim had written the qualities of The Bab on a 5 pointed star. I also put miniature red ribbon roses through the center of each one, since Mulla Husayn found Him in the city of Shiraz, known as the city of roses. I explained how each of the Letters of the Living had to find Him independently and had to really look with a searching eye, since to outward seeming, the Promised One appeared as a normal man. They had to use their spiritual senses and like detectives, look for clues and allow themselves to be guided. (Mulla Husayn fasted and prayed for 40 days before finding The Bab.) I told them that the star which represented The Bab was different in 4 ways, and that there were 8 clues in the room guiding them to that star. I told them that throughout the day, one at a time, they could go into the room and try to figure it out. If they did, they had to practice trustworthiness and self control, just as the Letters of the Living did, and not tell any one else. Each star also had a letter written on the back, so students could just whisper in my ear which one they thought it was rather than have to point it out, since there was a steady flow of seekers in the room.
Here are the ways the star was different:

- The one representing The Bab was the only one hanging directly over a lamp, and the first memory verse for the unit on The Bab was this verse by Him: "*I am the Lamp which the Finger of God hath lit within its niche and caused to shine with deathless splendour. ~The Bab:* Selections from the Writings of The Bab, page 74
- It's rose was scented with rose oil, the others only with canola oil. In the last class in June I had shared this verse of The Bab's with the students, and on Sunday I shared it again when we did an activity with a gift box: "*enable me to draw nigh unto Thee through the fragrance of Thy holiness." ~The Bab:* Selections from the Writings of The Bab, page 197

- On all the stars I had painted white iridescent rays emanating from the rose in the center. But the Bab's star had 9 rays, (a sacred number in the Baha'i Faith), while all the others had only 8.
- The Bab's rays were painted with glow in the dark paint, none of the others had glow paint. The Bab had said: *"I....am the light of God Whose radiance can never fade..."* Selections from the Writings of The Bab, page 12

The clues were:

1. The curtains were all shut very tight in the room—which they never have been before. This should have made them wonder.
2. There was a green sticker arrow pointing down on the light switch panel. This should have made them think to turn off the light so they could see the glowing rays.
3. A book entitled Nearness to God was placed on the nightstand directly below the Bab's star. In so many prior classes I have always emphasized the Baha'i teaching that if one wants to be near to God, one must recognize and obey His Divine Messengers.
4. Another book titled Who Knows this Nose? was placed facing outward on the bookshelf in plain view, with photos of animal noses on the front cover. This should have inspired them to use their noses.
5. An empty package was placed standing upright on the dresser which read "Glow in the Dark Glitter Stars". This should have stirred them to think about what the darkness may reveal.
6. A step ladder was left in the room to encourage them to climb up to smell the roses, since the stars were above their nose height.
7. There were red sticker arrows on the step ladder's steps to encourage them to climb
8. I had told them to remember their first memory verse for The Bab before they went in, (the one about the lamp) but I would not say the verse.

Round Robin Story

We played a story game in which every student chose a picture from a lotto game. The pictures were of animals and objects. I also had tiny paper dolls to choose from of a baby, boy, girl, man, and woman in different skin colors. Students also chose one slip of paper with virtues we had covered in class written in gold on it. I let them select the picture and virtue as opposed to choosing blindly to make the game a little easier. The object was to create a group story, with everyone at some point integrating their object or character and virtue. It could be as imaginary and fanciful as they wanted, but it had to make sense, have continuity, and maintain the story line. No acts of violence and aggression were to be told, and no disappearance or death of anybody else's' character was permitted. One could use a previously mentioned character in addition to their own in their contribution, but not bring in someone's who had not spoken yet. Also, when inserting the expression of their particular virtue, one could use previously introduced characters to do it. (This is especially useful if one has an object like a banana—unless the banana is magical and has human attributes.!) To make it even easier, I said you could insert your character with your virtue at any time in the story you felt it could work, as opposed to doing it in the strict order of the circle we were sitting in. Before beginning the game, its a good idea to insist that children do not raise their hand to share unless they are sure they know what they are going to say. Otherwise, the story can get boring if the others are waiting several minutes for a child to develop an idea.

Then I started a story about a journey of a boy (my picture) who set out to find happiness (my virtue) in the world. At first the kids had a hard time integrating their characters and virtues, but soon got the hang of it. The story got really elaborate and creative. Often, I find that for kids under 9 years old, it is necessary for me to give them prompts or suggestions. I try not to say too much, just plant a seed, so they have the satisfaction of creating a portion of the story. Also, unless the group is 12 years and up, I usually need to bring the story full circle and create the ending so that it all comes together in the end. Otherwise, the story may not have continuity or closure.

Together

To play this you need to purchase this game from Family Pastimes. (See resource list). Teams of 4 or 5 (they can be as small as 2) would each get 3 problem cards and 4 resource cards. Problems were things like: famine, drought, violence, poverty, racism, etc. Resources were things like: religion, kindness, education, technology, land, water, etc. Teams went off into separate rooms, came up with names for their "tribe" and discussed how they could use their resources to solve their problems. I urged them to try to get at root causes--i.e. money doesn't solve the reasons for poverty, education is more likely to. Tribes were encouraged to share and trade resources by sending tribe messengers on negotiating missions. All teams had different problems and resources, with the exception of religion--I gave all tribes a religion resource so they could all see how relevant the teachings, especially the ethical ones, of religion are to most problems in the world. I have often used nations instead of tribes to promote the concept of global cooperation.

After some discussion and trading, tribes all gathered together and each gave a presentation on how they used their resources to solve their problems. This activity was designed to get them to think in terms of interdependence and cooperation, to think and care about world issues, and to see how relevant spirituality is to a healthy world. It was also in support of our unit on consultation.

A similar Baha'i version of this game is found in Brilliant Star Baha'i Children's magazine, Sept/Oct. 1996 pages 22-25

Choices *

Another game from Family Pastimes—but I changed it to fit my educational goals. (One can also make their own situation cards.) I would read a moral dilemma from the Choices card set, and give them 3 choices, with the 3rd one always being "other". I assigned areas in the room which represented each choice, and they were to go to the area which they felt reflected the most moral or spiritual choice. For ex: "A friend says she hates God because her dad died." Choice 1: Don't pay any special attention to this. Choice 2: Try to get her to love God. Choice 3: Other. And "Your group is planning an afternoon in the park. A raid on the neighbor's garden is suggested." Choice 1: Join in, feeling it minor and harmless fun. Choice 2: Decide to stay home. Choice 3: Other. "A peer is always bossing everyone in your games." Choice 1: You and others say you won't play until the bossing stops. Choice 2: Try to talk the person into behaving differently. Choice 3: Other. And "During an argument, a little boy smaller and younger than you hits you." Choice 1: Hit him back. Choice 2: Hold his arms. Choice 3: Other. Some of the choices were not obvious and many children would choose "Other" for the answer, and came up with really good ideas that were wise, tactful, and moral. Children were very eager to express their reasons for their choices and there was a lot of interesting discussion. We played this game for our units on Abdu'l-Baha and Life after Death, but it can be tied into any unit on virtues or on the role of Divine Messengers in educating humanity. God's Messengers strive to train us so that we make upright and wise choices. It is through our choices that we demonstrate the depth of our virtue development, the quality of our moral character.

For the unit on Abdu'l-Baha, I urged them to make the choice they think Abdu'l-Baha would. In some of the situations, both choice 1 and choice 2 seemed options Abdu'l-Baha might choose—one was an expression of mercy or compassion, the other fairness or justice. That led to some interesting discussion about using wisdom in the application of those virtues in real life.

For the unit on Life after Death, I reminded them that the condition of their souls in the next world would be based on the choices they made during this earthly life. Life is full of choices which either exalt or debase us spiritually, and the goal is to always strive to make the choice which reflects our higher nature, and avoid those which stem from our lower natures.

Metaphor Madness

We played a metaphor question and answer game, and the students were quite good at it: I would ask a question like: "If your soul/heart is like a mirror, then reading the Creative Word is like_____? (Polishing it). If your heart is like a garden, then reading the Creative Word is like_____? (Watering it, or having new flowers blossom in it) If your heart is like a dark room, then reading the Creative Word is like_____? (Putting a beam of light in it) If your heart is like a candle, then reading the Creative Word is like _____? (Lighting the wick)." I also emphasized how *memorizing* the Creative Word is even more potent in terms of effect on ones' soul.

Casual Conversation *

2 or 3 people would leave the room, and the rest of the group would choose a separate sentence related to the Baha'i Faith for each of the absent persons to say such as "Baha'u'llah brought the Baha'i Faith" or "We have 9 Holy Days", etc. Then each person who had left the room was privately given his/her phrase. Then while the rest of us watched, the 2 or 3 kids would try to strike up a conversation related to religion and spiritual matters with each other and insert their phrase without the other ones in the conversation knowing. It was really fun to watch them try to hold a normal conversation, guiding it to their phrase and injecting it in an un-obvious way. If one of the kids engaged in conversation suspected that the chosen phrase had been said, they stopped and said "I challenge you!" One got 3 challenges per conversation. If they got it right, a new round with new kids would begin. You can also play it that the one who was found out then joins the audience, who can fill him in on the remaining 2 secret phrases. Then the 2 left try to be the first to figure out each other's phrase. This game is really for kids 10 and up, though younger get a kick out of providing phrases to be inserted and then watching the conversation. It can be more humorous if conversationalists are given silly things to say, and the Baha'i lesson is simply to practice being creative, tactful, and discreet.

What Holy Place is This?
The class should be divided into teams of 2-4 per team. Each team receives 4-8 photos of a Baha'i Holy Place such as a Temple or Shrine, or a building on Mt. Carmel. For each photo, I had made a tab of cardstock with the name and location of each place written in silver ink—to emphasize its special-ness. I would read the tab, and the team with the correct corresponding photo had to raise it up for all to see. If they did not, or they raised the wrong one, they did not get the tab, which equals one point. (You should team up older and younger, newer and more experienced kids on each team to make it fair. They should be encouraged to consult before answering). Then after we had read all the tabs, each team had to correctly identify their photos w/o using their tabs for guidance. If they could not, they would lose the tab for that photo. (The goal is to get as many tabs as possible). Then, just for a challenge, I invited any individual who felt knowledgeable enough to attempt to match all photos with all their tabs.

Synonym Secrets
This is basically a matching game. It can be played with teams who compete, or just with the whole class as individuals. Because my class has so many kids from non-Baha'i homes, I always create teams so they do not feel totally lost and clueless. Kids who are new or have no Baha'i background can be involved also by being score keepers. For this game I had created about 65 cardstock tabs, each one having a name, place, date, holy day, person's title, or brief description (such as "Abdu'l-Baha's wife, Baha'u'llah's burial place). On each tab I placed either a red or green star, and if it was an extra hard one, a gold star was also placed on it. Gold star tabs were worth 2 points. The red star labels related to Baha'u'llah or the post-Bab era, and the green related to events and people during The Bab's lifetime. Some tabs had both a green and a red b/c they could refer to either The Bab or Baha'u'llah—such as "Divine Manifestation". For each of the 65 tabs, I made a corresponding tab (w/o stars) that matched it. For example, for "Baha'u'llah's Declaration" the corresponding tab would be "Ridvan". Many tabs were tripled or doubled or more, b/c for example, another corresponding tab for Ridvan would be "The Most Great Festival", or "Paradise." The Central Figures' names were on many tabs b/c there were so many references to them, for ex: Abdu'l-Baha would go with "The Most Great Branch," "The Master," "The Center of the Covenant", "Baha'u'llah's eldest Son", etc. The stars were placed on the descriptions or definitions—b/c obviously you don't need a red star on Baha'u'llah's name to signify it goes with Baha'u'llah's lifetime.

Each team received equal number of tabs which they laid out in front of them on the floor. I would choose a starred tab from my pile and say for example "The Center of the Covenant". Of course both teams had several Abdu'l-Baha tabs, so the first one to hold up His name, would get the point. Then they would remove that tab from in front of them and place in a container so the game got easier as the choices became fewer. If they held up the wrong tab, or were the only ones with the correct answer and held up no tab, they lost a point. A mistake on a gold star tab was minus one point only. Some examples from the green star Babi-dispensation were: "The only female Letter of the Living" (Tahirih) or "The Last Letter of the Living" (Quddus) or "The Primal Point" (The Bab). Some red star examples were "Place where Baha'u'llah first received His Revelation" (The Siyah-Chal or The Black Pit), "The Most Holiest Shrine" (Bahji) or "The Ancient Beauty" (Baha'u'llah), or "The One Whom God Shall Make Manifest" (Baha'u'llah). This is really a review of past lessons in the form of a game. Though some information can be new and kids enjoy guessing, its best to play this game after these subjects have been taught.

I am not very fond of the concept of keeping score, but this technique seems to really motivate students b/c they love to acquire points—even if the points mean nothing! It also gives students who can not possibly know answers a way to participate—score keeping. Students always want a tally in the end, so I make a point of not exalting or praising the team w/ the most points—and besides, student score keepers are generally not terribly meticulous and the players know that. Score keepers may not enjoy the game quite as much as the players, but they should be invited to assist their teams with their opinions. I noticed that the score keepers (one or 2 for each team) rejoiced when their team scored and were almost as disappointed when their team made mistakes. Let us just say that it can be a vicarious learning experience for them b/c they do at least hear the answers and so probably absorb some knowledge.

Baha'i Scruples
You need Milton Bradley's *A Question of Scruples for Kids* to play this—unless you want to make up your own moral dilemma cards.

In the original game, players try to get rid of all their dilemma cards by choosing someone who they think will answer their moral dilemma in the way that corresponds to their answer card which is either a "yes", a "no", or a "depends". If the person answers the way you predicted, you get to get rid of your dilemma card. Then, you do not choose a new dilemma card, but you do choose a new answer card for the next time its your turn. You do not want others to see your answer card for fear they will deliberately not answer that way so you can't get rid of your moral dilemma card. In this version, although the dilemmas cause children to think, there is nothing that guides them to see or choose the more spiritual and virtuous answer. It can also be insulting when you choose someone you think would answer yes to cheating, lying, etc.

So in our version, teams of 3 received all three answer cards. (Yes, No, and Depends). I would read a moral dilemma card, and the 1st team to answer the way which was most moral/spiritually oriented (or if familiar with the example of Abdu'l-Baha, the way they think He would respond,) got the moral dilemma card. The team would show their vote by the person holding the relevant card raising it up in the air. (It can be tricky to see which team got the correct card up first. It helps to have another adult watcher). If they voted "depends" they had to defend their rationality. Also, to get the card that team would have to label what the relevant virtues were. (The team with the most cards wins, but because I am so anti-competitive, this was barely even mentioned in the end. The students know never to boast or exalt themselves in class and so the competitive nature is basically nullified.) If a team clearly answered incorrectly, they would lose a card. If they had no card to lose, they were given a token. At the end of the game, for every token your team had, one card was taken away. (Or you can just ignore the incorrect answers, and so only a reward is given in the form of the dilemma card.) Also, the answer cards were rotated among team members after each dilemma so every team member got a chance at saying yes, no, depends. The depends were used quite often, and students were very sophisticated at giving good rationalizations and variables which would effect the morality of the decision. It helps to have a large poster of a list of virtues for kids to refer to for the virtue labeling part.

They really got into this game! Here are some examples of the moral dilemmas posed to the class: (We did 22 total).

"A girl wants to buy a board game at your garage sale. Some pieces are missing from the game. Do you tell her?" (Relevant virtues: honesty, respect, consideration, sacrifice—because you may lose the sale.)

"Pretend—you are an adult. You've been out of work for several months. You are offered a job by a company that pollutes the air. Do you take the job?" Teams voted "no", but I encouraged them to think about "depends", because you could become homeless and also it could depend on whether the company was willing to change their polluting or whether you could get a position that could influence their polluting. (Relevant virtues: respect, caring, sacrifice, etc. When I switched it to a company that makes alcoholic drinks the answer was clearly "no".)

"You know where your parents hid your birthday present. Do you peek at it?" (Trustworthiness, self-control, detachment).

"Your know-it-all older brother is all dressed up and going to a graduation dance. He says, "So long, Shorty." Do you let him know his fly is open?" (Respect, forgiveness, mercy).

"A girl in your school doesn't bathe and smells bad. Other classmates stay away from her and she seems lonely. Do you tell her why she has no friends?" This one took some thought, but as Baha'u'llah exhorts us to look to the end of things when making a decision, we talked about in the long run what was best, and how to do it in a gentle manner. (Kindness, caring, compassion, courage).

"Your father is very overweight. His doctor has put him on a strict diet. You see him hide a box of doughnuts. Do you tell your mother?" Again, this one was a challenge because of loyalty issues. But again, I encouraged them to think about the long run. Since they did not promise to their father not to tell, the answer was "yes." (Caring, courage, love).

Some of the dilemmas explore cheating and stealing, and this can be a real challenge for kids in relation to peers. To tell or not to tell. My stance is if it hurts others in any way or is dangerous to health, such as stealing or drugs the answer is yes. Sometimes we have to get past immediate consequences and ponder the long term effects and chain reactions that can result from an act to determine its potential for damage.

Telling on someone who cheats on a test I am not sure about, since Baha'u'llah says:

If ye become aware of a sin committed by another, conceal it, that God may conceal your own sin. ~Baha'u'llah: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 55

This can also mean not to gossip about the faults of others. Another adult I asked suggested it was in the student's own best interest in the long run to be exposed to the teacher, but the person who told on them should keep quiet about it to others. Based on other scripture and common sense, it is obvious that there are times when it would be morally wrong not speak out because of protection of others issues. Youth struggle with these issues all the time—peer loyalty is so very strong—but this loyalty can often lead to damage to many if carried too far.

Arise

This is a game from the *Brilliant Star* Baha'i children's magazine Game Kit. (Available through the Baha'i Distribution Service). I changed the rules slightly to make it more challenging and more dependent on spiritual insight than on luck.

Teams of 2 were each given a card with 8 smaller pictures on it. Each large card had a different combination of smaller pictures on it, although the large cards shared some of the same smaller pictures. A deck containing at least 2 of each of the smaller pictures is placed in the middle of the circle. In order, teams would choose from the deck a picture, hoping to get a match. At first, if the card did not match, we moved onto the next team, but because I wanted the teams to get more frequent challenges, mid-way through the game, I let each team choose from the deck 3X to make it more likely they got a matching picture. If they could make some spiritual comment, insight, definition or explain the meaning of the symbol, etc, they could put a small star on that picture on their board. They would then return the card to the bottom of the deck. Due to time constraints, we could not play until the logical conclusion, that is when one team would have all their smaller pictures covered with stars on their board. Some of the smaller pictures were harder to comment on than others.

Some examples of some of the pictures were, a man and a woman holding hands, with the words, "the equality of women and men". I would expect the team to say that when women have equal rights as men, then world peace can emerge, or that men and women are like 2 wings of the bird of humanity, and only when both wings are equally developed can the bird fly. These are 2 concepts that we discussed and did activities on over and over in our equality of women and men unit, and the memory verses for that unit contained those concepts. Another picture showed a smiling child and said "happy and joyful being". We did a unit a while back on happiness. Therefore, I would expect that a team might say that true happiness comes from expressing virtues and serving God, not material wealth. Another picture showed 2 leaves and said "leaves of one tree" and I would expect a team to explain that this means that all people are connected and one in spirit, etc. Another card said 1844. This required a more concrete answer--the year that The Bab declared His mission. After the game, I went through each small picture card and asked students to raise their hand if they could comment. I was pleased that most kids were willing and able to give insights into at least several of the cards.

The Choicest Fruits
This game goes with the following quote:

Upon the tree of effulgent glory I have hung for thee the choicest fruits, wherefore hast thou turned away and contented thyself with that which is less good? Return then unto that which is better for thee in the realm on high. ~Baha'u'llah: Arabic Hidden Words, # 21

I brought out the dry erase board and told them that we were going to play a game based on the above quote. We talked about the possible meanings of the quote. I suggested that one interpretation could be that the tree of effulgent glory (we defined “effulgent” first) is that it is the Revelation of Baha’u’llah. I asked them to come up with a list of choicest fruits if the tree is Baha’u’llah’s Revelation, and examples of things that are less good that people content themselves with instead of seeking the fruits. This was the first part of the game, and to inspire/motivate them, I told them that the second part would involve tasting of some choice fruits—and the more they came up with, the more fruits they would get. Here then is the list we came up with, making a column for each subject:

Choicest fruits: eternal life, truth, nearness to God, divine civilization, knowledge and wisdom, virtue development, strong marriages and family life, justice, love, world unity and peace, world government, the equality of women and men, fair distribution of wealth, i.e. prosperity for all, oneness of humanity, oneness of religion, happiness, service, prayer, spiritual and physical health, Abdu’l-Baha as the Perfect Exemplar, divine laws, universal education, The Guardianship of Shoghi Effendi, Universal House of Justice, and loving communities.

That which is less good: luxury, physical comforts, worship of another person, alcohol and drugs, money, sports, entertainment, fame, power, physical beauty, clothes, shopping, art, music, food, nature, segregation, and all material things in general—be they toys, hobbies, houses, electronics, cars or flowers.

We discussed how most of the “less goods” were not evil or bad in and of themselves, but lead to evil and bad things when we live for them and make them the focus of our lives at the expense of spiritual pursuits. All of them, even art and nature, as beautiful and soul stirring as they can be, should not be a replacement for searching for spiritual fruits b/c they are, in their essence, still just physical things—even if they can reflect the light of God.

Then I turned the dry erase board around so they could not see it, and told them that for every choice fruit they could name from the list, (and they could only name it once—each person had to come up with a different one) I would reward them with a choice fruit. I had bought a few bags of Clementines which were incredibly sweet and were perfect for the game and piled them in a lovely crystal bowl. The kids were thus highly motivated and there were enough for each student to name 2 fruits.

In the summer one year, my youth assistants climbed up in a large pine tree with the fruit in sacks, one on each side of the trunk. I brought the dry erase board outside, turned it away from the group, and the kids gathered under the tree, half under one assistant, and half under the other assistant. They took turns trying to remember the choice fruits. When a child remembered correctly, a Clementine would fall down to them. I would then cross off that particular choice fruit on the dry erase board so I could know which ones were yet to be named. Some used towels or their shirts to catch, others enjoyed using their hands. They really liked this game. When all had received one fruit, then kids could try for seconds. To make sure all got at least 2, sometimes I had to give clues or hints. I'm not so sure that one should treat symbols of the choicest fruits with such frivolity—it strikes me as a tad bit irreverent, but fruit does fall from trees..... (This would also turn this game into a low activity game, instead of mainly cerebral.)

Recipe for True Happiness

I wrote down on a dry erase board RECIPE FOR TRUE HAPPINESS**.** To emphasize the content, I drew a very happy face on both sides of the title. Under this title I wrote a list based on the quotes found below. The phrases in **bold** are the ones that I used to compile the list—usually in regular English and summarizing. This part of the activity is actually for the memory game following this one. (We did not go over all the quotes at once, we had an outdoor game, *Hunting for Happiness*, drama, and a dance to a song about Joy in-between. Its important to not overwhelm students with too many quotes at once. We don't want them to dread hearing the Writings!) To make it more engaging, I divided the class into 2 teams, trying to balance age and experience evenly on each side. The questions were to alternate back and forth from team to team. Every correct answer earns a token for the team, which team captains put in their team cup. My assistant handed out the tokens. I asked kids to try and guess the words that are underlined using the context of the word, deductive reasoning and insight. Also, many of the students had heard most of these quotes from the last class.

To get a point/token, the exact word was not required—just a close synonym. If neither team could get it, then I would give a clue in the form of a first letter, then a second letter, first syllable or pantomime, rhyme, or descriptive riddle. Either team could guess after a clue was given. Sometimes, for newer or younger students, questions were targeted just at them, and only they could answer for their team. (Otherwise, they would just be quiet and let the older, more experienced students answer). Each token was worth 2 jelly beans—the number was rounded up to the next number that could be divided evenly among team members.

(Discussion about the quotes also took place, which is not described here, but will be in the lesson plans when I get those posted on the website. Short definitions to the big words in the quotes will also be included.)

.....the happiness and greatness, the rank and station, the pleasure and peace, of an individual have never consisted in his personal wealth, but rather in his ***excellent character, his high resolve, the breadth of his learning, and his ability to solve difficult problems.*** *~`Abdu'l-Baha:* Secret of Divine Civilization, pages 23-24

....man's supreme honor and real happiness lie in ***self-respect, in high resolves and noble purposes, in integrity and moral quality, in immaculacy of mind.***
~`Abdu'l-Baha: Secret of Divine Civilization, page 19

The Great Being saith: Blessed and happy is he that ***ariseth to promote the best interests of the peoples and kindreds of the earth.*** *~Baha'u'llah:* Proclamation of Baha'u'llah, page 116

....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****. Is any larger bounty conceivable than this, that an individual, looking within himself, should find that by the confirming grace of God he has* ***become the cause of peace and well-being, of happiness and advantage to his fellow men****? No, by the one true God, there is no greater bliss, no more complete delight. ~`Abdu'l-Baha:* Secret of Divine Civilization, pages 2-3

Happy the soul that shall forget his own good, and..... vie with his fellows in ***service*** ***to the good of all.....~`Abdu'l-Baha:*** Secret of Divine Civilization, page 116

Man is, in reality, a spiritual being, and only when he ***lives in the spirit*** *is he truly happy. ~`Abdu'l-Baha:* Paris Talks, page 72

In a time to come, morals will degenerate to an extreme degree. It is essential that children be reared in the Baha'i way, that they may find happiness both in this world and the next. If not, they shall be beset by sorrows and troubles, for human happiness is founded upon ***spiritual behaviour.***
*`Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 127

Obligatory prayer *is the very foundation of the Cause of God. Through it joy and vitality infuse the heart. Even if every grief should surround Me, as soon as I engage in conversing with God in obligatory prayer, all My sorrows disappear and I attain joy and gladness. ~Abdu'l-Baha,* The Importance of Obligatory Prayer and Fasting page 18

Happy is the man that ***heedeth My counsel,*** *and* ***keepeth the precepts prescribed by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.*** *~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 305

Whoso ***keepeth the commandments of God*** *shall attain everlasting felicity.*
~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 289

Good summary quote on happiness and obeying laws and teachings:

"In considering the effect of obedience to the laws on individual lives, one must remember that the purpose of this life is to prepare the soul for the next. Here one must learn to control and direct one's animal impulses, not to be a slave to them. Life in this world is a succession of tests and achievements, of falling short and of making new spiritual advances. Sometimes the course may seem very hard, but one can witness, again and again, that the soul who steadfastly obeys the law of Baha'u'llah, however hard it may seem, grows spiritually, while the one who compromises with the law for the sake of his own apparent happiness is seen to have been following a chimera: he does not attain the happiness he sought, he retards his spiritual advance and often brings new problems upon himself." (From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, excerpts from a letter to all National Spiritual Assemblies, February 6, 1973, Lights of Guidance, page 361)

The honor of man is through the attainment of the knowledge of God; his happiness is from ***the love of God;*** *his joy is in the* ***glad tidings of God;*** *his greatness is dependent upon his servitude to God.*
~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 335

As to spiritual happiness, this is the true basis of the life of man, for life is created for happiness, not for sorrow, for pleasure, not for grief. Happiness is life; sorrow is death. Spiritual happiness is life eternal. This is a light which is not followed by darkness..... This great blessing and precious gift is obtained by man only through ***the guidance of God.....*** *This happiness is but the* ***love of God.***
~Abdu'l-Baha, The Divine Art of Living, page 29, compiled by Mabel Hyde Paine

Gather ye together with the utmost joy and fellowship and ***recite the verses revealed by the merciful Lord.*** *By so doing the doors to true knowledge will be opened to your inner beings, and ye will then feel your souls endowed with steadfastness and your hearts filled with radiant joy.*
~Baha'u'llah: The Importance of Deepening, page 188

Happy is the man that ***pondereth in his heart that which hath been revealed in the Books of God.....***
~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, pages 12-13

May your souls be illumined by the light of the Words of God....for no happiness is sweeter than ***spiritual comprehension of the divine teachings.*** *~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, pages 459-460

Everyone who truly seeks and justly reflects will admit that..... the ***teachings of Baha'u'llah*** *are the very healing of the sick world, the remedy for every need and condition. In them may be found.....the cause of the happiness of the world of humanity, ...the basis of unity for all nations,*

the fountain source of love amongst mankind, ...the means of peace and harmony, the one bond which will unite the East and the West. `Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 440

*Happy is the **faithful one who....hath arisen to serve this Cause**.*
~Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 257

Teaching is the food of the spirit; it brings life to unawakened souls and raises the new heaven and the new earth; it uplifts the banner of a unified world;.... and brings those who give their lives to it the supernal happiness of attainment to the good pleasure of their Lord. (The Universal House of Justice, Ridvan 145 B.E., 1988, p. 3)

*In truth, **knowledge** is a veritable treasure for man, and a source of glory, of bounty, of joy, of exaltation, of cheer and gladness unto him. Happy the man that cleaveth unto it, and woe betide the heedless. ~Baha'u'llah:* Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 27

*We ask God to endow human souls with **justice** so that they may be fair, and may strive to provide for the comfort of all, that each member of humanity may pass his life in the utmost comfort and welfare. Then this material world will become the very paradise of the Kingdom, this elemental earth will be in a heavenly state and all the servants of God will live in the utmost joy, happiness and gladness. We must all strive and concentrate all our thoughts in order that such happiness may accrue to the world of humanity. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Foundations of World Unity, page 43

*.....happy are they that **judge with fairness** in all matters..... ~Baha'u'llah,* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 62

*Nothing makes a man so happy as **love**. ~Abdu'l-Baha* as quoted in Memories of Abdu'l-Baha, page 47, by Ramona Allen Brown

*Know ye, verily, that the happiness of mankind lieth in the **unity and the harmony** of the human race.... ~Abdu'l-Baha,* Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 286

*I want you to be happy....to **laugh, smile and rejoice** in order that others may be made happy by you. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 218

RECIPE FOR TRUE HAPPINESS

1. Excellent character, virtues in general
2. High resolve
3. Breadth of learning
4. Ability to solve difficult problems
5. Self respect
6. Noble purposes
7. Integrity
8. Cleanliness of mind
9. Promoting the best interests of all peoples
10. Become the cause of peace and well-being, of happiness and advantage to others—be a source of social good
11. Service to all
12. Living in the spirit and spiritual behavior, -- for example, prayer, reading of sacred scripture, virtuous conduct
13. Obligatory prayer
14. Obeying God's counsels
15. Keeping God's teachings and laws
16. Love of God
17. Glad tidings of God
18. Guidance of God
19. Recitation of the sacred verses
20. Pondering the contents in the Books of God
21. Spiritual comprehension of the divine teachings
22. Teachings of Baha'u'llah

23. Being faithful and arising to serve the Cause of God
24. Teaching God's Faith
25. Knowledge
26. Justice
27. Judging with fairness
28. Love
29. Unity and harmony
30. Laughter, smiles, rejoicing = source of happiness for others

Happiness Memory Game
After compiling the above "ingredients" list from the **bolded** words in the quotes above, I turned the front of the dry erase board away from the students. The teams stayed the same as in the *Recipe for True Happiness* game. I started out asking a team to try and remember an ingredient from the Recipe for True Happiness list. We continued alternating back and forth from team to team trying to recall as many as the ingredients as possible. For each correct answer, a token is given, which is placed in a small ceramic cup by a designated team member. When they ran out of items from memory, I would start giving clues by pantomime, providing part of the phrase but leaving out the key words, providing the first few letters of a key word, or even a syllable or rhyming word to the key words. If a team could not guess the answer based on a clue, the next team made an attempt. The team that finally gets it, gets a token. But if 2 clues have been given, and none of the teams got it, then any team can answer—b/c its an unfair advantage for the team that has heard more than 2 clues. At the end of the game, teams count up their tokens, and each token is worth 2 jelly beans. The jelly beans,---which should be a variety of flavors to make it more desirable to earn more--, are then rounded up so that they can be divided evenly among team members.

The Ungame
Sometimes we do verbal sharing activities. This can be time consuming and requires patience, respect, and courtesy on the kids' parts. It helps children get to know each other, learn empathy, listening and communication skills, express feelings, and assists in value clarification. It also encourages empathy and the understanding of others by providing information that reveals things about others' inner selves, often which is very much similar to our own perceptions, feelings, and beliefs. I often use little cards from a game called *The Ungame*. We don't play the game, just use the cards. We have used these cards in 3 ways: 1. On road trips in the car, 2. As a group activity, in which we sit in a circle and each student chooses a card from a basket and takes turns reading the question and briefly sharing their answer, (They can choose again if they can't relate to the question), or 3. Near the beginning of each class, a brass bowl full of colored beads is presented, holding a bead for each child. One bead is clear. The kids dip their hand into the bowl that is held above eye level. Whoever gets the clear one gets to get interviewed by the rest of us. If they have already been interviewed, they give the clear bead to someone else. (I like this better than excluding them from the choosing process altogether, and this way they get to do a little affirmation by choosing someone else). This is a "get to know you" technique in which the student sits in a chair in front of the class and calls on the other students or myself who each get to ask one question. The questioning audience can make one up or use the Ungame cards. There are Ungame versions for all ages. All versions of Ungames are available at www.educationallearninggames.com but you may find some of them cheaper at www.amazon.com.

These cards have questions like: What is your favorite animal? What 3 things would you save first if your house were on fire and all living things were already safe? What hurts your feelings? What 3 virtues do you look for most in a friend? If you had magical powers, what 3 things would you try to improve in the world? What turns you off? Describe what peace means to you. What makes you happy? What country would you like to travel to more than any other? If you had a million dollars, share 3 things you would spend it on. Some of these questions are ones I made up, some came in the game, but you get the idea. I also have made some that are informative to me as Baha'i teacher, such as: If you could meet Baha'u'llah, what 3 questions would you ask Him?

For a unit on consultation, we talked about how important it is to be able to listen well during consultation. Each child got to choose 1 Ungame card they liked, and was asked to briefly answer the question. After speaking, the speaker was to choose any one in the group and that chosen person was to summarize the feelings or thoughts just shared by the speaker. The speaker was then asked if the summary was accurate. If not, then the speaker was to clarify. I encouraged the speakers to choose people who had not been chosen already by another speaker, so everybody got a chance to share and to summarize other's sharing.

PARACHUTE GAMES

There are many more really fun parachute games which demand a lot of unity but for which I have no Baha'i metaphors. Terry Orlick's Second Cooperative Sports and Games Book is full of them, and there are others. (See Resources). If you purchase a parachute, you will want to get the most out of it you can—so please don't limit yourself to these few games below. Kids absolutely love parachute games, they promote joy and unity, and so you don't really need metaphors to make it worthwhile. It's a great investment if you work with kids. Also, don't worry about limiting the number of participants to the number of handles on the chute. Just have players hold onto the edges. It's always a good idea to give the kids practice raising and lowering the chute in unity before introducing a game. A unifying way to end a game session is to raise the chute, have all swing their arms backwards, draw the chute behind them, and sit down on top of the inside edge. This forms a sealed domed tent with everybody inside. Some of the games below will also work with a very large sheet or light blanket.

Save the World ##
I explained that the parachute represented the world, and the goal is to spread God's teachings of world unity, love, oneness, etc., before the world collapses—through war and hate, etc., by planting the seed of His new Revelation in human hearts. So for each round, I would choose 2 children, one would get a giant heart pocket on a necklace that said "the human heart" on it. That person would be the seeker. The other child got a giant seed shaped piece of brown-golden mat board, which said "the Seed of God's Revelation" on it. That child would be the Baha'i teacher. When we inflated the parachute as group, these 2 children (who needed to be on opposite sides) would run under and the child with the seed had to insert it into the heart pocket and run out from under the parachute before the parachute world collapsed on them. They also had to exchange places, so each would run to the place where the other had come from. I gave the command to bring the parachute down as soon as the "seed" was "planted" so the kids had to really high-tail it to the other side. I encourage the teacher and the seeker not to hold onto the parachute and raise it with the others so that they can immediately run under.

The game goes well with the following quotes:

Sow the seeds of My divine wisdom in the pure soil of the heart, and water them with the waters of certitude, that the hyacinths of knowledge and wisdom may spring up fresh and green from the holy city of the heart. ~Baha'u'llah: Persian Hidden Words, # 78

These are the days of seed sowing..... He who sows a seed in this day will behold his reward in the fruits and harvest of the heavenly Kingdom. This timely seed, when planted in the hearts of the beloved of God, will be watered by showers of divine mercy and warmed by the sunshine of divine love. Its fruitage and flower shall be the solidarity of mankind, the perfection of justice and the praiseworthy attributes of heaven manifest in humanity. All who sow such a seed and plant such a tree according to the teachings of Baha'u'llah shall surely witness this divine outcome in the degrees of its perfection and will attain unto the good pleasure of the Merciful One.
~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 8

The sons and daughters of the kingdom are like unto the real farmers. Through whichever state or country they pass they display self-sacrifice and sow divine seeds.
~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Tablets of the Divine Plan, page 16

Use thy utmost power to sow and cast these pure seeds, the divine teachings in the hearts.
~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Tablets of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 171

"Never must they let a day pass without teaching some soul, trusting to Baha'u'llah that the seed will grow."
~Shoghi Effendi, The Individual and Teaching, page 35

Verily, the words which have descended from the heaven of the Will of God are the source of unity and harmony for the world. ~Baha'u'llah as quoted by Shoghi Effendi in The Advent of Divine Justice, page 37

Verily I say, whatever is sent down from the heaven of the Will of God is the means for the establishment of order in the world and the instrument for promoting unity and fellowship among its peoples. ~Baha'u'llah: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 67

*.....today these heavenly Teachings are the remedy for a sick and suffering world, and a healing balm for the sores on the body of mankind. They are the spirit of life, the ark of salvation, the magnet to draw down eternal glory, the dynamic power to motivate the inner self of man. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 61

....the establishment of peace is unachievable save through the power of the Word of God....
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, pages 295-296

Everyone who truly seeks and justly reflects will admit that..... the teachings of Baha'u'llah are the very healing of the sick world, the remedy for every need and condition. In them may be found.....the cause of the happiness of the world of humanity, ...the basis of unity for all nations, the fountain source of love amongst mankind, ...the means of peace and harmony, the one bond which will unite the East and the West. `Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 440

One can also dispense with the seed metaphor, and use the more concrete object of a small booklet about the Baha'i Faith. I use this when working with kids who are unfamiliar with metaphors. Even though placing the booklet in the heart is still a metaphorical act for teaching, it is less abstract. So, we still use the heart pocket, but a child places a little booklet that says "The Baha'i Faith, It's Principles and History" in the open heart instead of the giant seed. The previous 5 quotes work well with this version also.

For a unit on life after death, this quote can be used:

The days of life are swiftly going by, and eventually man will be confined into subterranean regions and his name shall perish, except those souls who become Divine gardeners and who sow seeds in the soil of hearts. Those shall eternally remain shining and glittering like unto stars from the horizon of Truth. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Japan Will Turn Ablaze, page 19

Save the World II ##
This same game can be played in a more non-religious setting, using a different metaphor: Explain that the parachute represents the world and the individuals around it are the nations. (Or ethnic groups, tribes, etc.) You can ask each child to name a nation they would like to represent if there is time, or you can just give them a nation when you call on them. (Kids can have stick on badges which say their nation if you want to get even more educational and you call them under the parachute using their nation' name). Ideally, they should all be different nations. Explain that the world of so many millions of people is crashing down b/c the nations or tribes are fighting and they have to get unified and understand we are all one family before the world collapses from nuclear disaster, war, climate change, etc. (If you don't want to focus on such a downer concept just be more vague and general, especially for younger children). So when I say 1-2-3-UP! we will all raise the parachute and 2 of you who I will have already chosen will run under, shake hands (to symbolize unity) and exchange places before the parachute comes down.

I always give the cue to lower the parachute, making it so that there is barely enough time to shake hands and exchange places—runners are often sliding out from under just in the knick of time. When the parachute is lowered, 2 more are chosen. Players are admonished to be honest and fair and not raise their hand if they have already gone under. To make it a teachable moment, I explain that we can't have world unity if people or nations lie and cheat and take more than their fair share. Greediness and dishonesty do not promote peace, and truthfulness, trustworthiness, and fairness are necessary for unity and peace. I encourage the runners not to hold onto the parachute and raise it with the others so that they can immediately run under. Younger kids may find it easier to give a quick hug or a high five than to shake hands. If you have a huge group and giant parachute, and limited time, you can send up to 8 under at a time. In this case, choose 4 pairs of kids on opposite sides of the parachute, making sure they know ahead of time who is the person/nation they will be shaking hands with or hugging.

The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 286

Remove the Barriers ##
This game's metaphor was created by Aurelia Blake: Talk about the barriers that keep people apart: prejudice, fear, language, national identity, religious prejudice, skin color, class, age, etc. Then have every body practice inflating the parachute to create a giant mountain of air (the barrier). Participants must raise the chute together, lower it quickly to capture the air, and seal it by holding the edges on the ground. Then 2-3 kids are invited to walk on this mountain of air (the barrier) and using their feet and hands, eliminate it. They end up pressing all the air out. When the barrier is completely gone (all the air is out) the kids on the parachute should shake hands to symbolize friendship. Little ones can hug. It is important to emphasize that they should walk and not throw themselves around b/c it is only a barrier of air and you may end up knocking heads w/ another child on the other side of the mountain. With a large group, the seal is better and the air stays in more effectively. (Make sure the top/center of the parachute is sealed closed). If this is the case, walking on it may be just right—but if the air comes out too quickly, have the kids crawl on it. Older youth and adults should crawl, for otherwise they obliterate the barrier too fast.

Parachute Formations ## *
First we practice raising and lowering the parachute in unity. Then I explain that I will choose 3 children (if the group is really large up to 8 can go under) to go under the parachute and form a unique formation or sculpture with their bodies. The formation can be an abstract sculpture or symmetrical design. People can be sitting, laying down, standing or all 3—but they must all be touching in some fashion—this represents unity, i.e. separate individuals connected to make one formation. (Have a group demonstrate what you mean before playing with the parachute.) Every groups' formation should be different than the others'---this is one of the diversity aspects. Diversity is interesting, fun, and exciting--for wouldn't it be boring if every time we lifted the parachute the formations were the same? The other diversity aspect is that diverse people under the chute are attempting to be unified in creating a formation.

At the count of 3, I will say "UP" and the 3 run under and we lower the parachute. Peeking is not allowed. (If the ceiling is high, players stand and hold the parachute at waist level while the formation is forming. If the ceilings are low, people kneel and hold it down on the floor). While the kids are making their formation, I play the "Rapp Song" from Red Grammer's *Teaching Peace* recording which is about the beauty of diversity. (Its a good idea to record the song 3x in a row if you are using tape, b/c otherwise it will end before the end of the game.) When the music stops,-- I will give them about 20-30 seconds--(have someone to man the deck and watch for your signal) we will lift the parachute to behold their formations.

The kids really had to cooperate quickly to create their body sculptures. After we admire the formation, that group joins the outside group, and the parachute is lowered. Then I select another group, the parachute is raised, they go under, the parachute is lowered and the music begins again. When it stops, we raise it and behold the new formation and the cycle begins again. With some youthful groups, sending boys and girls under at the same time inspires sexual commentary. In this case, just send girls only or boys only. Also, if you are playing with little ones, adults and youth should kneel when raising the parachute so you don't force the parachute out of the smaller kids' hands. Ask kids to be honest and not raise their hands to go under if they have already done so. Its a good idea for most groups to have at least 1 adult go under the chute with a group of kids.

At a secular peace camp, I emphasized that being a peacemaker often means being able to cooperate with those who are different than you—sometimes under pressure. We need to be able to work with and achieve goals with those who may have very different ideas and values than our own. (The time limit of each formation forces kids to not cling stubbornly to their own ideas and to communicate). And Nations also are under pressure to cooperate with each other to avoid wars, famine, etc. They must learn to cooperate quickly and create organizations and structures (formations) which promote peace, health, and well being for their peoples.

Also, children love to make waves with the parachute by shaking it. This is not a good idea while the group is trying to form a formation under the parachute. It makes it hard to hear and focus if one is under the chute and it is being shaken wildly. The group is trying to come to some consensus and be creative, --this is enough to deal with. So, I let the kids do their shaking after they view the formation and those under the chute are departing. I say: "OK! Let's give them some air to cool them off!" Or I explain at the beginning that this is our form of applause, and I say: "Let's give them a gigantic applause!"

Wake Up Call ## *
This is an Inuit (Eskimo) game and really works best with at least 10 children using a parachute, but a circular tablecloth or even a blanket can do. As you all have probably noticed, I often try to relate many games we play to the theme of the class—sometimes stretching the analogy a bit far, as I did in this first game: I explained that God does not forget us and

since He created us to know and love Him, if we get distracted and forgetful of our relationship with Him, He will somehow guide us or push us towards spirituality. For example, sometimes we get really caught up in this physical world, and so sometimes God gives us a nudge, pinch or a slap to wake us up and notice Him. Then it is our job to figure out what the nudge, pinch or slap means and where it came from. I gave examples of pinches and slaps like an illness, an accident, a bold bit of feedback from someone, a powerful or unusual experience, an abrupt and unexpected change in our life, etc. We can't escape our duty and our purpose in life—God will always come after us in one way or another because He loves us. (Be careful who you play this game with—if there are children who have been sexualized through abuse or exposure to inappropriate media, this game can bring out unwelcome thoughts and comments.)

For a class on honesty, I left out the bit about God needing to sometimes give us a "wake up call" and focused instead about being honest when asked if one has the glove. Even if we are embarrassed or don't want the consequences of honesty, we still need to tell the truth.

So, this is how the game works for both the wake up call and honesty versions: Children sit in a tight circle with their knees bent and their hands under their knees. The parachute is placed over them to cover their arms and legs and feet. One child stands in the middle on top of the chute. Children surreptitiously pass a large leather glove around, through their bent knees, and it can *travel in either direction* at any time. (You can use 2 gloves if you want more action.) Remind players to not hoard the glove and to not pass it until they are sure the person next to them has a hold of it, otherwise it can be dropped and no one is getting it. With a parachute and large group of children, they are close enough to pass so that the child standing in the middle can't see their arm movements. The idea is to be sneaky and subtle. The person in the middle is supposed to bend over slightly and turn slowly around attempting to discern who has the glove. Any child who has the glove when the person in the middle is turned away from them can quickly smack the person in the middle on the rear end and then immediately pass the glove. The person in the middle gets one guess for each smack—they point to the person they think has the glove at that moment. It could be the person who smacked them or more likely, the person it was passed to. Honesty is one virtue practiced here, as is humility—getting whacked on the rear end and people giggling at you does not go well with a lot of pride! If the person in the middle guesses correctly, then the identified person changes places and goes into the middle.
Remind kids in the middle to keep turning around and not get their feet tangled in the parachute as they turn around. Players on the floor can tuck a section of the parachute down the front of their shirts and pull it through the bottom of the shirt, so they don't have to worry about it slipping away from them. They can all also move their arms as if passing the glove to throw off the person in the middle. If you have a large parachute, just have the kids bunch it up a bit so that the person in the center is not impossibly far away to smack. You can call this version "Honest Hands".

Striving for Pearls ##

Immerse yourselves in the ocean of My words, that ye may unravel its secrets, and discover all the pearls of wisdom that lie hid in its depths. ~Baha'u'llah: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 85

O My servants! My holy, My divinely ordained Revelation may be likened unto an ocean in whose depths are concealed innumerable pearls of great price, of surpassing luster. It is the duty of every seeker to bestir himself and strive to attain the shores of this ocean, so that he may, in proportion to the eagerness of his search and the efforts he hath exerted, partake of such benefits as have been pre-ordained in God's irrevocable and hidden Tablets..... Behold it is closer to you than your life-vein! Swift as the twinkling of an eye ye can, if ye but wish it, reach and partake of this imperishable favor, this God-given grace, this incorruptible gift, this most potent and unspeakably glorious bounty. ~Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 326

Students gather around the chute, holding it at waist level. Then, telling the kids not to peek, I toss 2 pretty balls underneath the chute. Next, I ask the kids for some pearls of wisdom from the Ocean of God's Words. Then I choose the first 2 kids to share those pearls of wisdom to crawl *on top* of the chute. The moment they are on, the rest of us begin shaking the parachute as vigorously as we can, to simulate waves. The two children are to try and find the pearls under the chute as fast as possible by crawling around and sweeping their arms and legs across the waves until they find that bump that is a pearl/ball. Some even begin rolling so as to cover more area at one time.

When a pearl/ball is located the child who discovered it is to then slip under the parachute, quickly re-hide it and then re-emerge and join the wave-makers. (Kids love to go under a parachute and its especially fun b/c the waves are still being made for the other child). As soon as the child comes out from under the chute, he/she chooses someone who has not gone yet to find a pearl by climbing on top of the waves and feeling about. This is a great upper- body workout for the wave-makers b/c basically for the duration of the game we are making waves! It can be hard to find those pearl/balls—remind kids to search near the shore (edges) b/c they tend to stay near the center. You may have to put a time limit on

the search so as not to wear out the wave makers. Or if a child is having real difficulty, peek under and give them a clue like—"search under the blue section!" Remind them that Baha'u'llah says that a seeker in the ocean will partake of benefits *"in proportion to the eagerness of his search and the efforts he hath exerted...."* If the wave makers wear out, take a few moments to relax before sending new kids onto the top of the parachute.

I think it would be better to have beautiful white or even colored balls to represent the pearls, as opposed to play balls. The pearls represent God's wisdom, and as you probably know by now, I am very keen on always using beauty and elegance in symbolizing spiritual things. Be on the lookout for plain cardboard or papier mache round Christmas ornaments that are undecorated—but have a pretty coating of some kind. They need to be at least as big as the tennis balls, and unbreakable. One can also buy wooden balls and paint them with pearlescent or iridescent glaze. In Oct. of 2006, Pier 1 Imports was selling the perfect balls—relatively unbreakable, about twice as big as tennis balls, with a shimmering surface befitting of pearls of wisdom. They are called *Capiz Spheres.* I have also found them at Michael's Arts and Crafts stores.

Cats and Mice #

.....it is not only their fellow human beings that the beloved of God must treat with mercy and compassion, rather must they show forth the utmost loving-kindness to every living creature. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha: Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, page 158

First the above quote was shared. We briefly discussed the meaning of mercy and compassion, and how we must not take scripture to the extreme, in that if an insect is biting you, you can swat it, etc.!

I explained that this game was an example of showing compassion and mercy to the weaker animal, the mouse. Every child got to be a cat and a mouse at least once. One mouse was chosen to go and crawl under and the parachute, and 1 cat to crawl around on top of the chute. For larger groups, up to 3 mice can go under at once and 2 cats can stalk them. The rest of us tried to protect the mice by shaking the parachute vigorously so that the cats could not see the mice crawling around. If a cat came upon a mouse they touched it and the mouse had to come out. Then a new cat and mouse were chosen. If there is more than one mouse, each round ends when there is only one mouse left under the chute. Sometimes the mouse was so clever our arms wore out before the cat could find the mouse. At this point, I just called an end to the round saying that the mouse escaped. Mice who crawled around the edges of the parachute lasted the longest. Its important that children understand that both cat and mice should be on all fours, crawling, and that they should move around a lot. Also, to avoid injury, cats should not pounce, but just paw (touch) the mouse when they find him or her.

The other 2 games for our lesson on kindness to animals were *Creature Capture* under Highly Active Games and *Whale Rescue* under Low Activity Games.

RESOURCES

Board Games, Equipment, and Game Books for Teaching Unity, Cooperation and Other Positive Values

Board Games:

SLEEPING GRUMP (for ages around 4-7)
GRANNY'S HOUSE "
HARVEST TIME "
BEAUTIFUL PLACE (for ages around 5-8)
TOGETHER (for ages around 8-12)
EARTH (for ages around 10 and up)
COMMUNITY (for ages 9 and up)
SKY TRAVELERS (for ages 8 and up -- but 5 yr. olds can do it)
PLOUGHSHARES (for ages 9 and up)
ROUNDUP (for ages 5 & up)
SAND CASTLES (for ages 5 & up)
THE SECRET DOOR (for ages 5 & up)
EYES OF THE JUNGLE (for ages 8 & up)
EARTHQUAKE (for ages 5-8 or 9)

The above games are from *Family Pastimes*. This company has many more games available for older children and adults as well. *Special Ideas* carries many of them. Or you can buy directly through *Family Pastimes.*

You can also get these and many more wonderful cooperative and noncompetitive games from the mail order catalog called *Animal Town Game Co.* (The *Family Pastimes* games are a bit more expensive if you order them from *Animal Town,* however.)

RAFA RAFA for ages 10 and above is a cross-cultural simulation game designed to teach awareness of how different people live, view the world, and how language affects one's thoughts, etc. Available through *SIMILE II* P.O. Box 910 Del Mar, CA 92014. Phone: 619-755-0272

ASSERT WITH LOVE (for ages around 6 and up-with child cards.) Uses role play to teach how to assert self in positive way in conflict situation. To order send $22.50 to *High Consciousness Games* Co. P.O. Box 3206 Kansas City, KS 66103. Children's situation cards are available for this game, but are not included in the above price. They cost about $5 extra and have to be ordered separately.

THE UNGAME (for ages 5 and up, fine for verbal 4 yr old) This game teaches empathy, listening skills, understanding, values clarification and sharing of feelings and thoughts. One can also buy just the cards in different sets covering different age groups. These include a family version, teen, all ages, couples and kids' version.

GIVE PEACE A CHANCE--A GAME OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION (International Peace Prize Winner) 2-4 players, ages 9-adult, (competitive, however). A teacher's guide which can be used with or without the game is also available but is sold separately.

GLOBE TROTTERS by *UNICEF* (for ages 5+) takes kids on a voyage of discovery, comparing the environment and daily life of children around the world. Phone: 800-553-1200. Not cooperative however.

Environmental Awareness Board Games:

GREENHOUSE GAME is a competitive environmental awareness game for ages 8+. Available through *Animal Town*. A BEAUTIFUL PLACE (ages 5-8) and EYES OF THE JUNGLE (ages 8-12) are beautiful cooperative environmental games carried by *Family Pastimes* and *Special Ideas*. ENDANGERED is another competitive game for 7+ but can be played cooperatively. POLLUTION SOLUTION (ages 10+) is also a competitive game. SAVE THE WORLD is yet another competitive environmental game offered by *Childcraft*, phone 800-631-5657.

Equipment:

PARACHUTES provide fantastic opportunities for cooperative play. BSN Sports carries these. It is cheapest to order through their website: **www.bsnsports.com**. The 24 foot one is about $77.00 and the 30 foot one is about $125.00—plus shipping. These are the best prices you are likely to find. Type in the key word "parachute" in their search option to locate them. Terry Orlick's Second Cooperative Sports and Games book has an excellent section on parachute games for all ages. Another source is a book called Parachute Play. It is for ages 3-8, available through **www.hearthsong.com**. It is item # 713429. You can also ask me for ideas.

BEAMOS can be ordered online at Amazon or other athletic equipment websites. Just type in Beamo. Get the 30 inch ones. These are fantastic toys. Just keep them away from pavement b/c they can tear. You can also call toll free 888-946-7464 to order. They are usually between $17.00-20.00.

EARTHBALLS (16 inch inflatable) can be found at **www.internatural.com** or at **www.signals.com**. You can also try a school supply store or catalog.

TUBA RUBA by *Milton Bradley* (for ages 7 or 8 and up) is a game which requires children to move their bodies in cooperation to send a marble through connected tubes which are tangled all over them. I use the tubes for many, many other games as well. Currently only available on Ebay.

Cooperative Games Books:

THE COOPERATIVE SPORTS AND GAMES BOOK by Terry Orlick. This book has games for preschoolers and up and also includes some games from different countries.

THE SECOND COOPERATIVE SPORTS AND GAMES BOOK by Terry Orlick. This book has games for 12 months and up, including games from many different cultures and parachute games.

A MANUAL ON NONVIOLENCE AND CHILDREN by Stephanie Judson has a large section dedicated to cooperative group games and other games and activities designed to promote unity, affirmation, sharing of ideas and feelings, friendship, empathy, etc.

GAMES MANUAL OF NON-COMPETITIVE GAMES by Jim Deacove of *Family Pastimes*. It takes a lot of traditional American games and redesigns them a bit to make them cooperative, plus new ones. I don't think you can get it through any bookstore.

EVERYBODY WINS by Jeffrey Sobel is a wonderful collection of games for children 3-10 which promote self-worth, confidence, unified fun.

EVERYONE WINS by Sambhava and Josette Luvmour is a well organized book with games for all ages. Fun and easy to use!

LET'S PLAY TOGETHER by Mildred Masheder is a compilation of over 300 cooperative games for children and adults.

GAMES CHILDREN PLAY: HOW GAMES AND SPORT HELP CHILDREN DEVELOP by Kim Brooking-Payne contains many cooperative games and tips.

NO CONTEST-THE CASE AGAINST COMPETITION by Alfie Kohn is a book for adults which shows convincingly how and why competition is inherently destructive and "Why we lose in our race to win."

MOST FREQUENTLY REFERENCED COMPANIES AND CATALOGS

***Animal Town Game Company*,** P.O. Box 485 Healdsburg, CA 95448, Phone 800-445-8642. Their web site is no longer listed. They may be out of business.
Family Pastimes, RR4 Perth, Ontario, Canada K7H 3C6, Phone 613-267-4819. Their web site is **www.familypastimes.com**.

Special Ideas, A Baha'i owned catalog company with great books, games, t-shirts, puzzles, posters, etc. Call 1-800-326-1197 or go to **www.BahaiResources.com** or email at **orders@special-ideas.com**

Some of the Other documents available from my web site **http://home.earthlink.net/~l.qualls/ :**

Do you need CONCRETE IDEAS FOR COMMUNITY OR FAMILY CELEBRATIONS FOR HOLY DAYS AND AYYAM-I-HA and want your children to develop a deep love for the Central Figures of our Faith? If so, a document titled Building a Strong Baha'i Identity in Young Children: A Concrete Approach may be helpful to you. A 26+ page compilation of ideas created by a Baha'i mother and Baha'i children's class teacher of 29 years is available.

An extensive *to-do list* for hosting a public event with a lot of child involvement, which includes details like a supply list to steps in the planning process.

If you are interested in *virtue development*, I also share a 6 page document outlining the theory and practice of virtue education in my Baha'i children's class.

A 280+ page *creative dramatics* manual for teaching Baha'i concepts and virtues to children which is full of skits, puppetry, public performance ideas, and interactive drama activities for kids.

IDEAS FOR BAHA'I SCHOOL GRADUATE OR AYYAM-I-HA GIFTS AND RELATED QUOTES FOR SCROLLS TO GO WITH THEM

A chain necklace with a large marble earth sphere, about the size of a large acorn. It is deep blue with the continents etched in green. It goes well with these quotes:

It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world. The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens. ~Baha'u'llah

Let your vision be world-embracing, rather than confined to your own self. ~Baha'u'llah

Any object that depicts an international group of people. Preferably with a radiant sun in the sky.

There can be no doubt whatever that the peoples of the world, of whatever race or religion, derive their inspiration from one heavenly Source, and are the subjects of one God. ~Baha'u'llah

A golden hand made brass and ceramic heart ornament that contains etched fruits of different colors and kinds.

The purpose and mission of the holy, divine Messengers is the training and advancement of humanity, the cultivation of divine fruits in the gardens of human hearts..... ~ `Abdu'l-Baha

An iridescent heart shaped box with 3D silver designs on the lid. Inside there is a sparkling star shaped frame ornament with a picture of the graduate in it. (Any sparkling, or crystalline heart shaped jewelry would also go well with the first quote 2 quotes).

My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart..... ~Baha'u'llah

O thou handmaid of God! In this day, to thank God for His bounties consisteth in possessing a radiant heart, and a soul open to the promptings of the spirit. This is the essence of thanksgiving. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha

Let the love and light of the Kingdom radiate through you until all who look upon you shall be illumined by its reflection. Be as stars, brilliant and sparkling in the loftiness of their heavenly station. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha

.....those souls whose inner being is lit by the love of God are even as spreading rays of light, and they shine out like stars of holiness in a pure and crystalline sky. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha

Ye must shine as stars radiating the light of love toward all mankind. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha

A bracelet made out of human figures each holding a star. They were inside a handmade jewelry box which has Abdu'l-Baha's photo on the lid. This quote would also go well with the star shaped picture frame mentioned earlier.

It is incumbent upon you to ponder in your hearts and meditate upon His words, and humbly to 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.....~Abdu'l-Baha

A magnetic base with tiny human figures that with effort, can be made into a single unified group using the Magnetism. Any attractive magnetic item would also do, but preferably one with hearts or people figures.

Should any one of you enter a city, he should become a center of attraction by reason of his sincerity, his faithfulness and love, his honesty and fidelity, his truthfulness and loving kindness towards all the peoples of the world...." ~Abdu'l-Baha

....love amongst the believers is the magnet which will, above all else, attract the hearts and bring new souls into the Cause. ~Shoghi Effendi

To the degree that the home front crusader is himself.....emptied of self, and filled by the healing and the sustaining power of God, will he be able to combat the forces arrayed against him, magnetize the souls of those whom he seeks to convert, and win their unreserved, their enthusiastic and enduring allegiance to the Faith of Baha'u'llah. ~Shoghi Effendi

A necklace that has a red enamel heart pendant bordered in tiny diamonds, with a diamond in the center of the heart as well. It also looked very radiant.

O SON OF SPIRIT! My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart, that

thine may be a sovereignty ancient, imperishable and everlasting. ~Baha'u'llah

The Purpose of the one true God, exalted be His glory, in revealing Himself unto men is to lay bare those gems that lie hidden within the mine of their true and inmost selves. ~Baha'u'llah

O thou handmaid of God! In this day, to thank God for His bounties consisteth in possessing a radiant heart, and a soul open to the promptings of the spirit. This is the essence of thanksgiving. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha

Any heart shaped candle. The ones I gave were encased in a lovely holder.

The candle of thine heart is lighted by the hand of My power, quench it not with the contrary winds of self and passion. The healer of all thine ills is remembrance of Me, forget it not. Make My love thy treasure and cherish it even as thy very sight and life. ~Baha'u'llah

Let the flame of the love of God burn brightly within your radiant hearts. ~Baha'u'llah

A sun medallion for a necklace, or any object that incorporates the sun image.

It is my hope that.....ye will become the very radiance of humankind, binding the hearts of all with bonds of love;..... that ye will, with the rays of the Sun of Truth, restore the sight of those whose inner eye is blind; that ye will bring spiritual healing to the spiritually sick. ~Abdu'l-Baha

A golden ceramic heart shaped ornament with various different colored flowers inlaid in it.

Man is a child of God, most noble, lofty and beloved by God, his Creator. Therefore, he must ever strive that the divine bounties and virtues bestowed upon him may prevail and control him. Just now the soil of human hearts seems like black earth, but in the innermost substance of this dark soil there are thousands of fragrant flowers latent. We must endeavor to cultivate and awaken these potentialities, discover the secret treasure in this very mine and depository of God, bring forth these resplendent powers long hidden in human hearts. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha

A satin covered and embroidered heart shaped box which is filled with many different colored and sizes of pearls and quality gemstones.

Thine heart is My treasury, allow not the treacherous hand of self to rob thee of the pearls which I have treasured therein. ~Baha'u'llah

.....attach not yourselves to the luxuries of this ephemeral world, free yourselves from every attachment, and strive with heart and soul to become fully established in the Kingdom of God. Gain ye the heavenly treasures. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha

Ye are My treasury, for in you I have treasured the pearls of My mysteries and the gems of My knowledge. Guard them from the strangers amidst My servants and from the ungodly amongst My people. ~Baha'u'llah

Make My love thy treasure and cherish it even as thy very sight and life. ~Baha'u'llah

A colorful clay butterfly with gem eyes inside a beautiful heart shaped box. We have used the butterfly as a symbol for spiritual transformation during our Spring classes.

O friend, the heart is the dwelling of eternal mysteries, make it not the home of fleeting fancies; waste not the treasure of thy precious life in employment with this swiftly passing world. Thou comest from the world of holiness-bind not thine heart to the earth; thou art a dweller in the court of nearness – choose not the homeland of the dust. ~Baha'u'llah

An Indonesian hanging ornament. It is a gold heart with elaborately decorated wings. I special ordered many of these from an Indonesian import shop. I always decorate it with a 9 pointed glow in the dark star on the center of the heart. The following quote is written in gold on a ribbon which is attached to the heart, like a tail. The ribbon matches the dominant colors of the wings. I first cover one side of the ribbon with clear tape to write on since writing on ribbon in gold metallic paint marker is messy and almost impossible to do well.

Give ear unto the verses of God..... Through them the soul of man is caused to wing its flight towards the Dayspring of Revelation, and the heart of every true believer is suffused with light. ~Baha'u'llah

On a scroll is another, related quote. This quote is in fancy font on paper with a sky pattern. I cut out tiny prismatic wings from bird stickers and place tiny metallic

silver hearts on the wings so all over the paper there are these pretty little silver hearts flying. The scroll reads:

If only thou couldst know what a high station is destined for those souls who are severed from the world, are powerfully attracted to the Faith, and are teaching, under the sheltering shadow of Baha'u'llah! How thou wouldst rejoice, how thou wouldst, in exultation and rapture, spread thy wings and soar heavenward for being a follower of such a way, and a traveller toward such a Kingdom. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha

(One can use any pendant, picture, earring, etc. with a single wing or wings imagery for these previous 2 quotes).

Any object that depicts an image of the sky and earth, (preferably with a heart image somewhere) would go well with this one. A poster of a youth in a beautiful nature scene that includes the sky would be ideal. I would add a tasteful radiant heart on his/her chest.

Blessed is he who in the prime of his youth.... will arise to serve the Cause of the Lord,..... and adorn his heart with His love. The manifestation of such a grace is greater than the creation of the heavens and of the earth. Blessed are the steadfast and well is it with those who are firm. ~Baha'u'llah

A single large pearl hung on a necklace that has some lovely imitation diamonds on it.

O My servants! My holy, My divinely ordained Revelation may be likened unto an ocean in whose depths are concealed innumerable pearls of great price, of surpassing luster. It is the duty of every seeker to bestir himself and strive to attain the shores of this ocean, so that he may, in proportion to the eagerness of his search and the efforts he hath exerted, partake of such benefits as have been pre-ordained in God's irrevocable and hidden Tablets.....~Baha'u'llah

Immerse yourselves in the ocean of My words, that ye may unravel its secrets, and discover all the pearls of wisdom that lie hid in its depths. ~ Baha'u'llah

Proclaim the Cause of thy Lord unto all who are in the heavens and on the earth. Should any man respond to thy call, lay bare before him the pearls of the wisdom of the Lord, thy God, which His Spirit hath sent down unto thee, and be thou of them that truly believe. ~Baha'u'llah

A fancy pen with a barrel that is half clear and sheds a blue light when turned on.

O SON OF MAN! Write all that We have revealed unto thee with the ink of light upon the tablet of thy spirit..... Sweeter indeed is this to Me than all else, that its light may endure for ever. ~Baha'u'llah

A silver bracelet made up of hands and hearts. The hands can symbolize service, giving a helping hand to others, good deeds.

.....service in love for mankind is unity with God. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha

Love ye all religions and all races with a love that is true and sincere and show that love through deeds..... ~ `Abdu'l-Baha

Any item that depicts unity of people, be it a t-shirt or sculpture, or jewelry, etc.

The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established. ~Baha'u'llah

The utterance of God is a lamp, whose light is these words: Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship. He Who is the Day Star of Truth beareth Me witness! So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth. ~Baha'u'llah

Any item that depicts flowers, such as fancy flower stickers or a poster, t-shirt, ornament, etc.

.....be thankful to God, for having strengthened thee to aid His Cause, for having made the flowers of knowledge and understanding to spring forth in the garden of thine heart. ~Baha'u'llah

And finally:
Any item that has to do with light, be it a candle, (preferably battery powered) glow in the dark ink, a flashlight, stars, or fiber optic device, etc. I found reasonably priced ($5.00-8.00) fiber optic centerpiece lights at http://www.save-on-crafts.com/glowproducts.html
I always choose the pure white ones and not the blinking multicolored ones b/c I think they look too psychedelic for my purposes. They have one that has a clear plastic pyramid base which is easy to glue tiny quotes or photos

onto. I just remove the cheesy sphinx images on it—they can be pried off.

I printed 3 of these quotes below in very small size on gold paper, framed them in black paper, and attached them to the base. I also took a photo of the child who would be receiving the gift. I showed the student his/her photo while it was still on the camera display to make sure it was liked by him/her so they would not remove them or cringe when they saw it. (Kids are very self-conscious of their looks especially after age 9). I cut the head and shoulders out and framed the photo in black like the quotes and glued it on one of the 4 sides. The last two quotes do not need personal photos, especially the one that suggests that the light is Baha'u'llah.

Strive to be shining examples unto all mankind, and true reminders of the virtues of God amidst men. ~Baha'u'llah

Let your acts be a guide unto all mankind.....
It is through your deeds that ye can distinguish yourselves from others. Through them the brightness of your light can be shed upon the whole earth. ~Baha'u'llah

....man must strive that his reality may manifest virtues and perfections, the light whereof may shine upon everyone. Abdu'l-Baha

If ye will follow earnestly the teachings of Baha'u'llah, ye shall indeed become the light of the world.....~Abdu'l-Baha

I am the guiding Light that illumineth the way. ~Baha'u'llah

May your souls be illumined by the light of the Words of God.....~Abdu'l-Baha

This company also has fiber optic centerpieces that have clear crystal looking nuggets in the base. When I gave that one, in addition to a quote about light (above) I also used:

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. ~Baha'u'llah