# CREATIVE DRAMATICS MANUAL

By Linden Qualls (Revised Oct. 15th, 2018)

*The drama is of the utmost importance. It has been a great educational power in the past; it will be so again. ~Abdu'l-Baha:* Abdu'l-Baha in London, page 93

The day will come when the Cause will spread like wildfire when its spirit and teachings will be presented on the stage or in art and literature as a whole. Art can better awaken such noble sentiments than cold rationalizing, especially among the mass of the people. ~Shoghi Effendi: The Arts, page 7

## INTRODUCTION, IMPORTANT TIPS, & EXPLANATION OF CATEGORIES

Everything I present here has been child and audience tested and the feedback was great, so have confidence that it can work for you. It may inspire you (or cause alarm!) to know that I have never had any formal or informal training in drama, puppetry, public speaking, etc. I was not even in a high school or college play. The biggest performance I ever did as a child was a piano recital. I was terrified to speak to a group of more than 2! But the Creative Word lives up to its name—it is what inspired me and gave me the courage in every single program, game and lesson plan I have ever done. One of the great things about drama is that if done in the spirit of service, it can force us to detach from our egos and self-consciousness—and thus helps us to grow spiritually, to become more selfless.

With many of the entries in this document, I go into great detail for those of you who don't have a lot of experience in drama. I hope the detail gives you confidence and encouragement to take the leap into this form of education. The details are not meant to be intimidating or overwhelming. Those of you with experience probably will find the details unnecessary or even irritating. Sorry about that. You folks can just take the material and put your own twist on it or totally transform it to fit your needs and tastes. I want these productions to be for everybody, even those who have never been on stage.

Practically all children love and really relate to drama. Dramatic interpretation makes concepts come alive for kids. They remember and understand the lessons they learned through drama much better than through just hearing them. Drama stimulates the emotions, and the more a child's heart is alive and engaged, i.e. the more they are feeling, the more attention they pay and the more they absorb.

Every classroom should have dress ups and a mirror. Most kids of all ages love dressing up and the costumes make the skits seem more real and really enhance the visual interest of the performances. Collect masks, hats, shoes, men and women's clothing, wigs, jewelry, office, kitchen, and school supplies, fake money, sunglasses, accessories, keys, purses, briefcases, animal noses, gloves, doctor kit, baby supplies, old cell phone and camera, etc. Have some outrageous styles as well, from elegant to gaudy to plain—like an apron or suit coat. My students raid the dress up supplies every single time they are here and gleefully don them for any skit. The single most versatile dress ups I own are 3 feet by 9 feet long lengths of silk-essence fabric. We use them again and again and again—for costuming and decorating spaces for holy days. They are quite lovely and not cheap—so these are not kept out for the students to use at any time.

In creating a dramatic piece, you can use dolls, stuffed toys, puppets or children. There are numerous puppet shows in this document. Dolls can be used in place of puppets. Also, bear in mind that most puppet shows can be converted to skits using the children. When you dramatize with dolls and puppets, have interracial and international families, i.e. a Caucasian mother and Black father, etc. Use foreign names for the dolls: "And the little girl's name was Akhtar, and her brother's name was Carlos." Whenever I play a mother with a doll baby, my baby is always black, b/c I am white. Mixed families exemplify the principle of unity in diversity on a very basic level. They are a true indicator of the sincerity of openness to different kinds of peoples. A Manual on Nonviolence and Children by Stephanie Judson has a section on using puppets with conflict resolution and Puppets For Peace by Camy Condon & James McGinnis is another resource you may find useful. Its easy to make a makeshift puppet "theater" by throwing a large cloth over the backs of 2 chairs side by side and putting carpet or pillows down for the comfort of the puppeteer's knees.

The possibilities are endless in any form of drama: You can set up conflict situations that children regularly experience and problem solve using input from children, encouraging them to insert virtues. You can illustrate the unattractiveness of prejudice, the beauty of inclusiveness, and demonstrate the expression of virtues in a myriad of situations. A key to success is to use situations that are personally relevant and meaningful to the kids—something they encounter in their daily lives and will recognize and relate to immediately. However, that doesn't mean you can't be fanciful. Indeed, many of the most popular scenarios I have done with children consist of totally imaginary situations---but the lesson or actions needed are common in children's lives. For example, in *Zymic Zelda* and *The Flood*, kids have to practice fairness, detachment, caring, generosity, etc., in regards to precious resources. Kids face these choices almost daily—how much to share a beloved toy, a candy bar, etc. In one of the most magical scenarios, *The Dar*, children are required to think in terms of how they can use their supernatural powers to serve mankind. This definitely has a correlation to reality—how can I use my talents and skills to make the world a better place, to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization?

Here are some examples of how I regularly use creative dramatics in the classroom and with my daughters when they were young:

1. A simple form of drama is to demonstrate a virtue and the children watch. It becomes a game if you ask children to identify the virtue. They like that.

2. Teachers or students can dramatize a story from a book or a situation with the relevant virtues absent, illustrating negative consequences, then ask children what qualities or virtues are needed here. Dramatize with those virtues present, followed by a discussion which compares and contrasts the outcome of the two situations. (I tend to prefer that kids do not act out negative roles—they need practice in being virtuous! So, usually myself or an assistant plays the negative role.)

3. Provide a personally meaningful situation and ask the children to express a virtue which you provide, or a virtue they see as relevant, --- or they can choose from a list of virtues.

4. Another method for older children (at least 8 years old) is to provide a virtue then ask them to develop and act out a situation using it.

During many of the skits, children are exhorted to behave like they think Abdu'l-Baha would. In that case, they are never to get rude with any of the characters they meet, no matter how obnoxious the character may seem. (We do discuss the role of justice though, and I have shared with them a story about how Abdu'l-Baha did not allow Himself to be cheated or abused. He never stooped to revenge or violence, but He did assert Himself.)

For public performances, always carefully consider the setting and mood you want to elicit before selecting a performing piece. Many of the performances described in this document may be too playful, silly, or considered undignified for some settings or groups. Use your best judgment and consult with others. For example, I have noted that some groups and cultures find the joyful, uninhibited, and spontaneous sounds and movement of gospel church goers not reverent or dignified enough for their tastes. (Personally, I feel that if the spirit is one of love for the Manifestation, and the ecstasy in singing His praises is expressed through joyful and playful sounds and movement, that this is not irreverent.) And many folks who come into the Baha'i Faith from a lively Southern Baptist church find our Feasts and Holy Days dry, boring, sterile, and uninspiring. So basically, we must strive to respect others' standards in this manner if they are the main audience. For any dramatic piece, you can't please everyone all the time—artistic tastes are just too diverse. Verbal and physical modesty/chastity is always called for, however. And I would never choose a silly piece for more somber occasions such as Holy Days commemorating Ascensions or Martyrdom. Ridvan celebrations tend to be elegant and dignified in our community. But dignified and elegant does not mean being quiet, somber and serious 100% of the time—there can be joy, lively expression, and humor—it should just be befitting, that's all. Also, in the Baha'i Faith, out of reverence, we do not impersonate or draw any Messenger of God, God Himself, or Abdu'l-Baha.

## More tips:

- For the more demanding pieces, try to arrange for more rehearsal time than you think you will need. This makes rehearsals less stressful and more relaxed. You can always cancel a rehearsal if the kids look great well ahead of schedule. I find there is nothing more stressful than having an unprepared group attempt to perform. And kids know if they looked bad—and they don't like that one bit. Then instead of being a source of joy and upliftment, the performance gives them negative associations with the Baha'i event—which totally defeats your purpose. The audience also will feel embarrassed for them. Not a good situation. People are much more forgiving of children's performances, so there is leeway for imperfection—but total mess up is another story. Panic, stress, and a sense of failure are definitely not the emotions you want the kids to experience in a Baha'i celebration. This can be prevented by good planning.

- It is so important that you do not loose your cool and snap or get harsh with the kids and kill the spirit. I always have to raise my voice a bit to get the excited performers to calm down and listen, but I never chew them out or humiliate them. If the kids are well rehearsed—everyone feels more relaxed and confident. We always say prayers to calming music before rehearsals and the event, and this helps.

- If possible, always do a rehearsal the day of the actual performance on the actual site of the event. Kids can really get thrown off by changed angles and directions. And you will become aware of logistic issues you did not foresee.

- For audience participation pieces, it is essential that you go over at least once, preferably twice, actions to any song with the audience/class before doing it to the music. Have kids do actions with you, not just watch. They will remember better. The second run through is faster, more abbreviated. I often will read just a key word or part of a phrase that goes with an action and ask them to show me the correct action.

- If using sound equipment, always do a sound check well before the performance to check appropriate volume levels and health of the components. Duct tape cords to floor to avoid tripping. I also recommend always bringing an extension cord or two if you don't know where you will be setting up equipment in relation to electrical outlets.

- Many of the activities have numerous quotes that relate to the theme of the drama or song. The Creative Word should always be included in activities whenever possible because the Creative Word has the power to transform souls. (I have a whole compilation on this subject, if you are interested.) In addition, relating the Word of God to the activity teaches children how relevant Baha'u'llah's and Abdu'l-Baha's teachings are to everyday life. The drama also helps to clarify the meaning and applicability of the scripture—it gives more life to the words. However, I do not recommend using too many quotes when explaining a dramatic activity—the kids will shut down and get impatient and annoyed. That said, I find that I can capture their attention longer and share many quotations if I try to be very expressive when reading them. One can even pantomime imagery when possible, and standing commands more attention as well. It also frees one's body up to move about, which will engage the students more than rigid sitting.

  More ideas: I often ask students to fill in the blank of key words, giving hints if necessary, such as the beginning sound of the key word, a rhyming word, or syllable, or a description, & it becomes like a riddle. Kids love riddles & guessing games. Choose ahead of time with a highlighter the words you want to have the students guess—try to choose ones that can be pantomimed or logically deduced by the phrase. Sometimes I ask questions on a topic then ask them to find the answer in the quote, or to see if their answer matched what the quote said. Of course we also explore the possible meaning of the quotes, the meanings of the unfamiliar words, and I try to relate them to their own lives. I remind the kids that these are the words of the Creator of the Universe, spoken through His Mouthpiece, Baha'u'llah, The Bab, or Baha'u'llah's chosen successor, Abdu'l-Baha—and this tends to build respect and reverence for the quotes. Also, for many of the dramas and songs I go into rather long elaborate discussions/speeches that elaborate on the lesson the drama is intended to teach. (The activities were usually designed to support a theme we were studying in Baha'i children's classes). While these verbal excursions can promote thought and insight, they can also be too much to absorb in one session. In sum, always intersperse quotes & discussion 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.

- Never allow gum, or immodest or dirty clothing in a performance. Hair should be secured so students are not constantly brushing hair out of their eyes or putting it behind ears during a choreographed piece. Another thing to avoid is loose fitting pants or skirts so that a performer is constantly pulling up the waistline. Remind performers to use the restroom at least 15 minutes before the performance.

- It is really important to be enthusiastic, expressive, and animated when explaining and doing drama with kids. Your positive energy will excite and inspire them, help hold their attention, and assist them in overcoming their insecurities. If a teacher manifests self-consciousness, insecurity, nervousness, or a ho-hum attitude, the students will absorb that and the activity will not go well. Be playful and have fun! Joyfulness and being uninhibited often go hand in hand.

- When getting students and parents to commit to rehearsals, it is always preferable if the student agrees and is motivated b/c rehearsals can be demanding, and conflict of interests such as birthday parties often come up. If the child has not agreed, he/she can pitch a fit and create a lot of disunity and negative feelings in the home atmosphere—or sabotage the performance by not memorizing lines. On the other hand, there are those children who reflexively say no to new or challenging situations, and if never forced will always remain in their comfort zone. They then are deprived of the joy and esteem building effects of overcoming fears and difficulties. Parents are thus the best judge as to whether to ask a child if he/she wants to perform or not. I know of many kids who if asked will say "no way" but if not given a choice, will obey and then do wonderful and are so glad they participated. Being a servant of God, in fact being a human, is not always "peaches and cream" and if we rarely demand that our children rise above their insecurities or inertia, we are doing them no favor. Abdu'l-Baha exhorts parents to accustom children to hardship—this is very, very wise advice indeed. Parents should remind resistant students that the performance is service to Baha'u'llah. Also, given that both Abdu'l-Baha and Baha'u'llah have written about the role of reward and punishment in the education of human beings, I think on occasion, if a child has real issues with the effort required for a performance, or is quite insecure about it, offering a reward may be warranted. Ideally, the joy of service and success should be its own reward, but if the reward is not huge, it will not detract from the child realizing how a difficult job well done is truly fulfilling. In the end, parents need to be the judge of whether a performance is truly asking too much of a child and is setting them up for failure. If a child is resisting, it is always a good idea for the parents or teacher to express empathy and explore the reasons with the child. One child came home from rehearsing "If I Were to Be" and became totally hostile about being in the performance. The parents and I consulted a long while, debating several ways to entice the child (we really needed him) and trying to understand the root cause of his aversion. Well, it turned out that this child had a hearing problem and that problem was the source: He thought the line that talked about the red roan stallion carrying Baha'u'llah to Constantinople said "constant nipples" and he was too embarrassed to say that in public! Once we cleared that up, he was totally OK with performing.

- I am continually amazed how often, when you give a reserved person a prop, it gives them permission to let go of inhibitions. Shy kids or kids worried about looking cool, and rather inhibited adults, will be much more likely to dance with a long ribbon on a stick or one or 2 silk scarves (another favorite material I use in countless ways). Any prop helps with feeling more at ease with any drama. If allowing the use of costumes and props for quick skits, make it clear that actors are to develop their skits first, before getting into the dress ups & props. Otherwise they can get so totally engrossed in choosing costumes and props that when time up is called, there is no skit.

- Students love it when humor and fantasy are employed. If the humor and fantasy are not carried too far, the educational value of a skit is not lost, but perhaps even enhanced b/c it is much more memorable.

## Explanation of categories and additional information on contents:

Here is how this voluminous manual is categorized. *I placed an activity/performance into one of 3 levels.* This is a subjective exercise, one based on my own strengths and weaknesses, my own perceptions of what is difficult and easy. Thus, this rating scheme is not flawless by any stretch of the imagination. You may totally disagree with my assessment. For many, I had a really hard time deciding which level to place it in. Everything is relative. **Please bear in mind that the levels have nothing to do with appropriateness for age levels.** Anyway, hopefully my categories will be helpful to some.

If in **LEVEL ONE**, an activity/performance will involve relatively minimal preparation, little or no expense, and can be easily done in most children's classes, or community gatherings. The most time consuming part is likely to be locating and obtaining the music, printing up the quotes, or gathering some props. Depending on what materials you already have available and your arts and crafts or sewing skills, I can safely say all of those in level one will probably take anywhere from ¼ hour to 3 hours in prep and rehearsal time.

Activities/performances in **LEVEL TWO** are of medium effort—more than those in level one, but obviously less than those in level 3. I estimate that the listings in level 2 will take anywhere from 1-8 hours prep and rehearsal time. As in level 1, the amount of time needed depends on how resourceful one is, the range of materials (such as costumes & props) one has access to, and how artsy-craftsy one tends to be.

**LEVEL THREE** listings will take considerable time and effort (and sometimes $) to put together and/or rehearse. They usually involve a lot of props. They can of course be altered and simplified to fit the needs of your particular situation. But generally speaking, any piece listed in level 3 will take anywhere from 6-25 hours of prep and rehearsal time.

**If there is a (M) after a title:** This means that it is what I call "Musical Drama", and it requires a specific song. Other drama may need background music or include songs which support the theme, but for the ones with an "(M)", the song is integral and essential to the activity. The title I provide is always the actual name of the song. If not obvious by the title, I also mention whether any song used was created by a Baha'i musician so you know to go to a Baha'i source to purchase. Try the Internet for locating non-Baha'i recordings. (Most of mine were bought many years ago, so I don't remember where I got them. But I still see them advertised now & then, so I know most are still available). Of course, a quality boom box or sound system is a given for materials if there is a (M).

**About ages:** Sometimes I do suggest an age group, but I think most of the activities in here can be done with a wide age range—making adjustments for really young ones or youth. Indeed, many of the local preschool children's class lesson plans were originally adapted from my lesson plans for 6-11 year olds. It should be obvious to a teacher which pieces in this manual are way too young or old for their group. But even skits and performances that are way too hard for little ones, they still love to be the audience for these. And I was continually amazed at how my 10 and 11 year olds thoroughly enjoyed watching and using puppets. I have done drama with ages 2 to adult in many settings, and can assure you that in doing dramatics, normal boundaries and limitations are often transcended. A dramatic setting gives older kids the license to be playful and uninhibited again, and gives little and big ones a bridge to understand moral issues, virtues, conflict resolution, and Baha'i concepts and history. Many of these activities were designed for the age group I have taught for 28 years—the 6-11 year olds. In drama, the older ones take on the harder roles and direct the younger in their simpler roles. Still, don't despair if you teach preschool, jr. youth, youth, or adults. There are plenty of things in here for them also. And remember, *in all 3 levels there are activities for ages 3-adult.*

**About numbers:** I usually did not specify numbers b/c usually numbers can be flexible. Kids can share parts, or one kid can do numerous parts, or you can add or delete parts, etc.

If a description is not obvious from the title, I try to briefly sum up the main thrust of the piece so a teacher can swiftly ascertain if it is relevant to his/her needs. I also hope that it becomes apparent very quickly whether the activity is suitable for non-Baha'i audiences, such as public schools. But of course, aspects of the more religious pieces can be altered to fit secular settings.

And finally many of the dramatic activities games described in this document 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 activities are written in past tense,* describing scenes with my students. As unprofessional as this is, it gets the ideas across. As in the games manual--it's my compromise. I just could not bring myself, after months of typing and other editing, to go in and change all the verb tenses, etc. If something is unclear to you, please call me at 937-767-7079, or if the answer is short, you can email me at l.qualls@earthlink.net.

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# LEVEL ONE

## Waiting for Dinner

A skit about the virtue of patience and the perils of impatience. Can be done with ages 3 to 10. (For a puppet show about patience, see 3 Puppet Shows about Virtues and Unity, *Hasty Hester*.)

*He will, certainly, repay all them that endure with patience and put their confidence in Him. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 239

*Be patient under all conditions, and place your whole trust and confidence in God. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 296

*He, verily, shall increase the reward of them that endure with patience. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 129

*Blessed are the steadfastly enduring, they that are patient under ills and hardships, who lament not over anything that befalleth them, and who tread the path of resignation.... ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 129

*.....this earthly life shall come to an end, and everyone shall expire and return unto my Lord God Who will reward with the choicest gifts the deeds of those who endure with patience. ~The Bab:* Selections from the Bab, page 161

Life afflicts us with very severe trials sometimes, but we must always remember that when we accept patiently the Will of God He compensates us in other ways. With faith and love we must be patient, and He will surely reward us. (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 30, 1951)

This skit was fine tuned by the preschool class. Its a perfect example of how the seed of an idea becomes a blossom with creative and playful people: I was asked for ideas to teach pre-schoolers the virtue of patience. I basically told the teachers to create scenes that pre-schoolers encounter daily that require patience, then ham it up and then de-brief with the group afterwards. I suggested waiting for dinner when they are hungry, having an adult play mom or dad cooking, and another adult play the impatient child in an exaggerated way—but realistic enough so that children could recognize themselves in the adult-child. The exaggeration makes it fun and interesting, but also clearly underscores how unpleasant and unattractive impatient behavior can be. I interviewed one of the teachers (Kim Kremer) to get this description of how it was implemented. Here is what they came up with, with a few alterations based on improvements Kim and I thought of afterwards.

**Props:** apron (optional) pot, spoon, table or something to symbolize a table, some nutritious real food, plates and cups, napkins, pitcher of water or juice, silverware. (However, table should not be set yet, as children should do this as part of the skit).

Students were told before the skit that they were to pretend to be children of the same family, and that they were very, very hungry. Mom was making a delicious dinner, but b/c it was so good, it was hard to make and will take longer than usual. They were to practice the virtue of patience as best they could.

The mother was pretending to cook dinner, wearing an apron, stirring a spoon in a large pot. (A father can also be used to avoid sex-stereotyping). Children were seated around a table along with an adult playing the impatient child. He is to illustrate just how unpleasant impatience is compared to patience, and what effect impatience has on others, especially one's parents. (I suggest that the person playing the impatient one demonstrate the diverse ways in which different children express impatience so that they can

recognize themselves in his behavior). If you think your group will be unduly influenced by the fun of acting obnoxiously impatient, have another adult play a patient child to model good behavior. She/he can also initiate ways to occupy oneself while waiting. (Though this particular pre-school group came up with ideas on their own.)

The adult-child starts to inquire about when dinner will be ready. The mother calmly explains that it is coming, but it will be awhile. He begins to whine. She looks irritated and asks him to be patient. He then begins to nag and pull on her apron strings. She looks quite annoyed and sternly informs him that he is getting on her nerves and if he does not stop, there will be consequences. He is undeterred and steps up his obnoxious pestering. Mom gets louder and tells him to go away. He instead throws a tantrum screaming how hungry he is. She then commands him to go to his bedroom and that he will get no dinner at all. He stomps off yelling. (This escalation occurs over a 5-10 minute time period, not all at once. There is other dialogue going on between cook and other kids during this time too, as in a real family situation there would be.)

Meanwhile, the other kids, in an effort to not be anything like the impatient child, are inspired. And this was not scripted or guided by adults in advance: One asks if she can help with dinner, and mom gives her and another sibling the task of setting the table. Others sing a song, still others come up with a clapping game to keep themselves occupied. A short while after the impatient adult/child has left, Mom serves each child some food. (It should preferably be warm, but something tasty and not dessert—this is dinner food, and we don't want to set up the unhealthy dynamic of associating rewards with sugar. Even though this is a pretend skit, the whole build up to food will have the kids really desiring something, and it would be very anti-climatic and a let down if none were forthcoming.)

The impatient adult child appears in the doorway and longingly looks at the others eating the food, then goes away. Some may take pity on him and offer him some of theirs, but Mom should not allow that—although she should acknowledge the virtue of caring or compassion. Afterwards, kids and teachers process what happened and why, how behaviors influenced others, how being impatient did not get the child what he wanted and actually made things worse. (*Hasty Hester* also demonstrates that impatience often undermines one's goals, rather than expedites their achievement).

## Patience, Self-Control, & Gratitude

Mini-skits for 3-6 year olds on patience, self-control, and gratitude.

Pictures of symbols relating to the skit are drawn on a card. A student picks a card and on the side w/o the picture is the description of the situation which they and another child or adult will act out for others to learn from. Props make it more interesting but are not absolutely essential. (Kim Kremer conceived and drew the image on these picture cards).

**Patience and self control:**

See prior entry for quotations relating to patience.

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, page 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)

*Picture of candle.* Description of scene: you are at feast and have an incredible urge to blow out the candle but the host said you must wait until all prayers have been finished.

*Picture of ear on one side and open mouth on the other with the words "blah, blah, blah" in a conversation balloon.* Scene: You have to keep a secret about a surprise birthday party or present for your mom/dad or sibling. (Have an adult play the person trying to get you reveal the secret.)

*Picture of alphabet blocks piled up.* Scene: your friend/sibling is very slowly building a very tall tower of blocks and you want to play with the blocks next and so are very tempted to knock it down.

*Picture of a phone*. Scene: Your parent is talking on the phone and you want to ask them a question or tell them something exciting.

*Picture of someone blowing bubbles.* Scene: your grandparent just bought you and your siblings a new bottle of bubbles. Your parent said you must wait your turn to use them. Your younger siblings get to go first and you just love to pop floating bubbles—but they hate that.

**Gratitude:**

The inspiration for these skits came from Promulgation for Universal Peace by Abdu'l-Baha, pages 236-237. We chose the phrases and concepts we thought young children could understand and relate to and practice for our dramatic lesson. He says that:

*To express his gratitude for the favors of God man must show forth praiseworthy actions. In response to these bestowals he must render good deeds, be self-sacrificing, loving the servants of God, forfeiting even life for them, showing kindness to all the creatures. He must be severed from the world, attracted to the Kingdom of Abha, the face radiant, the tongue eloquent, the ear attentive, striving day and night to attain the good pleasure of God. Whatsoever he wishes to do must be in harmony with the good pleasure of God. He must observe and see what is the will of God and act accordingly. There can be no doubt that such commendable deeds are thankfulness for the favors of God.....*

*Therefore, in thanksgiving for them ye must act in accordance with the teachings of Baha'u'llah. Ye must read the Tablets - the Hidden Words, Ishraqat, Glad Tidings - all the holy utterances, and act according to them. This is real thanksgiving, to live in accord with these utterances. This is true thankfulness and the divine bestowal. This is thanksgiving and glorification of God.*

*I hope you all may attain thereto, be mindful of these favors of God and be attentive.*

*Picture of a common toy, such as a teddy bear*. Scene: Show *"good deeds"* and *"be self sacrificing"*. A friend has come to your house for a play date. He/she takes an interest in a toy which you just got and really think is very special. You decide to share and let them play with it, and its hard to let go of it.

*Picture of a glass of water and the words "cough, cough!" in a conversation balloon.* Scene: Show *"good deeds"* and *"showing kindness"*. Your brother/sister is home with a bad cold. They are coughing and coughing and coughing. You stop watching a very interesting video and go get him/her some water and ask if they need anything else.

*Picture of a smiling face and car.* Scene: Showing a *"face radiant"*. Your family is taking a very long car ride. Even though your brothers/sisters might be complaining and even though your parents might be getting grouchy, you remain cheerful and pleasant.

*Picture of a dog.* Scene: *"Showing kindness to all the creatures".* Your family has been busy doing errands all day. Finally you return home and see your dog who has been patiently waiting for your family's arrival. Instead of eating or reading a good book, you take her for a walk outside and play fetch with her.

*Picture of a mouth and tongue, with the tongue adorned with sparkles or flowers.* Scene: *"The tongue eloquent."* You are next in line at the slide at the play ground and someone who is in a real hurry to get on the slide shoves you out of the way. You want to call them a bad name, but think of what Abdu'l-Baha would do instead. You say: "Hey that hurt when you shoved me. Every one needs to take turns, and mine was next. Please don't do that again!!!

*Picture of toys, books, clothes, etc. scattered on the ground and an ear.* Scene: *"ear attentive."* Your family is having company soon and the living room is a mess. Your mom or dad asks you to please clean up the area, listing everything that needs to be picked up and where to put it. You listen carefully and do a good job, not missing anything and putting everything back where it belongs. (Or for a more spiritual bent, use a picture of an ear and someone reading from a prayer book. Someone begins to read from a prayer book at feast, and you immediately sit up, close your eyes and listen quietly.)

*Picture of child reading a book with a candle next to it, suggesting that it is scripture.* Scene: *"Ye must read the Tablets."* It is bedtime, and even though you are very tired, you read one of the Hidden Words before going to sleep. (Even if kids are too young to read, pretending to read in a skit, is good modeling for the future.)

*Picture of 3 paper dolls, preferably of different colors.* Two are together, the 3rd is off to the side alone. Scene: *"Showing Kindness to all.....loving the servants of God....."* You and your friends are playing a game. You notice a shy little boy/girl standing nearby watching. You invite him/her to play too.

There are many more scenes that young children could enact which reflect ways to show gratitude to God as described by Abdu'l-Baha in the above quotation. *"Loving the servants of God"* can be expressed in many, many ways, as can *"act in accordance with the teachings of Baha'u'llah."* Though we deliberately chose not to use words such as "accordance", "praiseworthy," "render", etc. We did use a few big words such as "eloquent" defining it as beautiful. Little kids can absorb only a few new big words in each lesson.

## Miscellaneous Exercises about Gratitude

(See also *Hurray for the World*.)

Many kids in N. America take an awful lot for granted and often forget to be grateful for what they have. Then an unattractive sense of entitlement and discontent sets in. The following activities remind kids to be thankful even for every day simple things.

I asked the kids to contemplate something they are grateful for. Then I asked them to imagine a still photograph of it, and present it to the class. They could not show movement, only a sculpture-like image. I gave them some examples, like pretending to cradle a baby in my arms=grateful for my children, forming a triangular roof over my head with my hands and forearms=shelter, etc. I told them they could use props and dress ups, as long as the props and costumes did not give away the thing for which they are grateful. If needed, they could use each other in the photo, in which case they had to consult in private in another room, for this was to also be a guessing game. I also allowed them to present a series of still photos if that was necessary. (For ex., one girl said she was thankful for her life, so she presented 5 photos: a baby on its back with legs in the air, a crawling position, a toddler on her knees with her thumb in her mouth, standing up, then an old lady with a cane.) When they were said "ready!", I pretended to take a snapshot. Some kids did simple things like their pets, another portrayed education by looking studious with a pen and paper, one had a group of children sitting while holding hands to show community, and

one even made a picture in a thought box and held it above her head, as in a cartoon, to represent that she was thankful for her creativity. The students really enjoyed this activity. However, it disturbed me that 2 children could not think of anything they were grateful for.

Then I asked the students lay down and turned out the lights. I shut the curtain so it was almost dark (this cuts down on distractions, but there needs to be some light so I can monitor those who may be taking advantage of the veil of darkness!) I told them they were going to listen to 4 songs which express gratitude to God, and I wanted them to paint the pictures in their minds of what was being sung about. They all contain a lot of nature imagery, so I asked the kids to close their eyes and when the song mentioned a particular object or scene, to visualize the most beautiful one they could think of. A tree, waterfall, cloud, sky, etc. were some of the images they pondered. The 4 songs were "Thank You" from Jack Lenz's *We are Baha'is Too* CD, "I'm Thankful" from Jennifer Russell's *The Virtues Songs, vol. 3.* (Available through the Baha'i Distribution Service), "Gratitude" on a CD by the same name, (available from www.fullcirclelearning.org , just click on the FCL Music Catalog link on the right side) and "Thanks a Lot" from Raffi's *Baby Beluga* recording. These selections are all slow, contemplative pieces which lend themselves quite nicely to visualization.

The last of the 4 songs ("Thanks A Lot") like the other 3, is very mellow. I asked the kids just to lie still as possible and try to remember the things the song mentions, which are mostly natural objects. After the song, we played a memory game: I divided the class into two, put the groups in separate rooms and gave the oldest a pen and paper. Each group was to come up with as many of the things mentioned in the song they could remember. Then the two groups came together and alternated listing objects from their lists. As each correct object was named (some mentioned things from the first song) I pulled a representation of it out from under a cloth. Then I played a hinting game to get them to remember the 3 objects both teams had missed. All objects were put back under the cloth. Then each child was asked to name one of the objects, and as they did, I handed them that object, which was to be used in the next activity:

Next I asked them each to pantomime the object they were holding and also something from nature that they are grateful for. I gave them 4 examples: rain (wiggling my fingers moving downward), mountains, (forming a peak with my hands and arms,) oceans (making wave motions with my arms and wrists undulating) and waterfalls, (making wave motions then moving my hands downward in a flowing motion). We were to guess what the second pantomime represented (since we already knew what object they had been given for the first one). They had fun with this and did things such as trees, grass, flowers, wind, various animals, etc.

Then we went into the living room to do actions to an active song. I read them the words from a song called "I Want to Say Thanks" taken from Vitamin L's *Everyone's Invited* recording. This song is much more upbeat than the other 4. I gave them actions to go with most of the phrases, and told them they could dance and do the actions during the song. For ex., for the word *"heart"* they were to point to their own heart, for the word *"body"* by making two strong arms as if showing off one's biceps, *"mind"* by pointing to ones' head, *"eyes"* by placing fingers on the edges of both eyes, *"the best in you and the best in me"* by pointing to someone then oneself, *"family"* was indicated by putting one's arm around another (b/c we are all part of God's family) *"love"* was shown by placing hands over the heart and moving them outward, as if radiating love, *"friend"* by shaking hands, *"you"* by pointing to someone, *"me"* by pointing to oneself, *"home"* by making a triangular roof over one's head, *"wind"* by tossing body and head about, *"rain"* by making fingers wiggle as moving hands downwards, *"food"* by pretending to eat, *"air"* by taking a deep exaggerated breath, *"disappear"* by curling up and shrinking to the ground, the phrase *"I want to say thanks"* by placing their hands on each side of their mouths and then quickly raise up their arms moving away from their mouths in a diagonal motion, as if their mouths were the tip of a triangle and their arms were tracing the sides, but in an upward direction as if praising God, and *"my heart is shouting out"* same as *the "I want to say thanks",* but starting on the heart, and the for *"I count my blessings"* by counting on fingers.

And finally I asked the kids to act out ways they can show gratitude to other people. Some of the skits gave excellent examples: being friendly and kind, praying for others, giving verbal or written thanks,

material gifts, doing service and favors for them, and if showing gratitude to teachers and parents, by obeying and respecting them.

## Ingratitude VS Gratitude Scenario

I asked students to ponder the effect ingratitude has on relationships, the consequences for not appreciating what you have or what someone has done for you. Then I requested a volunteer to be my daughter. I asked her to come into a separate room with me to prime her for her role. I asked the remaining students to privately conjure up a simple pantomime of something they were grateful for (to be used in the next listing, *Pantomime Pursuit*) while I was next door.

I explained the following to the student (and to the audience when we returned to the classroom, to set the scene): I was a single mother who works very hard to take care of her daughter and home. I get very few vacation days, but one was coming up. I really wanted to spend my day off by going to visit my good friend who had moved to another city and bought a house with a pool. I really longed to catch up on her life and lounge by the pool and relax, and my daughter would be in day care. But I also knew that my daughter desperately wanted to go to the zoo and see the new exhibits. So I sacrificed my precious time off to spend the day with her at the zoo, even though what I really needed was a good rest and relaxation.

While alone together, I had explained to my actress-student that we were going to do the following scene twice: We went to the zoo, and after being there for 6 hours, I turn to my "daughter" and exclaim what I delightful day I had with her, and together we list some of the animals we got to see. Then I announce that I am extraordinarily tired and its time to leave b/c I need to get home and make dinner and do laundry and pay bills. In the first round, when I tell her its time to leave, she immediately pouts and retorts that she wanted to ride the zoo train. I explain that the next one does not leave for an hour, and I am really tired, it costs too much, and we need to get home. She begins to whine and demand. I list all the things we did get to do today, like an elephant ride, and how I bought her favorite meal for lunch, and the zoo entrance fee was pricey too. She then begins to really whine and cry, and I get increasing agitated and annoyed, telling her its time to go NOW. Finally, she throws herself on the ground and goes into a full blown tantrum about how she did not get to ride the train. The scene ends we me dragging her out of the room by her leg, angrily shouting how I will never use a day off again to do anything with her, how dare she act this way after all I did for her, how ungrateful she is.

The second scene is to be played exactly the same as above, but when I tell her its time to leave, she does look a little disappointed and quietly says she would like to ride the train. When I explain that the next trip isn't for another hour and we have to get home, she composes herself, smiles, and thanks me for a wonderful day with a hug. I put my arms around her, and exclaim what a wonderful day I had too, how glad I am that I spent it with her instead of putting her in day care, how much I love her, and giving her a kiss on the forehead, cheerfully ask her if next time I get a day off would she like to go to Sea World? We leave the room in smiles, holding hands.

The audience is then asked to describe the different consequences of the daughter's behavior. I remind them how unattractive ingratitude is, and how they should always remember to thank those who do things for them, such as for providing transportation, meals, big excursions, gifts, assistance with homework, reading a story, etc.

## Gratitude Pantomime Pursuit

We played this game to reinforce our lesson on gratitude, but other virtue themes can easily be used.

I divided the class into 2 teams, reminding them that they were to have a pantomime in mind of something for which they are grateful. Then I explained the following dramatic game:

We were to go outside, and I had marked off a playing area by placing a pole in the center of a large rectangular area. At each of the ends of the rectangle there would be 2 cones, placed about 8-10 feet

apart. At the beginning of the game, near their goal cones and away from earshot of the opposite team, each team would go into a huddle like football players and decide on pantomiming one teammate's source of gratitude. They would consult and agree on how it should be done. Then when both teams were ready, they both came to the center, marked by the pole. I flipped a coin to decide which team went first. The non-performing team stood at the ready next to the pole, and as soon as one of them guessed and called out the correct source of gratitude, the acting team took off running to their goals, with the audience team in hot pursuit. They were safe once they got past the goals. But if one were tagged before getting past the goal cones, he or she had to join the other team. (This reduces the competitive spirit, b/c one is changing sides throughout the game. You can also just give each team points for each person tagged, but I don't like the social atmosphere that keeping score inevitably creates.) The second team then gets to perform, whether they caught someone from the first performing team or not. If the chasing team got any new members, they had to quickly inform them of their pantomime and incorporate them into it. (If that is too challenging, the new members can wait until the next round to join their new team.) The kids loved this game, and came up with all sorts of creative ways to portray something. They got more and more elaborate as the game went on.

Some examples: *An octopus* was created by 4 kids getting back to back and waving their arms.

*A home*: one child stands in the center, while others form a roof by connecting their hands overhead, making the arms look like the boards slanting down, etc.

*A sunrise:* 2 kids linked arms to form the horizon, one made a circle with his hands and rose above the horizon, while another looked admiringly on.

*The planet earth:* some kids formed the huge sun with their arms making a giant circle, while another circled around them while rotating on his "axis".

*A spider web:* 2 kids stuck together, back to front, to form 8 "legs" to be the spider, one was a fly irritating a person, who then set out to smack her with a pretend swatter, the fly gets stuck in the web and the spider wraps her up and makes gross sucking sounds. Another team member was a mosquito, who uses a finger up to his mouth to portray his long mouth and jabs the person on the arm, who then swats at him, and he too meets the same fate as the fly.

*A potato sack race:* two sets of 2 kids formed a circle with their hands, another child pushed their arms down and steps inside the circle, and the kids forming the bag crouch so the kid inside can hold onto their shoulders and shirts, then the 2 sets line up, and start jumping as a unit, with the bag children encircling the jumper-children, but jumping with them, staying below the waist as a sack would.. You get the idea!

*Version 2:* I think another way to play this dramatic game is to have kids pantomime ways to express love for others and praiseworthy actions, and begin the game with these memory verses:

*.....the best way to thank God is to love one another.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 469

*To express his gratitude for the favors of God man must show forth praiseworthy actions. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 236

*Version 3:* They can also play by pantomiming virtues in general. A large poster of the virtues is then helpful to have for display to help them. Insist that they name the intended virtue before the actors run. Kids will quickly realize that several answers are applicable because in so many virtuous actions, many different virtues are expressed. For example, detachment and sacrifice are almost always associated with generosity. But it will confuse the actors about when to run if various virtues are acceptable. I think learning what virtues often come together, such as honesty and trustworthiness, respect and obedience, orderliness and responsibility, love and caring, patience and detachment, etc. is in itself a valuable lesson.

## Hurray for the World (M)

A cheering activity to promote gratitude and appreciation for our world.

This song is by Red Grammer, from his *Teaching Peace* recording which is available in most Baha'i and many non-Baha'i catalogs. (Red is a very well known Baha'i musician here in the States.)

This activity joyfully celebrates and shows appreciation for our wonderful world. All you need for this one is high energy and blue and green streamers. I use shiny metallic (or mylar) ones from Stumps party catalog. They are really lovely and kids are nuts about them. They are 2 inches wide and come in rolls of 400 feet. The item code is STM-MET. The color codes are DKB (dark blue) and GRE (green). Though I actually prefer the TEA (teal) for the green b/c it is a more unusual color and has plenty of green in it. They currently cost $6.99 per roll in 2015. Stumps phone number is 800-348-5084, web site: www.StumpsProm.com. Another source is www.shindigz.com if Stumps does not have the right colors.

We use this activity for our Ayyam-i-Ha party with the theme of world unity. I have played this with dozens of different groups and it never fails to bring joyous smiles and upliftment—quite literally. I cut the streamers into 3-4 foot lengths, which is made easier by placing a roll over the center pole of a ring toss stand, so I can just pull and cut, pull and cut. (Good service project for kids also). I can usually get over 100 sections per roll. And it goes faster if you pull both the green and the blue at the same time and then cut. Then I carefully place them in a large attractive sack or tie them up in a giant sheet. The sheet has the advantage that it can just be opened, and kids retrieve their streamers from the pile, then we close the remaining back up in the sheet—whereas a sack has to be dumped, then all the streamers not used picked up before the song begins. I try not to squash or stuff them tightly b/c they do wrinkle, and I think they look so beautiful unwrinkled.

To introduce this one, I have the kids sitting down. I tell them that the next song is a celebration of the beautiful world God gave us in His love for us, and it reminds us to be grateful and thankful for this wonderful gift. Then I ask the kids to share with the audience one thing they love about our world, one thing they are especially thankful/grateful for. (I hold the microphone up to their mouths—kids love this). If its not too large of a group, I call on all those who raise their hands. Next I tell them that during the song, they will be doing a cheer for our world, and they will each get 2 streamers (or each can get 4 depending on your budget.) One will be green and one will be blue. I ask them why do they think the streamers are those colors? They get it right away—b/c the sky and water are blue, and most plants are green. Also, its best to do this activity last in a session, b/c kids will want to hold onto and/or be distracted by the streamers and won't listen as well to the instructions for the next game.

(If I am in a classroom setting, I will then point out that there are many places in the world where children do not have enough water or any pretty green place to play, or blue sky b/c of pollution, and many do not have any of the things you children shared about. This is not just. God made this world and its joys for all people, not just some of us. We can't have world unity if millions of children are not getting their fair share of God's bounties, not getting basic needs met such as clean water, pure air to breath, healthy vegetables to eat, etc. We need to teach the world about Baha'u'llah b/c He brought teachings that if followed, would make sure all children share in the joys of this world.)

Next I explain that whenever they hear the phrase *"Hooray for the World!"* they are to leap as high as they can in the air with their arms stretched up and out with their streamers, and shout "Hooray for the World!" I remind them to be careful not to smack anyone when they do their cheer—to keep a bit of distance. Kids are also encouraged to dance. The streamers inspire dance movements. I also remind them to always wait for the cue phrase, or they will tire out way too soon. (In the end there are a lot of Hoorays in a row). Then I bring out the streamers. I ask the kids to not all rush the pile at once—there is plenty for everyone—otherwise they will bump heads. When everyone has their 2-4 streamers, (equal number of both colors) and the pile is safely out of the way, we begin. The music should be good and loud. I join in and demonstrate ways to dance with the streamers, and expressively pantomime some of the objects in the song. However, many do not lend themselves to pantomime—like cheese and raisons and egg foo yung!

For *buffalo* I make horns with my forefinger on my head, for *bees* I place my pointing finger in front of my face and rotate it while making buzzing sound, for *jellyfish* I make my wrists, arms, and hips undulate, for *beavers* I protrude my front upper teeth and move my mouth as if in gnawing, for *bats* I pretend to fly, for *bugs* I make my fingers crawl like a bug, and for *slimy old slugs* I act grossed out as I draw an imaginary meandering slime trail in the air. I still have not figured out what to do for *bears* and *miniature poodles*. The rest of the lyrics go into food and relatives, which I don't even try!

I do not teach the kids actions for any of the animals b/c they come at you so fast in the song, it would just frustrate them. I even miss some frequently, and I really know the song. The words come with the recording, so no need to have them here.

## Virtue Skits

*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:* Gleanings, page 305

*The light of a good character surpasseth the light of the sun and the radiance thereof.... ~Baha'u'llah:* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 36

*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

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

*You must become the shining candles of moral precepts and spiritual ideals and be the means of the illumination of others. Clothe your bodies with the robes of virtues. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Excellence in All Things, page 376

*Pray to God that He may strengthen you in divine virtue, so that you may be as angels in the world..... ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Paris Talks, page 61

*You live to do good and to bring happiness to others. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha*: Paris Talks, pages 112-113

*.....develop spiritual characteristics and the praiseworthy virtues of humankind. This is the primary consideration. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Education, page 282

*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

Virtue skits really reinforce the practical application and expression of virtues. I divided the class into teams of 2 or 3. One member of each team dipped their hand into a basket and pulled out a little hand-made card. One virtue written in gold was on the inside. On the outside of the card was a *pretty flower sticker.* I asked the students why there was a flower sticker on the front of each card? Most knew the answer—that virtues are like flowers in the garden of the heart. (A metaphor I use over and over in my classes). I also explained that like flowers, virtues bring joy and beauty to the world. On the inside flap was a *smiling face sticker,* and I asked what that had to do with virtues. With very little coaxing, kids

figured out it was b/c virtues produce happiness in ourselves and others. With few hints, kids figured out that the *star sticker* in each card symbolizes that when we express virtues we shine spiritually like stars in the darkness of the world. They also figured out that each card had *a heart sticker* to symbolize that the expression of virtues shows love for others and for God because it is His beauty we are reflecting when we express them.

I told the teams that they are to keep the virtue on the card secret—only their team must know. The teams were to disperse into separate rooms and develop a short skit that illustrated the practical expression of their virtue. They could use dialogue, but not name the virtue or its synonym. They could use props and costumes. If they just could not conceptualize how to demonstrate the virtue they chose, they could choose another. The other teams were to try and guess which virtue was being acted out. They had to wait until the skit was finished to guess, and the actors got to call on members of the audience. To make it a little harder, I did not bring our class poster of the list of virtues into the performance area, but I did offer hints by providing the first letter of the virtue if the audience was stumped. I also pointed out that practically always, when one is practicing a virtue, other virtues will also be shown. (For ex., generosity always involves sacrifice and detachment, gratitude involves courtesy, etc.) So, although the goal is to ascertain the exact virtue which was chosen, there are many right answers. Indeed, many more virtues were demonstrated than the one chosen in each skit and students pointed those out also. Acting out a virtue turns it into a very concrete and practical behavior.

The kids did an excellent job in designing their own mini-skits. I can see the growth in many of them—most of them needed very little guidance and help from me and came up with very appropriate scenes. The virtues that were acted out this weekend were: responsibility, reliability, mercy, loyalty, and generosity. The students really got into these dramatic assignments.

## Higher VS Lower Nature Role Plays

First, we had a discussion about the purpose of life and that one way we could define it was that we are here to learn how to gradually have our higher selves dominate our lower, to learn how to obey God's will instead of our own (if it contradicts God's).

Here are some quotes we read and discussed to elucidate this concept:

*O friends! Prefer not your will to Mine, never desire that which I have not desired for you.... ~Baha'u'llah:* Persian Hidden Words, #19

*If thou lovest Me, turn away from thyself; and if thou seekest My pleasure, regard not thine own; that thou mayest die in Me and I may eternally live in thee.*
*~Baha'u'llah:* Arabic Hidden Words, #7

*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. Then if the divine power in man, which is his essential perfection, overcomes the satanic*

*power, which is absolute imperfection, he becomes the most excellent among the creatures; but if the satanic power overcomes the divine power, he becomes the lowest of the creatures. ~`Abdu'l-Baha:* Some Answered Questions, pages 235-236

I pointed out that if we examine the affairs of the world, we can readily perceive that the animal nature is often dominating the spiritual nature--wherever there is suffering, violence, or abuse, etc., the animal or lower side of human nature is dominating the higher or spiritual side. Think about all our obsessions with sex, food, and territory.

*How lofty is the station which man, if he but choose to fulfill his high destiny, can attain! To what depths of degradation he can sink, depths which the meanest of creatures have never reached! ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 206

So next we did a role playing activity**:** Groups of 3 consulted on a typical inner debate between the higher and lower self, preferably one which at least one in the group has personally experienced. Students then acted out in front of the group this internal struggle, with one playing the person, one playing the voice of the animal or lower nature, and one playing the voice of the higher or spiritual nature. I asked that the person be in between these two, and that he/she demonstrated in words or actions their back and forth struggle with the 2 voices. At the end of each skit, the child playing the person with the internal struggle can walk off stage with or embrace the nature they decide to heed.

We had great fun with these. Students loved creating wicked and angelic looking costumes and devising props. Some even made a devil's pitchfork out of tinker toys. They chose conflicts such as struggling whether to do homework, seek revenge, being honest to one's parents, to obey or not to obey parents, to return lost money or not, etc.

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)

## Happy Clams and Self-Fishes Skits

The clams and fishes come from a *Brilliant Star Baha'i children's magazine* dedicated entirely to the themes of life after death and the purpose of life. (May/June 1993) I use it for our Inner Beauty unit-- and for our Life after Death unit, since the purpose of life is to acquire virtues, which exalts the soul in the afterlife.

Students first colored black and white clams and fishes (cut out from the above mentioned Brilliant Star.) Then I laid them on contact paper and sealed them. Students cut them out. On the back of each "Happy Clam" was an example of a child behaving in a virtuous manner. On the back of each "Self-Fish" was an example of a child letting their lower self dominate. (One could also have "Jolly-fishes" instead of clams.)

Then students in teams of 3 used sticky stretchy hands on sticks to "catch" the clams and fishes they had colored, which were placed on a poster of an underwater scene taped to the floor. Tape also marked where they could stand. For 6-11 year olds, 2 ½-3 feet away from the edge of the poster is about right. They flung the hand toward the poster and couldn't control much what they get—a clam or a fish. (To

make it even more challenging, you can insist that its a catch only when its affixed to the hand part, not the long stringy arm). Its best not to have more than 4 at a time go fishing b/c they will get entangled too easily. We called our sticky hands "Grabnabbits" after some hilarious arm shaped sea creatures from Bill Peet's rhyming book called No Such Things, pages 24-25.

When each member of a team got one catch, the team went into a private room to consult on a skit based on the examples on the backs of their clams and fishes. The "Self-Fish" scenes were to be done twice--to show the contrast. So the teams also enacted the opposite of the negative scene. The audience had to guess which virtues were being expressed or missing as in the case of the "self-fishes". (A poster of the virtues nearby is helpful as a guide). This is an easier version of the virtue skits we often do because the scene and the behavior were provided--whereas in the other version I normally use, kids just pick a virtue out of a basket and they have to develop an example themselves.

The sticky hands came from Oriental Trading Company, Inc. at www.orientaltrading.com. Their phone is 800-228-2269. In 2004 they were $4.95 a dozen, plus shipping, but their web site claimed they were out of stock. But when I phoned, they told me that was a mistake and they actually had 17,000! Oriental Trading also sells them in miniature and glow in the dark w/o sticks. Do not get the miniature ones—they will not be strong enough to lift the fishes and clams off the floor. I prefer having them on sticks because it makes it a little harder to control—which makes it more fun and challenging. So, if you can't get them on sticks, you may want to affix them to sticks yourself. Wash w/ warm soap & water to restore stickiness after a bit of use. In 2007 www.RINOVELTY.com sold a stick version for $2.50 a dozen. I can't tell from the description if they are miniature or not. They also sold a handle version with what looked like a larger hand for $3.50 a dozen. Item #s SK-HACA9 & SK-HAN12 respectively.

## Walking in the Footsteps (M)

A challenging obstacle-course dramatic game, in which students pretend to walk in the footsteps of Abdu'l-Baha.

*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

*Materials needed:* At least 40 paper or cloth footprints with non-slipping bottoms, *Greatest Moments* CD by Jack Lenz. (Available through www.bahaibooksonline.com ). This one can be done w/o the music—but its so much more enriching with the song.

First we talked about walking in the footsteps of Abdu'l-Baha, and how incredibly hard it is b/c He was a master of virtue, and it is so much harder to be virtuous than just to do whatever we feel like. I gave them the following examples and asked them to fill in the virtues (underlined): Its harder to be generous than selfish, forgiving than angry, to persevere or keep trying than to give up, to work hard than to be lazy, to be clean and orderly than messy, to be courteous than rude, to be excellent in our homework than to do a poor job, to be patient than impatient.

I shared with the kids a story about Lua Getsinger, a devoted and illustrious Baha'i in the time of Abdu'l-Baha. She and He were walking on a beach and she started to playfully step into the footprints He made in the sand. He asked her what she was doing, and she replied that she wanted to follow in His footsteps. At that moment she was stung by a scorpion. Abdu'l-Baha tended to her painful bite, and told her that the sting was to illustrate to her the kind of suffering it takes to live a life like Abdu'l-Baha. Then I showed the class a large color picture of a scorpion. Scary! I also shared with them the story of Mason Remey—who was also an illustrious Baha'i who originally followed in the footsteps of Abdu'l-Baha, but whose pride and ego destroyed his relationship to the Baha'i Faith. When Shoghi Effendi, (the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith appointed by Abdu'l-Baha) passed away, Mr. Remey claimed to be the next Guardian of the Faith, though there was no scriptural support for such a claim. He was ousted from the Baha'i Faith by the Universal House of Justice (our international governing body created by Baha'u'llah) b/c he refused to let go of his claim.

I shared both these stories b/c their names are in the song I used for the next activity. The song is "Walking in the Footsteps" by Jack Lenz from his *Greatest Moments* CD. After a thorough discussion about the hardships of following in the footsteps of Abdu'l-Baha, I explained that I was going to place different colored felt footprints all over my living room and dining room for them to place their feet in during the song. They had to follow the path I set. Kids listened to the song while I placed the footprints around. I knew that they would not follow the lyrics if they were trying to follow the footsteps. Many of the footprints were placed so that in order to walk in them, it involved quite a bit of effort. It would be hard and a real challenge, just like following in the footsteps of Abdu'l-Baha is. I told them they could help each other, as that's what community is for—to help each other be virtuous like Abdu'l-Baha. I urged them to try to match left and right feet and not place their feet down in between footprints. The feet had rubber bottoms to help prevent slippage. I put them on chair handles, step ladders, tables, counters, couches, etc.—Adamantly reminding them that they were not in a race and to walk on people's furniture and counters is totally inappropriate in all other circumstances. They loved this and many went through 3 times on their own accord. The song played while they were doing the activity. Its a really good idea to have youth or adult spotters walking beside the kids to prevent accidents.

## Tablet of the Heart Drama

These skits are all based on the quotes found in the beautifully illustrated children's compilation called Tablet of the Heart, God and Me, memory verses selected from the writings and talks of Abdu'l-Baha, compiled by Leslie Lundberg. Most of the writings are virtue-oriented and contain moral or spiritual guidance for children. In case you do not have this book, I have enclosed the quotes we used for this activity. (It is out of print as of this time, 2009)

The group was divided into 3 separate groups with Aurelia, Anisa, and myself as helpers. Each group received an envelope containing strips of decorative paper with a quote by Abdu'l-Baha on each strip. All of them came from Tablet of the Heart. Each group can have different quotes, so they do not choose the same one. However, if you want each group to have access to all the quotes to choose from, since then they are even more likely to find one they feel they can illustrate, have a full set for each group. If some groups choose the same quote, that is fine—it is fun to see how differently each group interprets its meaning through drama. The goal was to act out the quote either through pantomime or through a skit without using any of the actual words in the quote. After about 15-20 minutes, each group was to perform their piece in front of the class. They could use props and dress ups.

All the quotes were on a handout given to each student so they could peruse them after each skit. The audience was to try to guess which one it was when each group finished. (Performers do not appreciate it when you guess in the middle of their performance). The correct answer was read in full so children would be exposed to the wisdom contained in Abdu'l-Baha's writings. The 3 resulting skits were really delightful! Here are the 3 quotes that were chosen for the dramas, including a description of how they were portrayed:

*Lift up your voices and sing out the song of the Kingdom. Spread far and wide the precepts and counsels of the loving Lord, so that this world will change into another world, and this darksome earth will be flooded with light..... ~ `Abdu'l-Baha*

Students sat in a circle, all singing their own song—which of course sounded unpleasant. All had scarves tied around their eyes, so they were blindfolded. Then one began to sing a song we had played earlier about Abdu'l-Baha calling souls to Baha'u'llah's Cause. Gradually, one by one, all members began to sing that same song, and when that occurred, they all removed their blindfolds.

*.....let your heart burn with loving kindness for all who may cross your path. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha*

One student was dressed in a bright red gown. She held sparkly gold metallic, orange and red pipe cleaners, which were attached to shiny gold pieces of cloth and strips of orange and red felt fabric—kind

of like pom poms held by cheer leaders. She wore sunglasses to indicate brightness. Then one by one, students from her group, dressed in wild costumes, passed in front of her, making some comment reflecting their character. One played a grumpy old man, one played a weirdo, and one played a normal nice person. In response to each passerby, the red gowned girl would smile real big and shake her pom poms—which were of course to represent flames.

*If you desire with all your heart, friendship with every race on earth, your thought, spiritual and positive, will spread; it will become the desire of others, growing stronger and stronger, until it reaches the minds of all men. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha*

One student stood holding both her hands over her heart, with her eyes closed, looking as if she is praying or thinking deep thoughts. Behind her is a student covered in shimmering blue cloth, from head to toe. To one side of her are 2 kids shoving each other back and forth. On the other side a student and myself were pretending to be in a vicious sword fight, using play swords. After a few moments, the blue cloth covered student pulls a silk blue cloth out from behind the thinking/praying students head (it was concealed by being tucked into her shirt back, but it gave the impression it was coming out from her head.) The thinking/praying student then opens her eyes and starts to watch with a smile on her face as the blue cloth covered student starts dancing and fluttering the blue silk cloth in the air, gently at first, then with much more force and vigor. She then has it touch the individuals in each fighting group, and as she does, they relax and stop fighting and hug or shake hands. Then the thinker and the former fighters all hold hands in a circle with the blue clothed student (who of course symbolizes the spiritual and positive thought) standing in the center still waving her smaller blue silk cloth. We all move around in the circle, smiling.

Here are the rest of the quotes:

*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*

*If love and agreement are manifest in a single family, that family will advance, become illumined and spiritual.....*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha*

*Be kind to all peoples; care for every person.....strive ye to gladden every soul.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha*

*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.....*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha*

*May this boundless love so fill your hearts and minds that sadness may find no room to enter..... ~ `Abdu'l-Baha*

*You live to do good and to bring happiness to others. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha*

*So far as ye are able, ignite a candle of love in every meeting, and with tenderness rejoice and cheer ye every heart.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha*

*.....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*

*May each one of you become a shining lamp, of which the flame is the Love of God. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha*

*Pray to God that He may strengthen you in divine virtue, so that you may be as angels in the world..... ~ `Abdu'l-Baha*

*Know thou of a certainty that every house wherein the anthem of praise is raised to the Realm of Glory in celebration of the Name of God is indeed a heavenly home, and one of the gardens of delight in the Paradise of God. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha*

*God willing, thou wilt be loving and obedient to thy father and mother, kind and considerate to thy brother and sister, and wilt grow from day to day in faith and certitude. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha*

Many verses from the compilation were deliberately left out for the drama. One was left out b/c it involved being kind to animals, which would be too easy to guess and b/c none of the students have trouble being kind to animals. They need much more work on getting along with other kids! The other verses were left out because 1), they would be way too easy to guess given the suggested imagery, 2) too abstract for kids to act out, or 3) the verses would be too hard to act out w/o representing God, Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha. (Out of reverence, Baha'is do not draw, sculpt, or impersonate any of the 3 Central Figures in the Baha'i Faith, any Divine Messenger, or God).

## Service Skits

We did this at a feast, but it can be done in a class, a cluster meeting, a unit convention, etc. The following quotes were individually put on strips of paper, and all of them were on a pretty bordered paper with copies for everyone.

We then counted off in numbers up to 5, since there are five quotes. All the threes, for ex., congregated in one room, and they were to express #3 in dramatic form, creating their own unique skit. Props were encouraged. If you want to turn this into more of a guessing game, then each group can designate a picker, and he/she can choose one of the slips of paper from a hat or basket and that is the one they dramatize. Then the community has to guess which quote is being performed. A good rule of thumb is that no one can guess until each skit is complete—kid actors usually hate it when someone guesses correctly in the very middle of their show. It is also better manners to not be calling out quotes during a performance. We did not do this one as a guessing game, but had a person read the quote then the group enacted it. ---Or the action can take place first, then at the end one of the group members reads the quote. If done as a pantomime w/o words the quote can be read while the actors are performing. However, children often find it too hard to listen to sophisticated words and watch movement at the same time. Try and keep some of the performances lighthearted with caricature and exaggeration simply b/c these exhortations can otherwise come off as too scolding or judgmental.

The skits described below are examples I came up with, some based on the actual performances—which were too long ago for me to remember the details. Your group can use these or of course come up with their own interpretations. My students have played some of the adult roles, but especially in #3, the bad guy needs to be super expressive at the end to make a big impression. I usually assign youth or adults to the role of the thief, or play it myself.

1.. 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

A child helped a blind person (wearing sunglasses) with a cane cross a busy street, some actors were cars. 1 child picked up litter, another read a book about Abdu'l-Baha to a little one, and another invited a child to Baha'i children's classes. The rest of the children pretended to play video games, and when an adult asked them if they wanted to help prepare a study circle, they said "NO WAY!!".

2. IT BEHOOVETH MAN TO SHOW FORTH THAT WHICH WILL BENEFIT MANKIND. HE THAT BRINGETH FORTH NO FRUIT IS FIT FOR THE FIRE. ~BAHA'U'LLAH: EPISTLE TO THE SON OF THE WOLF, P. 49

Children walk in carrying a large bowl of fruit and offer it to other kids and then they begin to consult on how they can raise funds for the Kingdom Project. Some adults are lying down on the floor pretending to watch TV. One of the fruit bearers invites them to join the discussion on fundraising, and they decline saying that they live for TV shows and that the only time they feel like exerting any effort is to go to the Mall and buy clothes and movies. The kids accept the answer with a sigh and shake their heads. Those adults then roll over and pretend to be logs. One of the kids holds up a sign that says *10 years later*. An adult wanders in looking somewhat like a lumber jack, and exclaims what handsome logs he has found and they will make great wood to burn in his new invention---a wood burning stove that powers his TV. He rolls them offstage.

3. 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. I SWEAR BY THE DAY STAR THAT SHINETH ABOVE THE HORIZON OF DIVINE POWER! THEY THAT ARE THE FOLLOWERS OF THE ONE TRUE GOD SHALL, THE MOMENT THEY DEPART OUT OF THIS LIFE, EXPERIENCE SUCH JOY AND GLADNESS AS WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO DESCRIBE, WHILE THEY THAT LIVE IN ERROR SHALL BE SEIZED WITH SUCH FEAR AND TREMBLING, AND SHALL BE FILLED WITH SUCH CONSTERNATION, AS NOTHING CAN EXCEED. WELL IS IT WITH HIM THAT HATH QUAFFED THE CHOICE AND INCORRUPTIBLE WINE OF FAITH THROUGH THE GRACIOUS FAVOR AND THE MANIFOLD BOUNTIES OF HIM WHO IS THE LORD OF ALL FAITHS.... ~BAHA'U'LLAH: GLEANINGS, PAGE 171

An adult sitting at a table or desk is filling out some papers, and a knock is heard. She says "come in please". The adult who enters introduces himself. They shake hands. The first adult asks him to fill out some final adoption papers, which he does quickly. When he hands them to her, she asks: "Are you *sure* you want to adopt these 4 orphans?" He says enthusiastically: "Absolutely!" She says: "Well, its time to meet your new family members, then." She goes into another room and ushers out 4 children who shyly embrace him. He exclaims how happy he is to have them come into his life and tells them he promises to love them and teach them about Baha'u'llah.

Next scene, another adult pretends to accost another and that person falls on the ground. He pretends to repeatedly kick her and steals her purse and runs away laughing. *(This may too scary and violent for young children, be careful. I just wanted to make "they that live in error" look really wicked so people, especially children, don't think that they or others will have this fate just through the mistakes and poor choices that we all make throughout our lives).*

Next scene, a sign is held up that says 50 years later. The adopting parent is lying down on a cloth, dying, surrounded by adults who represent the children he adopted. There are loving farewells, expressions of deep gratitude. As soon as he closes his eyes, he is completely covered with a pretty cloth. A few seconds later a person wearing a long flowing white silky cloth, representing an angel, lovingly removes the cloth. The dead person rises with a look of happy wonderment. The angel places a beautiful long sparkling cloak on his shoulders, offers him an elegant goblet, and says: "Well done, name of person! Drink ye the water of life everlasting!" Looking extremely joyful, he drinks and floats/dances away, looking totally blissful.

The thief is dying alone of a heart attack, calling out for help, but no one responds. After it is clear he is dead, the angel covers him with a dark cloth, then after a few seconds, removes it. He gets up, opens his

eyes, and immediately beholds the woman he kicked writhing and crying in pain. He then immediately falls on his knees with fear, trembling, looking absolutely terrified, and screaming in horror, saying over and over: "What have I done?!" The angel observes with a frown.

4. 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

An adult walks in followed by a group of kids and adults, and enthusiastically explains that they are gathered today to clean their new Baha'i center, which is a mess b/c the former owner did not take care of it. ½ the group immediately goes to different parts of the room with their props of a bucket, rags, brooms, window cleaner, mop, etc. The other ½ just stands around showing off and boasting about their jewelry, palm held computers, watches, nail polish, clothes, etc. We made it funny, in that some of things people boasted about were ridiculous, like the shape of their big toe, a tattoo of Elvis or Britney Spears, a cell phone in the shape of a banana (it really was a banana), some hideous costume jewelry, portable TV player the size of a fingernail, etc.

5. LET THEM AT ALL TIMES CONCERN THEMSELVES WITH DOING A KINDLY THING FOR ONE OF THEIR FELLOWS, OFFERING TO SOMEONE LOVE, CONSIDERATION, THOUGHTFUL HELP.
~`ABDU'L-BAHA: SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF `ABDU'L-BAHA, PAGE 1

One child holds up a homemade clock—a circle or square with numbers and 2 moving arms, affixed via a paper fastener. As the clock's hands are moved, another child gives a foot massage to an adult pretending to be old with feet pain. Another sees a child sitting by himself, watching 2 other kids playing a game who are ignoring him. She walks over and introduces herself and asks if he would like a new friend. Another tip-toes quietly past a sleeping person. And finally, another offers to help do dishes after feast. They use real dishes and pretend to wash them happily.

## Outstanding Servants Skits

(For those of you who do not have Brilliant Star magazine, you can use a different source than the magazine for the following activity—such as a compilation of famous or not-so famous people who have served humanity selflessly through science, religion, medicine, human rights, etc.)

On pages 24-27 of the *Brilliant Star Baha'i children's magazine*, May/June 1996, there are 21 photos of very diverse children and adults from all sorts of ethnic groups and backgrounds, who have served humanity and/or the Baha'i Faith in very selfless, unique, and challenging ways. With each photo there is a short biography of what that person has done. They are designed to be cut out as cards for a game. The game I deemed too impractical for our particular circumstances, but I did copy and cut out each photo and bio. Some descriptions lent themselves to acting out more than others and I removed those that would just be too abstract. Each child chose one person to represent, but kids could help each other out in their skits. I asked the students to choose 2-4 highlights that they felt they could act out from their biographical description. Props were encouraged and believe me, they were used with zeal and relish: Sometimes ethnic dolls were used to represent children, the students donned wigs, glasses, clothing, and suitcases, etc. After about 45 minutes of preparation and coaching, the kids had a blast acting out or pantomiming several of the services each person did. During the performances, I read the brief description of the life of each servant out loud to the audience. However, I would stop reading after each highlight that was to be acted out, so the kids could focus on the actors' interpretation of that highlight. Then the reading would resume.

*Blessed are they that remember the one true God, that magnify His Name, and seek diligently to serve His Cause. It is to these men that the sacred Books of old have referred..... The glory of their station, however, is as yet undisclosed. The Hand of Divine power will, assuredly, lift up the veil, and expose to the sight of men that which shall cheer and lighten the eye of the world. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 110

*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

*I entreat Thee, O Lord of the Kingdom of eternity, ..... to grant that I may.....stand firm in Thy service and in the service of Thy loved ones. Graciously assist then Thy servants, O my God, to do that which will serve to exalt Thy Cause and will enable them to observe whatsoever Thou hast revealed in Thy Book.*
*~Baha'u'llah:* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, pages 116-117

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

(More relevant quotes are in listing below.)

## Community Service Skits

On *pages 14-15 of the Brilliant Star Baha'i children's magazine, Jan./Feb. 1993,* there is an activity called "I Want to Help!" It provides an illustrated "Community Service Checklist". For ex: Host a Feast, Prepare the Devotional Portion of Feast, Prepare Refreshments for Feast, Host Firesides, Host a Children's Deepening, and Serve on a Holy Day Committee. There were 4 more, but for dramatic purposes, I felt they would be too hard to do. Under each service topic, there were 3-6 examples of actions one might do when performing the service. For example, under "Prepare Refreshments for Feast" the following 3 actions were listed: 1) plan and make the food, 2) plan and prepare the beverages, and 3) decorate and set the food table. I had cut out onto strips the 6 services listed above, along with their list of specific actions.

Since this was done in 1993, before the Institute process and core activities of devotionals, study circles, and children's classes were well known in the USA, these are missing as options. It would be good to include these. That said, I wanted to focus on what kids can do now as service. They can't join a Ruhi study circle which is for youth and adults, nor teach children's classes. However, they can support these activities by inviting their friends to classes, babysitting little ones so parents can attend a study circle, help with devotionals, or even design a devotional for their friends, with just a little support from adults or youth. A teacher can come up with their own *Community Service Checklist* which is appropriate for their student's ages and available resources. The teacher then should then itemize under each service, specific actions the kids would need to consider and engage in if actually doing the service, as the example for "Prepare Refreshments for Feast" does above. The acting out of the items on the checklists is an excellent exercise for children in event planning and working in groups.

Anyway, children were divided into groups of 2-3. Each group chose a slip from a very beautiful sparkling sack. I pointed out that when we do service, our souls sparkle and shine spiritually. The teams were asked to act out the actions without using the key words. They were given about 20 minutes and were allowed to use props. The list of services was written on a dry erase board, and the audience was to guess which service was being acted out based on the specific actions. (Of course the last group was easy to guess!) By turning it into a guessing game, the audience children pay more close attention. Kids were allowed to refer to their check list while performing so they did not have to memorize all the items.

*Blessed are they that remember the one true God, that magnify His Name, and seek diligently to serve His Cause. It is to these men that the sacred Books of old have referred..... The glory of their station, however, is as yet undisclosed. The Hand of*

*Divine power will, assuredly, lift up the veil, and expose to the sight of men that which shall cheer and lighten the eye of the world. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 110

*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

*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, p. 245

*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

*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

There is nothing that brings success in the Faith like service. Service is the magnet which draws the divine confirmations. Thus, when a person is active, they are blessed by the Holy Spirit. When they are inactive, the Holy Spirit cannot find a repository in their being, and thus they are deprived of its healing and quickening rays. ~Shoghi Effendi: Living the Life, page 23

(More relevant quotes in the preceding activity, "Outstanding Servants Skits".)

## Service Skits II

Kids were divided into groups of 3-4 and asked to develop a skit which illustrated a way to serve others or their religion. I asked them not to do tending to the sick or injured since those examples had been used several times already in class and I wanted them to expand their awareness of ways to serve. I encouraged them to be creative, but that they should provide examples of things they really can do in real life. They were allowed to use props and costumes (they love to do this) and were given 20 minutes. They showed things like caring for young kids, doing extra chores for their parents, picking up litter, collecting for UNICEF, donating food and toys to a homeless shelter, etc. (See above for relevant quotes).

Children love to employ humor in drama, so I encourage that as long as it does not undermine the goal of the activity. Though I insisted that kids illustrate realistic ways they can serve in real life, they could add creative, zany, and funny twists. For example, 2 boys played brothers who were going around their neighborhood asking to do odd jobs for money to help a friend's parent make the rent so the family would not be evicted. I played a neighbor lady whose door they came to. I exclaimed that I really needed to run some errands and so could they please baby sit my 2 pet squashes? (The boys had drawn faces with markers on them during rehearsal). I introduced them to my pet squashes and told them their names and a little bit about how they could care for and play with them. Then the boys each whipped out a Bell Pepper from their pockets, that also had faces, exclaiming that they had experience with caring for vegetables. In another skit, a pair of girls pretend to phone me offering to help make a refreshment for the upcoming holy day because they heard I was organizing refreshments. I lament how everybody is bringing sweets and sugary things, and how I would love something healthy and raw like a vegetable tray or fruit salad. They eagerly agree and then get an "Ahhhhaaa" look on their faces and whip out some scissors and disappear out the door. The next scene is the day of the event and they ring the doorbell. They are carrying a wooden bowl full of grass. What the audience doesn't know is that its actually

wheatgrass, a health food, that many people, (including myself) juice or put in blended drinks. I am delighted and ask if I can taste it. They agree and I eagerly stuff a wad in my mouth and start chewing and exclaiming out delicious it is, thanking them for their thoughtful donation. The audience kids are highly amused, and then to my surprise, all gather around the bowl to taste this grass. They are not as thrilled as me, to say the least! I eventually tell them the truth-- that it is not lawn grass.

## Swimming versus Service Puppet Show

I did a brief *puppet show* depicting 2 friends who are going to go swimming on the first day of the public pool opening. The girl is waiting for her friend to arrive and is enthusiastically exclaiming how excited she is and about all the things she loves to do at the pool. Her friend arrives and they greet each other and talk happily about how much fun they are going to have. He asks how she is and she says fine, but in passing mentions that her mother is not feeling too well. He inquires further and learns that the mother is actually super sick with the flu and has a fever and is throwing up. He then asks who is taking care of his friend's younger brother since her dad is out of town. She says her mother is trying to. He says "it sounds like she could use some help." She says: "yeah, too bad there is no one available, lets go swimming!." Then he points out that they both love her mom, that her mom has done a lot for them and that they could go swimming tomorrow or the next day. She pauses and realizes he is right and they both go off stage talking about how they are going to help her mom. I ask the students what virtues were shown and they knew exactly: sacrifice, caring, detachment, and of course, service.

*Be the source of consolation to every sad one, assist every weak one....., , care for every sick one....~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 453

*Let them at all times concern themselves with doing a kindly thing for one of their fellows, offering to someone love, consideration, thoughtful help.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 1

*May you be nurses for the sick.....~ `Abdu'l-Baha:*: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 425

## Making Faces and Service with a Smile

I had kids aging from 6-12 this day. This activity was originally designed for 3-6 year olds, and can easily be done with that age group. But I wanted to use this activity with this group b/c it related so well to our topic of “service”. Since I wanted the older kids to stay engaged for this activity, I asked the oldest kids to show off their dramatic abilities by really exaggerating the facial expressions and body language indicated by my dialogue: I gave them a situation and asked them to express the resulting emotion. However, if you have a group in which the majority are eager to act, you can give twosomes or threesomes 1-3 scenes each, then a new group can act. It was an especially appealing invitation b/c the performers got to use the sturdy classroom table as a stage and stand upon it. (I did admonish them that normally it is definitely not acceptable behavior to stand on any one’s tables, and that they may only do so here with permission.)

For ex: “You live in a neighborhood of all retired people who have no children. You learn that some people from the country of Nigeria on the continent of Africa are moving into the house next to yours. You look out the window one day and see them moving in. They have two children that seem to be around your age. You feel excited. Show me your excited faces. Someone unjustly accused you of cheating in a game of sports, and you feel angry, show your angry faces. You just did an excellent job on a school project, and got an “A”, show your proud faces. You just saw real children on TV who are starving. You feel really sad. Show me your sad faces.” I go through several emotions, each involving a virtue or moral situation. The last one is: “You just showed kindness to someone who was very lonely by inviting them over to play and that made you both feel really good inside. You feel happy. Show me your happy faces”.

Then all the children were asked “What did the performers all do when they showed their happy faces?” (smiled) “What makes you happy? What makes you smile?” Every child shared some examples, many of which were spiritually related or other-oriented. Then I explained that good deeds, or acts of service make us happy and smile because it feels good inside to make others happy. (The rhyme called THE HELPERS on the next page hints at this: “Make happy days for everyone”). I urged the kids to remember this important lesson b/c most of us struggle with sadness and/or depression at times, and doing good deeds is the best medicine for that. I asked for examples of service and good deeds they had done or received. Then before reading the quotes below, I also pointed out that one of the best ways to give love to others is through service, by doing good deeds.

*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

Several of the kids mentioned certain foods, sports, toys, and video games when they were asked what makes them happy. So, before moving on, I asked the kids which of the things they listed would make their souls rejoice and be pleasing to God upon their death? They all knew that the material things were totally unimportant in this context. (We pondered this concept more in depth during our life after death unit several years ago—but I feel it is important to regularly remind kids to evaluate their priorities and values in light of their spiritual reality and the impact their choices will have upon the station of their souls in the next world. People often do things which are harmful to themselves or others b/c they are ignorant of or forget about the long term spiritual consequences.)

*Today, all the peoples of the world are indulging in self-interest and exert the utmost effort and endeavour to promote their own material interests. They are worshipping themselves and not the divine reality, nor the world of mankind. They seek diligently their own benefit and not the common weal. This is because they are captives of the world of nature and unaware of the divine teachings, of the bounty of the Kingdom and of the Sun of Truth. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha,* Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, pgs. 103-4

*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

*The first thing to do is to acquire a thirst for Spirituality, then Live the Life! Live the Life! Live the Life! The way to acquire this thirst is to meditate upon the future life.*
*~`Abdu'l-Baha,* The Importance of Deepening, page 204

Then I shared 2 short true stories—one about the near death experience of a woman named Renee Pasarow, and one about the fragility of life—you never know when you will leave this world, so don’t take for granted your life, make wise choices, and spend your time in ways that will rejoice your soul when you die. In the first story, Renee was a teenager when she had one of the longest near death experiences on record. But the point was that in her life review, it was several acts of kindness that she had shown a mentally disabled boy that made her soul blaze out in joy and bliss. She had completely forgotten about these encounters and was totally surprised at how important they were to her soul compared to other things she had done. In the second story I shared the tragedy of one family of 4: First the daughter, a jr. in college, was killed as she was standing in line renting a video at a video rental store—a car on the road lost control and smashed through the front windows and hit her. Then 6 years later, the son who was also a jr. in college at the time, was killed in a car accident. Then several years later the father died of heart attack on the golf course. 3 out of 4 taken well before any one would have predicted. (This one is too heavy for young kids, I would not share it w/ children under 10.)

After sharing those stories, I again really emphasized to the kids that they should really think deeply about the choices they make in pursuit of happiness. I urged them to make wise choices that would rejoice their souls—not to waste their precious lives seeking happiness in ways that would not nourish them spiritually or be pleasing to God. So often, it is in pursuit of happiness, that people break spiritual laws or do things that are against the will of God. And they do end up regretting this either in this life or the next.

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)

I also pointed out that the more things you enjoy in life, the happier you will be. I told them that they would be a lot happier in life if they had an attitude of gratitude, and focus on the good things in their lives, not on what they don't have or don't like.

Next, we talked about how God has given us bodies 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 body parts to bring sadness or happiness to others. (This description obviously would not work well with older kids and teenagers!) I said: For example, we can use our tongues to say "Go away I don't like you," or we can use our tongues to say "I love you." And while using gesticulations to illustrate, I say: "We can use our hands to grab something away from someone, or we can use our hands to give a gift or loving touch."

Then I presented them with a rhyme and asked them to fill in the blanks by either noticing my fingers, what I pointed to, or my facial clues, or by guessing through context or by finishing the last word of a section based on the rhyme. The words that are underlined were the ones the students had to guess.

Before sharing this simple poem**,** I pointed out that although it is geared towards pre-schoolers and early elementary age, the message in it is deep and extremely important—and much of the suffering in the world is due to the fact that too many people have not yet learned the message or lesson in this simple poem.

*THE HELPERS*

Two eyes to see nice things to do,
two lips to smile the whole day through,
two ears to hear what others say,
two hands to put our toys away,
a tongue to speak sweet words each day,
a loving heart for work or play,
two feet that errands gladly run,
make happy days for everyone!

Then I asked what is the basic message in this poem? (That using our bodies and life to serve others and be loving and caring, brings joy to ourselves and to all those around us.)

*....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

Abdu'l-Baha also said: *"You live to do good and to bring happiness to others."*
(Paris Talks, pages 112-113)

Then I asked for volunteers to individually or in pairs to present the rhyme in a really unique and/or creative fashion to the group. (Rap, opera style, funny voices, character voices, etc.) I gave an example, using a really unusual voice and accent and facial expressions. The students found it highly amusing. The volunteers were then given large print versions of the poem and asked to go into separate rooms to practice for about 5 minutes. About half the group felt confident enough to do this—those who are really expressive actors (i.e. real hams). They did a fabulous job and the audience kids were filled with hearty laughter.

As a follow up to the above activity, to reinforce that service brings happiness to ourselves and others, I presented the students with *Smile Vials:* These are basically film vials with holographic contact paper wrapped around them with 3 stickers, 2 on the lid and one on the body of the vial. All lids had a photo-sticker of a flower, with a smiley face in the center of the flower. A heart sticker was then stuck below the face, not on the lid, but on the vial. I explained to the kids that sticker-symbols meant the following: (I let them fill in the underlined words b/c these are concepts we have studied before in class.) The smiley face is for the happiness you bring to yourself and to another when you do the good deeds, the flower symbolizes how good deeds bring joy and beauty to the world just like flowers do, and whenever you do a good deed, a new flower is growing in the garden of your heart. And the heart represents that good deeds are a way of showing love.

The children were asked to sit down and think of 3 acts of service or good deeds they can do and who they will do them for. I gave them a list of ideas if they could not think of any, such as folding laundry, putting silverware away, sitting with a child who is alone at lunch, inviting a lonely kid to play, picking up litter, clearing the dinner table, dusting, picking up a younger sibling's toys, help someone else clean up their mess, massaging your parent's or grandparents feet, etc. They were also given a tray full of many different colors of ribbon segments with one side covered with clear tape. (Ribbon can be very hard to write on for kids, writing with ink on clear tape is relatively easy.) They were to choose 3 ribbons, and write the acts/deeds in ink on the tape, put them in a vial, and to do them before next class. (Older students helped the youngest to write theirs instead of doing their own). I asked them not to write down their routine chores, and to be specific—for example avoid writing things like: "I will be nice to my sister". They were to describe a specific action that would reflect being nice. I also asked them to do a good job and with a pleasant attitude if it was a chore. They should not write things that they know will involve a lot of help from you, their parents. I assured them that these good deeds would bring happiness and smiles to themselves and the recipients, because it feels so good to do them.

Show students how to roll the ribbon on a pen to place it neatly in the vial. But remind them to wait until the ink is dry so it doesn't smear. Remind them to write their initials on the bottom so they can figure out which one is theirs when its time to take them home.

*Materials needed for the Smile Vials:*

- Trays for the items listed below
- Film vials covered with a strip of attractive contact paper—holographic stars are nice. I found mine in the school supply sections of department stores—this contact paper was intended for covering books and folders.
- Film vial lids with a flower sticker, smiley face sticker

- 1 Heart sticker on each vial (or you can put all 3 stickers on lid, depending on your sizes of stickers.)
- Different colors of ribbon, cut into about 6 inch strips, with pretty side covered in clear tape
- Rubbing Alcohol and tissue for wiping clean mistakes in writing
- A collection of different colored ink pens that write well on tape. I have found that for the pens, the Gelly Roll brand by Sakura from Japan are by far and away the best. They look great on dark and light surfaces, some are metallic, others have sparkles. They rarely dry out and have a reliable flow. All other brands I have used had to be thrown out after just a few uses—often whole sets even before the first use.

(This was not an arts and crafts activity, it was really about associating good deeds with happiness, so I prepared the vials ahead of time. If you have the time in class, you may want to let the kids choose and place their own stickers from a tray of many. But even if you cut the contact paper into the right length and height ahead of time, kids will have a hard time positioning them so that they are not crooked or unevenly overlapping.)

*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

*Happy is the man who will arise to serve My Cause..... ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 69

*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

*Let him do some good to every person whose path he crosseth, and be of some benefit to him. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 3

## With These Hands (M)

A song and pantomime about good ways to use our hands, by Vitamin L, on their *Swingin' in the Key of L* recording.

*Thine hand is a symbol of My loving-kindness..... ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 322

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

*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

*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:* Gleanings, page 305

*Strengthen my hand, O my God, that it may take hold of Thy Book with such steadfastness that the hosts of the world shall have no power over it. Guard it, then, from meddling with whatsoever doth not belong unto it. Thou art, verily, the Almighty, the Most Powerful. ~Baha'u'llah:* Prayers and Meditations, page 314

Kids are gathered in a circle, sitting until we start to practice actions. First I talk about how our hands are gifts from ____?(God) and can be used to bring happiness or _____(sadness) to others, to make the world a better or _____(worse) place. To thank _____(God) for the precious gift of our hands, we should use them to ____(serve) His will and pleasure, to serve ____(mankind) and teach His ____(Cause). I

give examples, such as a hand can be used to hit someone b/c you want what they have or to lovingly caress a child, or to grab something for yourself or to give a gift, etc. (I do actions in the air to emphasize, along with relevant facial expressions, always ending with the more positive image.) What we do with our hands reveal what's in our _____(heart), hands show in deeds what we feel and believe. Their actions prove who we really ____(are).

Then I go over the words to the song, and teach the kids the actions:

With these hands *(wave both hands in air side to side, palms facing out, hands open, or push forward and back)*

A picture I will paint *(pretend to hold paintbrush and paint)*

I see it right here in my mind, *(point to head)*

It will be one of a kind *(hold up one finger)*

And when I am through, you will see it too. *(point to someone else)*

With these hands *(wave both hands in air side to side, palms facing out, hands open, or push forward and back)*

I will plant a tree *(pretend to place a small tree in ground, bend down, pat dirt, etc.)*

I will watch it grow *(look down and up as if watching something rising from floor)*

And I'll protect it, give it love and I'll respect it *(pretend to pour water on imaginary tree)*

And one day you'll see, it will give fruit to me *(pretend to pluck a piece of fruit and eat it)*

CHORUS:

With these hands *(wave both hands in air side to side, palms facing out, hands open, or push forward and back)*

I can offer so much *(start with the backs of the fingertips of both hands touching in the center of body, then move hands outward towards others, ending with arms outstretched and palms facing ceiling)*

With these hands I can create *(wave both hands in air side to side, palms facing out, hands open, or push forward and back)*

And with these hands, *(wave both hands in air side to side, palms facing out, hands open, or push forward and back)*

I can offer my love *(hands over heart, then bring down in front, elbows bent, palms up, as if holding a pillow)*

I can do beautiful things *(each child is to come up with own unique movement for this, I give a few examples but encourage them to do their own)*

with these hands *(wave both hands in air side to side, palms facing out, hands open, or push forward and back)*

(end of chorus)

With these hands *(wave both hands in air side to side, palms facing out, hands open, or push forward and back)*

I will write a song *(pretend to write in air)*

A song of peace *(make peace symbol with fingers)*

For all to hear *(cup both ears and then extend hands and arms out forming a "v" from the head)*

A song that may catch someone's ear *(cup ear and lean as if listening for some distant sound)*

And when they hear the song *(cup one ear)*

They may sing along *(place one palm under chin and then extend open hand out straight in front)*

With these hands *(wave both hands in air side to side, palms facing out, hands open, or push forward and back)*

I'll reach out for the world *(reach out toward center of circle, or towards globe or picture of world)*

I will join with other hands *(kids hold each other's hands)*

Everywhere in all the lands *(still holding hands)*

Working for the love the world's been dreaming of! *(Can continue holding hands or place hands over heart and close eyes)*

CHORUS 3X

## Unity in Diversity Puppet Show and Activity

We read 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. I made a puppet using velcro and doll body parts (I felt like a real psychopath cutting arms and legs off of various dolls) to go along with the story. (Thanks to Jackie Mulhall for making the big red lips!) It is truly a wild looking puppet!! (The legs are attached to the lips, and the eyes, arms and lips are attached to the nose). You can also buy vinyl eyes, noses, lips, and ears from Oriental Trading Co., but they come in sets of 3 dozen parts, and include fingers, tongues, and teeth, and cost about $10.00. (Phone 800-228-2269, web: www.orientaltrading.com, item # JB-39/969.) Since we are still working on unity in diversity and cooperation, I thought this story was a good example to use. We used a real cookie in the story and so I had the kids' total concentration!!

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

*Close your eyes to racial differences, and welcome all with the light of oneness. ~Baha'u'llah:* as quoted by Shoghi Effendi in The Advent of Divine Justice, page 37

*The diversity in the human family should be the cause of love and harmony, as it is in music where many different notes blend together in the making of a perfect chord. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha* Paris Talks, page 53

*If you meet those of different race and colour from yourself, do not mistrust them and withdraw yourself into your shell of conventionality, but rather be glad and show them kindness. Think of them as different coloured roses growing in the beautiful garden of humanity, an rejoice to be among them. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Paris Talks, page 53

The most important thing for the believers is, of course, to be united and to really love each other for the sake of God....~Shoghi Effendi: Directives of the Guardian, page 75

## Unity in Diversity Skits

Partners were to create a skit or example of how 2 people working together are better than one, or complement each other. For example, one child tried to carry a table, the second child enabled them to do it. One child wrote a phrase, another illustrated the phrase with a drawing, one child could not reach something high up, but together, with one on the other's shoulders, they could, one guided another to hang a picture straight, etc. For inspiration before the skits these books are perfect: Some Things You Just Can't Do by Yourself by Naomi Schiff and Together by George Ella Lyon. Kids should be requested to not use the same activities in the books but to think of their own. (See above for relevant quotes.)

## Cooperation, Unity & the Difference Between Them

Demonstration of win/win cooperation and how compromise is essential: 2 people pretend to be pigs or dogs or whatever. Those rubber animal noses with elastic straps add an element of humor, as do curly tails. They get down on all fours. They are attached to each other by a long rope, which depending on whether you are using adults or rambunctious kids, can be tied around the neck, if not, affixed to the torso. Two bowls full of real or pretend food (kids love to see adults stuffing real grass in their mouths) are placed at opposite ends of the room. At first each animal is tugging to get to the bowl nearest them—but neither can eat b/c each is pulling in the opposite direction, thus preventing either from getting to their bowl. (It is important that the bowls be placed far enough apart so that the animals, when pulling and expanding the rope to its limit, can't reach the bowls.) Then they both have an AHAH! expression on their faces as if they suddenly got a bright idea. They make animal noises as if talking to each other, then each proceeds to move in the same direction towards one of the bowls, of which they both eat out of. When finished, they then both proceed to the second bowl and eat out of it together. One could also demonstrate patience and detachment with this version: One animal waits while one eats out of the bowl alone, then they both proceed to the second bowl and the one who hasn't eaten yet gets to eat, while the other waits. They can even be more clever: They both proceed to one bowl, and push it with their snouts towards the other bowl so they can eat simultaneously, side by side.

With a group of age 6 and up, you can tell the kids before the skit that these 2 animals have a problem and that after they figure out what that problem is, they should come up with solutions and inform the animals. Then the animals act those solutions out. Tell audience members that they may not touch the pigs, bowls, or rope—b/c they will be itching to just intervene.

*To illustrate cooperation and unity and demonstrate the sometimes subtle difference between unity and cooperation we did the following:*

Two people are attempting to twirl and jump rope with a third trying to jump in the middle. The first round—they are twirling in opposite directions and the rope is not moving in rhythm and the jumper is incapable of jumping. They are arguing over which speed and direction is best or blaming the other for the lack of success. Second round: They are moving the rope in perfect synchrony and the jumper is able to jump quite well, but they are arguing over who gets to be the jumper next. 3rd round: They are moving the rope in perfect synchrony and are enjoying the experience and complementing the skill of the jumper and one of them invites the other jump rope holder to be the next jumper. Discuss the differences in the 3 rounds. Point out or let children come to the conclusion that they are indeed cooperating, but they are not in unity in the second round. Their ability to analyze this demonstration without much adult input will depend on their age and verbal skills.

See Unity in *Diversity Puppet Show and Activity* for relevant quotes.

## Practicing Being Unified

Kids did mini-skits and the rest of us had to guess what 2 things they are. (See *Together (M)* for a musical version of this activity.)

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 of these 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

## All of Us All at Once

A dramatic cooperative game which demands unity, consultation, cooperation and often synchrony.

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, roller coasters, vacuum cleaners, toasters, etc. Its a good game to illustrate how individual parts are important to the functioning of the whole, unity in diversity, and even systems theory.

## Floor Designs

A simpler version of the above game. This one uses static forms.

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.

## 3 Puppet Shows about Virtues and Unity

These puppet shows are designed to clarify the understanding that the expression of virtues is essential to creating unity.

We sat in a circle, listened to a prayer for unity to music, and then each child verbally shared an action or activity which they thinks creates unity, or is unifying.

Then I asked them to define and discuss the meaning of unity. I asked them what they thought unity means, or what it personally means to them. I shared that I thought unity was deeper than peace. "Being at one with another, or being in a state of oneness" is how the dictionary defines it--which is certainly the Baha'i concept as well. Then I asked them, based on their answers, what would you say makes unity? Basically all their original contributions were descriptions of virtues. And that is the main point of the lesson: The expression of virtues create unity. We talked about how we can all express virtues in a negative situation to help restore unity or at least prevent things from getting worse.

I presented a vase of multicolored daisies and told them that: "Virtues are to unity what the sun and rain are to flower seeds. Virtues make unity grow and blossom, virtues make unity happen. Unity brings joy and beauty to the world, just as flowers do. Unity is like a beautiful flower garden."

Then I told them that: "All of you can express virtues--when you are about to get into an argument, get upset, when you are not getting along--virtues can make unity."

Then I gave them the unity sticks. This is basically a popsicle stick between 2 large notary seals. The notary seals have the word “unity” written on them and many symbols for unity using stickers. I asked students to try and guess what each sticker meant—for ex. A heart b/c love promotes unity, a dove, roses (virtues, like flowers, bring joy and beauty to the world, and virtues create unity), a rainbow (unity in diversity), stars (when you create unity, it is like bringing light to the darkness), a heart shaped earth with a candle in it (love and unity in the world illuminate the earth spiritually). Its a good idea to remind the kids to handle the sticks gently and not chew on them even if they are on the suggestive popsicle sticks!

Next, we discussed how all virtues can promote unity and that wherever there is disunity, you can bet that one or more virtues is missing. I described things people say and do, and if it increased unity, they were to raise their sticks, if it decreased unity, they were to hide the stick behind their backs. After each action, students were to bring the sticks back to a neutral position, such as centered over their laps, so they could proceed to the next movement. I gave examples such as boasting, rolling eyes when you don’t want a slow person on your team, backbiting, scooting away from someone who sits next to you, handing out valentines to only some people in your class, saying “so what” or saying “how can I help?”, hugging someone who is sad, many examples of manners, etc. I wanted them to see that non-verbal actions can be just as hurtful/pleasing as verbal ones, so one should always be careful what their body/face is saying.

They had no problem ascertaining the unifying behaviors and comments versus the disunifying ones. Then each student gave examples they were familiar with, and we responded accordingly.

I told them that I was going to use puppets to act out various scenes and whenever they saw a puppet expressing a virtue, and thereby promoting unity, they were to raise the unity stick, and whenever they saw the puppet express a behavior that was un-virtuous, that was negative, and thereby jeopardizing unity, they were to put the sticks behind their back to symbolize that the action makes unity disappear. After each action, students were to bring the sticks back to a neutral position, such as centered over their laps, so they could proceed to the next movement.

I also gave them pamphlets which have a list of behaviors and actions which are negative, and likely to create a conflict and disunity or make a conflict worse. Also on these pamphlets is a list of virtues which can heal a conflict and create unity. Using the lists from the pamphlet, students were to verbally specify what virtues were needed/missing in the situation, which negative behavior was being expressed, and if a virtue was expressed, to label it. (I used these pamphlets all the time with my daughters and in my workshops--they are available upon request.)

We pulled the couch out from behind the wall to make like a stage, and I kneeled behind the back. In each skit I ask the students to think of names for the puppets. Here then are the skits the puppets did to demonstrate the power of virtues:

**The Paint Job**
In the 1st one I explain that the 2 puppets who are friends, buy a house together that has only one bedroom. It badly needs a coat of paint. I ask the students to listen as they "discuss" what color to paint the room. Each puppet begins by announcing what color the room is to be painted., (which happened to be the color of the puppet, one was a green frog, the other a yellow creature of some sort.) When the other one objects, wanting to paint the room his favorite color, the argument escalates. Finally, after much haggling and obnoxious behavior, I ask the puppets to stop and ask them what the problem is. Each one accuses the other of having bad taste and blaming him for the conflict. So I ask them to ask the students who is right and to define the problem. The students aptly point out that neither is right and that the problem is that they cannot agree on what color to paint the room. I also ask the students to use their lists from the pamphlets (or their observations if they are not reading,) to explain to the puppets what negative behaviors are preventing them from solving the problem. The children, I am proud to say in both classes, were extremely astute in labeling the negative behaviors of the puppets--which were: demanding, disrespect, insults, forcing, rudeness, yelling, selfishness, stubbornness, inflexibility, and bossiness. Then I asked the students to tell the puppets what virtues would be helpful to solve the problem, and again they were right on the mark: detachment, sacrifice, cooperation, courtesy, respect, flexibility, etc.

So we asked the puppets to redo their discussion using the virtues. They politely asked each other what color they would like the room, and expressed how they wanted each other to be happy, and gently suggested their own favorite color as a possible option. Then I asked the puppets to ask the students for creative alternatives to their problem--and the students were really creative: Mix the 2 colors, do stripes, polka dots, alternate walls, do a mural using both colors, find a 3rd color they both liked, etc.

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

*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

*O people of God! I admonish you to observe courtesy, for above all else it is the prince of virtues. Well is it with him who is illumined with the light of courtesy.... ~Baha'u'llah:* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 88

*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

*Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. ~Baha'u'llah:* Arabic Hidden Words, #68

*Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship. ~Baha'u'llah:* Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 14

*If any differences arise amongst you, behold Me standing before your face, and overlook the faults of one another for My name's sake and as a token of your love for My manifest and resplendent Cause. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 315

*O contending peoples and kindreds of the earth! Set your faces towards unity, and let the radiance of its light shine upon you. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 217

*For the attributes of the people of faith are justice and fair-mindedness; forbearance and compassion and generosity; consideration for others; candor, trustworthiness, and loyalty; love and loving-kindness.... ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Secret of Divine Civilization, page 55

*Our greatest efforts must be directed towards detachment from the things of the world....~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Paris Talks, page 87

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

*Let not your heart be offended with anyone. If some one commits an error and wrong toward you, you must instantly forgive him. Do not complain of others. Refrain from reprimanding them, and if you wish to give admonition or advice, let it be offered in such a way that it will not burden the bearer. Turn all your thoughts toward bringing joy to hearts. Each one must be the servant of the others, thoughtful of their comfort and welfare. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 453

*Your utmost desire must be to confer happiness upon each other. Each one must be the servant of the others, thoughtful of their comfort and welfare..... He must not consider his own pleasure but seek the pleasure of others.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 215

**Hasty Hester**
This one is about a frog who is so skinny that all the pond animals mistake her for a salamander without a tail. She is always getting into quarrels with the other pond creatures b/c she is so cranky due to hunger. I explain that she is plenty fast, but for some reason she is unable to catch flies. So I demonstrate the frog's technique for catching and ask the students what she is doing wrong. Most have figured it out: She leaps for the fly as soon as she sees it, rather than waiting for it to come closer. The fly giggles mockingly at the frog every time she misses it. The kids point out that she needs patience. So I ask the kids to tell the frog to practice patience. So, the next time a fly comes buzzing around, she waits until it is practically on her nose. I make the puppet tremble and gulp as if really struggling with not impulsively going after the fly. She catches it easily, gobbles it up & gently burps. Then I explain that she became so patient that soon she was renamed "Patient Pudgy Patty". We then talk about how easily impatience creates disunity and stress. Kids shared examples of when impatience has caused problems or disunity in their own lives. (The fly was made out of clay and pipe cleaners with plastic eyes. Wings can be cut from shiny paper or mylar.)

*He will, certainly, repay all them that endure with patience and put their confidence in Him. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 239

*Be patient under all conditions, and place your whole trust and confidence in God.*
*~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 296

*He, verily, shall increase the reward of them that endure with patience.*
*~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 129

**The New Ball**
There are 2 sisters, and the youngest sister has just had a birthday and received a brand new ball which she is really thrilled about. She exclaims how happy she is about her new bright pink, high bouncing ball, and that it is "all mine". Then her older sister appears and comments on what a nice ball her sister has, who then forcibly exclaims that it is hers alone. Next I ask the students what the older sister wants. (To shift the student's identification with the younger sister to the older). And then I say "Lets see." Sure enough, the older sister politely requests to play with the ball. But her younger sister is really possessive

and adamantly shouts “No way”!-- the ball is all hers and no one can touch it! Then I ask the students what negative behaviors the younger sister is displaying (selfishness, rudeness, yelling, inflexibility, etc.) I ask the students how the older sister feels, and what would make her happy. They of course are now identifying wholeheartedly with the older sister and know that to play with the ball would bring her joy. So I ask the students to ask the younger sister to let the older sister play with the ball with her. The younger sister struggles and finally agrees. They both then have a really good time tossing the ball back and forth, and the younger sister realizes that playing with someone is more fun than playing alone. Then I ask the students how the puppets both feel now, and what virtues helped create this feeling. (detachment, sharing, caring, unselfishness, etc.)

I end the show by asking kids to think of what might be the moral lesson in this simple puppet show—after some dialogue, they do figure it out—that sharing brings unity and joy to both the recipient and the giver.

*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

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

*Your utmost desire must be to confer happiness upon each other. Each one must be the servant of the others, thoughtful of their comfort and welfare..... He must not consider his own pleasure but seek the pleasure of others.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 215

*Our greatest efforts must be directed towards detachment from the things of the world..... ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Paris Talks, page 87

## 4 Mini-Puppet Shows about Virtues & Unity

Like the 3 above, these puppet shows are also designed to clarify the understanding that the expression of virtues are essential to creating unity.

I did 4 mini puppet shows to illustrate to the kids what I wanted them to do with their puppets: create a simple situation in which the characters express negative behaviors and show the consequences, and then redo the situation with virtues from the virtues list, and show how that affects the outcome.

The students again were given the unity sticks to be used as indicators for virtues which create unity and for actions which lead to disunity. They were also given the pamphlets used above which contain 2 lists: behaviors and actions which are likely to create disunity or make a conflict worse and virtues which can heal a conflict and create unity. After each action, I stop the scene and ask the students to label the virtues and the negative behaviors expressed using the pamphlets as a reference. (See *3 Puppet Shows about Virtues and Unity*, introduction, above, for description of unity sticks and pamphlets).

**The Accidental Bump**
*The first skit is about an accidental collision. Puppet 1 is admiring some geese flying in the sky and accidentally bumps into puppet 2.*

In scene one puppet 1 says "excuse me!" (Kids raise sticks, I ask what virtue was shown--courtesy, etc). Puppet 2 calls her a name and gets hostile. (Kids hide sticks, I ask what negative behavior was shown--insult, rudeness, unforgiving, and anger). Puppet 1 hangs her head.

In scene two, puppet 1 says excuse me, (courtesy) puppet 2 shoves her (revenge, anger, rudeness, unforgiving) Puppet 1 retaliates and a cycle of aggression begins.

In scene three, Puppet 1 says "sorry!" (courtesy, apologizing), puppet 2 says "that's okay, are you all right?" (forgiveness, caring)

**The Bad Mood**
*In the second skit I explain that a girl (puppet 1) is in a terrible mood at school--her parents were fighting that morning and she got in trouble with them too. Puppet 1's friend, puppet 2, has just caused their team to lose a spelling bee.*

In scene one, puppet 1 calls him stupid and berates him for causing the team to lose, (put down, blaming, anger) Puppet 2 calls her a name back (revenge). They begin a name calling fight.

In scene two, puppet 1 calls puppet 2 stupid and he tries very hard to not call her a name and then tells her how it makes him feel instead, (self control, honesty, courage). Puppet 1 then apologizes, which showed humility. (I pointed out that it does not always happen like this in real life--but that calling a name back almost always makes the conflict worse. Sharing feelings with an aggressor is iffy-they may just use it against you.)

In scene three, puppet 1 calls puppet 2 a name, and puppet 2 immediately says "hey what's wrong with you today, you seem really upset about something?" (caring, selflessness)

**The New Toy**
*In skit three, puppet 1 has a new toy that she is totally thrilled with.(We have made it hilarious by making the new toy one of the children in the class which the puppet fawns over and "plays" with. Can choose new "toy" for scene 2).*

In scene one, puppet 1 talks about how she has this toy and no one else does, how great it is, etc., (self-exaltation, boasting). Puppet 2 demands to play with it, when she says no, he says he won't ever play with her again, she still refuses, and so he then snatches the coveted item. (demanding, threatening, grabbing) They then fight over the toy.

In scene two, puppet 1 exclaims how happy she is with her new toy (joy). Puppet 2 asks "may I please play with your new toy?" (courtesy). Puppet 1 says No, because she just got it an hour ago, but that he could play with it later, (sharing) Puppet 2 says "ok, I'll go read a book," (patience, detachment).

**Left Out**
*In skit four, puppets 1 & 2 are whispering, giggling and clearly enjoying each other's company. Puppet 3 is watching and looks lonely.*

In scene one, puppets 1 & 2 deliberately ignore puppet 3, (excluding, unkind). Puppet 3 asks to play with them. They say no. So puppet 3 insists loudly (demanding), then starts to whine (whining) and finally yells that if they won't play with him, he is going to beat them up, (threats, yelling, aggression). Puppets 1 & 2 quickly leave, and he is left alone.

In scene two, puppets 1 and 2 notice that puppet 3 is all by himself. They immediately invite him to play with them (kindness, including). Puppet 2 exclaims his pleasure at the invitation and says "thanks!" (courtesy, gratitude).

After this I split the students into groups, usually pairing older with younger and they had to design their own puppet-skit. The rules were that there could be no violence, the virtues had to outnumber the negative behaviors, and that the negative behavior could not be extreme or unrealistic. (I have seen skits without these rules disintegrate into mayhem and be of no educational value!) Kids were asked not to do variations of the themes already done such as exclusion, sharing issues, name calling, etc. So for the next half hour, In teams of 2 and 3, the students chose one or more negative behaviors and counteracting virtues to build a skit around.

We pulled out the couch away from the wall for a stage for the puppeteers to crouch behind. I gave them about 20 minutes to develop these shows. They all did a fantastic job and each skit displayed many virtues and were really enjoyable to watch. After each skit, students labeled the negative/disunifying and

virtuous/unity building behaviors exhibited by the puppets. I really want the virtues to become deeply embedded in their consciousness' so they can call them forth under a variety of circumstances. I also want them to become keenly aware of what behaviors create disunity so they can instantly recognize them in their own actions and correct themselves.

All of the negative behaviors and virtues in these mini-puppet skits are quite familiar to children—the kids have either expressed these virtues or negative behaviors themselves or they have been the recipients of them. I sincerely hope that students become very aware of these behaviors in their own life and of their power to create or destroy unity.

## Together (M)

Pantomime-dance to encourage unity and cooperation.

This delightful song is by a Baha'i named Nancy Ward from her *We Want to Grow Up* recording. It is really upbeat, fast and playful, and kids can't resist moving to it. I can't find the recording on the internet—but I did have it transferred from tape to CD and could send you a copy since it is no longer available.

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

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

*It behoveth you to seek agreement and to be united; it behoveth you to be in close communion one with the other, at one both in body and soul, till ye match.....a string of lustrous pearls. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 86

First gather the group in a circle. You assign pairs or have kids choose numbers or pictures out of a hat in which you have placed pairs of every number or picture. Matching numbers or pictures become pairs. This avoids the unpleasant situation of a child not being chosen by anyone and forces tight friends to get to know others.

Explain to the kids that they will stay in the circle until the end of the song. They can dance in place when they are not doing their specified actions. They will be ants carrying a heavy load, 2 birds singing, the sun and moon, and everyone will get on one or 2 pretend toboggan sleds and pretend to go down a hill. Ask pairs to choose ahead of time which one will do which action. Here are the lyrics and movements that we do:

Two ants boogying down the road, carrying such a heavy load *(kids hold up and wiggle fore fingers to make antennas on their heads)*

One she pushed, the other he pulled, they did it together *(one makes pushing movements with her hands, the other pulling—in the same direction, for the word "together" they hold 1 pair of hands and raise them up)*

Two birds singing on the fence, their songs don't seem to make much sense *(both pretend to form beaks with one hand held up to mouth, open and closing with thumb against all 4 fingers together)*

One is a crow, and the other a sparrow, they tweeted together *(child makes cawing sound, the other tweeting, for the word "together" they hold 1 pair of hands and raise them up)*

CHORUS:

Sing a song to cheer your heart, to help you when you come apart *(unstructured dance for chorus)*

Sing it loud and sing it long, soon everybody will sing along

(end of chorus)

The sun and the moon, they share the sky, watching all the clouds go by *(one child forms large circle with arms for sun, the other uses his arms to form crescent moon by placing palms together and bending elbows to side)*

One in the daytime, the other the nighttime, *(child playing moon closes eyes during daytime, sun closes eyes during nighttime, each pop open eyes for their proper time)*

They boogie together *(twosomes hold 1 pair of hands and raise them up)*

CHORUS

Two kids tobogganing down the hill, one named Zach, and the other named Lil

*(Whole group gets down on floor—if really big group form more than one line. It is important to choose child(ren) before the song begins who will be first in line if more than one line. This song moves fast and there is not time to be picky about placement, as children often are. If there is only one line, I suggest you as the teacher is in front b/c you can then be seen by all and lead the actions. Also before the song, point out where the front of the toboggan will be and which direction riders should face. Demonstrate with a few kids how everybody sits down with their legs around the person in front, as in riding a long sled.*

*Whenever riders hear the line "they boogie together" they are to hold both their partners' hands up high, like roller coaster riders do, except pairs are connected. Then they lower it for the next time the line is sung. If partner order got messed up in the hurry to form the sled, then kids should just hold the hands of the person in front of them. Or everybody can just hold hands up continually, or not at all and hold onto the waist or shoulders of the one in front—whatever works for your group. After the lyrics below, at the end of the song, there is an ample section that is open ended and really funny. During this time I encourage all the sled-riders to pretend to sway back and forth as if going around curves, raise up a bit as if going over bumps, make appropriate weeeeeee! sounds, sing etc. You may or may not want to go over this section with the kids before the song).*

One is a Cajun, the other Canadian
They boogie together
One's a punk rocker, the other like's soccer,
They boogie together
One is an Alien, the other Australian
They boogie together
One is E.T. and the other is me
Let's boogie together!

## To Everyone in all the World (M)

A dance activity promoting international friendship.

This song comes from Raffi's *Baby Beluga* recording. It is great for an Ayyam-i-Ha party with the theme of World Unity. (Raffi has another great song on this recording called "All I Really Need" which I also have actions for. But I don't use it much and its not in this document, b/c I can't agree with and teach children that all they really need is love, food, water, etc.—they need God and Baha'u'llah too! However, if you are interested in using "All I Really Need" in a secular setting, call me and I will give you the simple actions and dialogue that goes with this delightful song.)

*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. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 288

*Consort with all men, O people of Baha, in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship.*
*~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 289

*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, page 334

*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

*The advent of the prophets and the revelation of the Holy Books is intended to create love between souls and friendship between the inhabitants of the earth.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Baha'i World Faith, page 364

*If you desire with all your heart, friendship with every race on earth, your thought, spiritual and positive, will spread; it will become the desire of others, growing stronger and stronger, until it reaches the minds of all men.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Paris Talks, pages 29-30

I first encourage the participants in their daily lives to seek out and befriend those that are different from themselves to promote world unity. I say that one way we do this here in the U.S. is to shake hands and introduce ourselves. Then I say something like this:

"In this song, you will shake hands with many different people and say your name. Try to shake hands with as many different people as you can. If you already know each other's name, you can just smile knowingly, instead of saying your name. Whenever the singer says *To everyone in all the world, I reach my hand, I shake their hand,* or *I shake my hand like this,* or *we can shake hands,* you find someone to shake hands with. Then you link elbows, *facing in opposite directions*, and skip in a circle together. If you want you can even switch directions by switching linked elbows like they do in country dancing. Have any of you ever been to a square or contra dance? Well, one of the moves in this dance comes from country dancing. "

(Then I ask a child to come up and demonstrate with me the actions I just described. First we shake hands, say our names, then skip in a circle with linked elbows, then switch directions. Then I mention that the song also goes into French, and the dancers should listen for "la main" and "de main" explaining that "main" means hand. (It's pronounced me, with a short e, as it "let".) When they hear "la/de main" they should also shake hands and link up. Often what happens, even during the English portion of the song, is that everybody just shakes and links throughout the song, not bothering to wait for the cues. As long as they are having fun, that's OK too.)

Lyrics for To Everyone in all the World:

To everyone in all the world,
I reach my hand, I shake their hand.
To everyone in all the world,
I shake my hand like this.

All, all together,
the whole wide world around.
I may not know their lingo,
but I can say by jingo.
No matter where you live,
we can shake hands

French part—I think, based on my very feeble French, that at least the first French stanza says the same as above, but I am not sure about the second stanza. However, I do know for sure that both stanzas have the word “hand” in them.

A tous et chacun dans le monde
Je tends la main, je l’eur donne la main
A tous et chacun dans le monde
Je donne la main comme ca

Tous tous ensemble au monde entier je chante
C’est tres facile entre humains
Avec une poignee de main
N’importe ou dans le monde on peut s’entendre

## Touch a Hand, Make a Friend (M)

Perfect activity for warming up a crowd and making connections between folks. It also has a good dance beat.
This wonderful song is by Kids on the Block. Like the song above, (*To Everyone in all the World*) we use it at our Ayyam-i-Ha party with the theme of world unity. The exact same quotes from above also apply to this activity/song. The song is no longer available from Kids on the Block, but they told me it was fairly faithful to the original 1974 version done by the Staple Singers which is available from Amazon as a MP3 download. http://www.amazon.com/Touch-Hand-Make-Friend/dp/B000U8KIZO

Ask the crowd to form one or more circles. No more than 20-25 per circle is about right. Explain that we are going to make new friends in this activity. Whenever the musician says: “Touch a hand, make a friend”, we are all to *step* (not lunge, as some active young ones tend to do!) into the center of the circle and reach out both hands and touch someone else’s. We should make eye contact and smile, and try to touch the hands of someone different every time. After touching, raise both arms up high and step back to reform the circle. It looks like a giant flower opening. Lower arms when circle is reformed. I also encourage people to groove to the music in the circle, between actions.

It is important to demonstrate what you mean with a group of 5 or so volunteers. Basically its like the arms form the spokes on a wheel when lowered to reach and touch. As people step back and raise both arms up in the air, it looks really neat. I won’t list the words here b/c they come with the music and the only phrase that has a structured action is the “Touch a hand, make a friend”.

## Isn’t it Wonderful? (M)

Pantomime movements to lyrics about oneness and spirituality.

This is a slow and tender song by well known Baha’i musicians, Jean Marks and Susan Engle. It is on their *Loving Hands* recording. Nice beginning or ending activity for group bonding.

We discussed what the sun might represent in this song, and what some of the lines could mean in a practical way. Then I presented some of these quotes and we discussed them briefly. A nice touch, but not essential, is to give each participant a heart shaped mirror to tape over their hearts. You can make these with mylar from a craft store, or even cut up those shiny reflective disposable trays for parties and weddings—but they are thicker.

*Ye are all the leaves of one tree and the drops of one ocean.*
*~Baha'u'llah:* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 129

*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:* Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 14

*Your souls are as waves on the sea of the spirit; although each individual is a distinct wave, the ocean is one, all are united in God.....*
*Every heart should radiate unity, so that the Light of the one Divine Source of all may shine forth bright and luminous.....The spirit is as one great ocean and the waves thereof are the souls of men. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Paris Talks, page 84

*.....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 whites and blacks; all are as one. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* The Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 425

*I hope that you will turn with unclouded eyes towards the Sun of Truth.....*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Paris Talks, page 44

*May you receive the clear vision of the Holy Spirit, so that your hearts may be illumined and able to recognize the Sun of Truth shining through all material clouds, His splendour flooding the universe. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Paris Talks, page 45

*Therefore, I hope that.....you will strive with heart and soul in order that day by day the world of humanity may become glorified, more spiritual, more sanctified; and that the splendor of the Sun of Reality may be revealed fully in human hearts as in a mirror. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 59

Here are the words and actions. Start by having the group sitting in a circle on the floor:

CHORUS:

Isn't it wonderful we're here together? *(Everybody places arms around each other's shoulders or holds hands—which ever works best for your group)*

Isn't it wonderful to see the sun? *(hold fingers as if making eyeglasses around eyes, then gradually open fingers, raise hands and arms to form a big circle, indicating the sun , arcing arms back down to side)*

Isn't it wonderful our hearts are open? *(have hands over heart then open them as if a gate)*

Take my hand my hand my friend, for we are one *(everybody holds hands and holds them up, either grasping or palms flat against neighbors' flat palm)*

(end of chorus)

Let us all forget the past *(shake head once as draw flattened hand with thumb touching one's chest to almost behind oneself, straightening arm in process, as if in a salute--- but not from head, from mid torso instead)*

Let us clear our eyes to see the dawn *(rub or wipe eyes)*

And turn the mirrors of our hearts *(base of hands on each side of heart, as in open gate)*

continually to the sun *(raise hands and form circle/sun with arms)*

CHORUS

## Testing Steadfastness

Dramatic Game

*Such must be thy steadfastness in the Cause of God, that no earthly thing whatsoever will have the power to deter thee from thy duty....., though all men dispute with thee, thou must remain unshaken. ~Baha'u'llah*: Gleanings, page 339

First we discussed how most of the Baha'i Temples and Shrines have many stairs leading up to them. I showed them pictures of the terraces on Mt. Carmel in Israel, with their majestic fountains, gardens, and lights. Each of the 19 terraces is connected by a flight of about 70 stairs. We talked about the possible symbolic meaning of this; such as ascending spiritually, loftiness, the effort it takes to be near God, striving towards the "realms on high", etc. All the worlds' religions have used the metaphor of heights and ascension to describe spiritual growth and nearness to God.

*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

*Supremely lofty will be thy station, if thou remainest steadfast in the Cause of thy Lord. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 246

Steadfastness is a treasure that makes a man so rich as to have no need of the world or any person or any thing that is therein. Constancy is a special joy, that leads us mortals on to lofty heights, great progress, and the winning of the perfections of Heaven.
~Shoghi Effendi: Bahiyyih Khanum, page 148

We talked about the higher and lower nature, and how when you are steadfast in your faith, you are obeying your _____? (higher nature), and when you are breaking spiritual laws or being un-virtuous, you are obeying your _____? (lower nature). (See *Higher VS Lower Nature Role Plays* for relevant quotes). Then I showed them the mask I was going to wear to symbolize the lower nature—a devil. —(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).

Then I told them that they would be playing the game on my front porch—which has lots of stairs. The porch represented our religion and its laws. They were to demonstrate steadfastness by staying *up high* on the top of the porch and not descending towards the lower nature—me. We also placed silk flower heads all along the bottom stair to emphasize the furthermost boundary of their Faith. The flowers thus visually marked the point which if crossed over, would mean they blew it by giving in to the lower nature. I pointed out how Baha'u'llah often used the metaphor of the garden to symbolize His Revelation, or a high station spiritually. (See Persian Hidden Words, #s, 18, 34, & 39, and Prayers and Meditations page 160.)

I showed them a kitchen timer and emphatically warned them that only when the timer went off, was the game over, no matter what. I also told them that although I would not hurt them and use unfair force, I would go after them, so they better cling to the railings and to each other for support—and help those who may be getting carried away. Players were informed that they could not attack or grab the lower nature in any way. Baha'u'llah uses the metaphor of cleaving and clinging, and holding fast to His laws and teachings to represent steadfastness. There are literally hundreds of quotations which use the words of cling, cleave, and hold fast. Here are few:

*I will recompense whosoever will cleave unto Me, and recognize My rank and station, and hold fast unto My hem. I am the most great ornament of the people of Baha, and the vesture of glory unto all who are in the kingdom of creation. I am the supreme instrument for the prosperity of the world, and the horizon of assurance unto all*

*beings. Thus have We sent down for thee that which will draw men nigh unto the Lord of creation ~Baha'u'llah:* Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, pages 136-137

*We exhort the loved ones of God to perform good deeds that perchance they may be graciously assisted and may hold fast to that which hath been sent down from the heaven of His Revelation. The benefits arising from this divine utterance shall fall upon such as observe His precepts. ~Baha'u'llah:* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, pages 131-132

*Cling ye to the hem of virtue, and hold fast to the cord of trustworthiness and piety. 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

So with the students positioned on the front porch, I set the timer, put the mask on, and began to test their ability to remain steadfast. I tried every trick in the book to get them to come down off the porch: I told them I would tell their parents they were bad in class if they did not, I told them the game was over (before the timer went off—it was set for 10 minutes), I told them they were scared babies, that it was only a game. Then I tempted them with a *Lord of the Rings* DVD, saying that whoever came down could have it, then I tried a real $ 20.00 bill, then marshmallows. I placed the bag of marshmallows on the walkway and pretended to walk away, but hid out of sight behind bushes—they did come to the edge of the stairs at that point, and I leapt out and roared and tried to grab a few. I even went after them, but they vigorously clung to the railings. I did manage to come dashing up and grab a few who were not holding on, but as I had hoped, others all grabbed that student and pulled him/her back to safety. I pulled off some of their shoes and pretended to throw them away—to get them to come after it. One student had come late, so his lunch was placed on the walkway while he played the game. I seized it with glee and opened it and went on and on about how good it looked. Then I spotted my dog, and called her over, and said how much she would like that bologna sandwich. The owner of the lunch was in agony—I think in the dramatic spirit, however. He came very close to leaving the lofty garden of Faith to rescue his lunch, but the other students persuaded him not to.

Later we talked about how community can give us support and strength in times of tests, about how people break spiritual laws for all sorts of reasons, how what is a severe temptation to you might not be to others, how physical pleasure—(for example the marshmallows) can be someone's downfall. (Baha'u'llah often refers to these as our carnal desires.) Also, I pointed out how materialism is one of the big tests. .....*with fire We test the gold, and with gold We test Our servants. ~Baha'u'llah:* Arabic Hidden Words, # 55. This game was really fun, and they asked to play it again—which is always a confirmation that it went well.

About DVD's or videos: The second time I played this, it was with a group of 19 kids, ages 7-12. I had called my local Block Buster video rental store and explained the game. I asked if they could donate any empty cases of DVD's that were popular with this age group. The employee was amused and extremely helpful. He not only provided me with 6 popular choices, he shrink wrapped them for me, and gave me a play station box with other boxes inside it for weight. The students were drooling over these items. I lined them up on the walkway, like stepping stones, with a marshmallow on top of each one. Some kids did come down and snatch them. But boy did they get a graphic lesson when they opened them—empty! And then I gave 4 marshmallows to all those that restrained themselves. The empty containers reminded me of this quote:

*The world is but a show, vain and empty, a mere nothing, bearing the semblance of reality. Set not your affections upon it. Break not the bond that uniteth you with your Creator, and be not of those that have erred and strayed from His ways. Verily I say, the world is like the vapor in a desert, which the thirsty dreameth to be water and*

*striveth after it with all his might, until when he cometh unto it, he findeth it to be mere illusion. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, pages 328-329

*(See Wily Wanda activity for more relevant quotes on steadfastness.)*

For our *Life after Death* unit, I used the following additional quotes in conjunction with *Testing Steadfastness:*

*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

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)

*Variation for lesson plan on being steadfast in the Covenant:*

These quotes were used:

*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 Splendours.....~Abdu'l-Baha,* Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 259

*O ye beloved of God, know that steadfastness and firmness in this new and wonderful Covenant is indeed the spirit that quickeneth the hearts which are overflowing with the love of the Glorious Lord; verily, it is the power which penetrates into the hearts of the people of the world! Your Lord hath assuredly promised His servants who are firm and steadfast to render them victorious at all times, to exalt their word, propagate their power, diffuse their lights, strengthen their hearts.....,brighten their stars, increase the abundance of the showers of mercy upon them, and enable the brave lions to conquer. ~Abdu'l-Baha,* Baha'i World Faith, p. 357

First we discussed how most of the Baha'i Temples and Shrines have many stairs leading up to them. I showed them pictures of the terraces on Mt. Carmel in Israel, with their majestic fountains, gardens, and lights. Each of the 19 terraces is connected by a flight of about 70 stairs. We talked about the possible symbolic meaning of this; such as ascending spiritually, loftiness, the effort it takes to be near God, striving towards the "realms on high", etc. All the worlds' religions have used the metaphor of heights and ascension to describe spiritual growth and nearness to God.

*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

*Supremely lofty will be thy station, if thou remainest steadfast in the Cause of thy Lord. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 246

We talked about the higher and lower nature, and how when you are steadfast in your faith, you are obeying your _____? (higher nature), and when you are breaking spiritual laws or being un-virtuous, you are obeying your _____? (lower nature). . Then I showed them the mask I was going to wear to symbolize the lower nature—a devil. —(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).

Then I told them that they would be playing the game on my front porch—which has lots of stairs. The porch represented the fortress of the Covenant:

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

The students were to demonstrate steadfastness by staying *up high* on the top of the porch and not descending towards the lower nature—me. We also placed a thick golden-orange cord across the railings of the bottom stair to emphasize the furthermost boundary of the covenant. The cord thus visually marked the point which if crossed over, would mean they blew it by giving in to the lower nature. The players could go under or over it, if they chose.

.....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)

I showed them a kitchen timer and emphatically warned them that only when the timer went off, was the game over, no matter what. I also told them that although I would not hurt them and use unfair force, I would go after them, so they better cling to the railings and to each other for support—and help those who may be getting carried away. Players were informed that they could not attack or grab the lower nature in any way. Baha'u'llah uses the metaphor of cleaving and clinging, and holding fast to His laws and teachings to represent steadfastness. There are literally hundreds of quotations which use the words of cling, cleave, and hold fast.

So with the students positioned on the front porch, I set the timer, put the mask on, and began to test their ability to remain steadfast. I tried every trick in the book to get them to come down off the porch: I told them I would tell their parents they were bad in class if they did not, I told them the game was over (before the timer went off—it was set for 10 minutes), I told them they were scared babies, and that it was only a game. Then I tempted them with a real $ 20.00 bill, saying that whoever came down could have it, (but being the lower nature, I would naturally deceive them). I placed a bag of marshmallows on the walkway and pretended to walk away, but hid out of sight behind bushes—they did come to the edge of the stairs at that point, and I leapt out and roared and tried to grab a few kids. I even went after them, but they vigorously clung to the railings. I did manage to come dashing up and grab a few who were not holding on, but as I had hoped, others all grabbed that student and pulled him/her back to safety. I then lined up single marshmallows very close to the border of the "Fortress" which could be snatched if one just stepped a few feet away from the corded edge. I also used chocolate Truffles for those who have a weakness for chocolate. I pulled off some of their shoes and pretended to throw them away—to get them to come after it. Before the game I had stealthily nabbed some of their personal belongings and stashed them in the bushes near the porch. With great fanfare, I presented the items with glee and went on and on about how they were now mine. Some came very close to leaving the lofty "Fortress of the Covenant" to rescue their possession, but the other students persuaded them not to.

I also lined 4 very attractive gift boxes along the walkway, like stepping stones. Some kids did come down and snatch them. But boy did they get a graphic lesson when they opened them—empty! The empty containers reminded me of this quote:

*The world is but a show, vain and empty, a mere nothing, bearing the semblance of reality. Set not your affections upon it. Break not the bond that uniteth you with your Creator, and be not of those that have erred and strayed from His ways. Verily I say, the world is like the vapor in a desert, which the thirsty dreameth to be water and striveth after it with all his might, until when he cometh unto it, he findeth it to be mere illusion. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, pages 328-329

A few students, despite the efforts of their companions to dissuade them, also just had to show that they could out-maneuver me. They did manage to snatch a single chocolate or a single marshmallow, even though I threatened them that they would be "*afflicted with regret and loss*". (*~Abdu'l-Baha,* Tablets of the Divine Plan, p. 51, referring to those who violate the Covenant). So when the drama ended, all who stayed in the Fortress of the Covenant, within the bounds of the Cord of the Covenant, got 4 marshmallows and 2 chocolates. The others, who had triumphantly & arrogantly stuffed their ill-gotten loot of one marshmallow or one chocolate into their mouths in front of all the others, were then very remorseful. They were not given more treats, however.

After the game we debriefed: We talked about how community can give us support and strength in times of tests, about how people break spiritual laws for all sorts of reasons, how what is a severe temptation to you might not be to others, how physical pleasure—(for example the marshmallows) can be someone's downfall. (Baha'u'llah often refers to these as our carnal desires.) We also discussed how those who left the fortress for a small reward, lost out in the long run. This is a metaphor for life ---those who live life for instant gratification and short term gain, often end up suffering later on in life and certainly do not reap the eternal spiritual benefits of detachment, patience, trustworthiness, steadfastness, etc.

## Kindness to Animals (M)

Dancing, pantomime, and making sounds to a song.

The song is called "Animals" on the *We Want to Grow Up* cassette by Nancy Ward, a Baha'i musician. One can purchase it through www.bahaibookstore.com. Some children played people, and some played animals, using noses to signify their species. (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, any animal nose. Kids choose blindly and for the first round they are whichever nose they chose—animal or human.) During the song, kids switched roles. When the words to the song said "we treat them with kindness" kids pet the "animals" and the animals also rubbed noses together. When the words said "show them our love" the kids hugged the animals. It's a fun and danceable tune and a good opportunity to be silly. (Also, kids really appreciate having a mirror to see how they look. The noses can be found at costume shops and www.orientaltrading.com, or phone 800-228-2269. Item # IN-25/976. They also have really neat foam animal ½ masks for about $5.00 a dozen. Item # KF-25/1340 and set 2 is KF-25/1520).

## Kindness to Animals Skits

First, we discussed the following 3 quotes:

*...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. Ye should most carefully bear this matter in mind.*
*~Abdu'l-Baha*: Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 160

*If an animal be sick, let the children try to heal it, if it be hungry, let them feed it, if thirsty, let them quench its thirst, if weary, let them see that it rests.*
*~Abdu'l-Baha*: Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 159

*.....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

I assigned the students into groups of 2 or 3 and asked them to develop a skit which shows kindness or respect to animals, other than watering, grooming, feeding or helping an injured or sick one. Some of the groups needed some assistance thinking of ideas. I encouraged them to think in terms of:

*Affection, habitat preservation, enhancing an animal's environment such as giving a dog a pillow or warm clean straw for his house, protection from poachers, hazardous waste, and animal predators, rescuing an animal from a trap, finding the home of a lost animal or finding or providing a home for an abandoned or orphaned animal, protecting from the cruelty of another child, reporting abuse or neglect, removing an animal from harm's way—like a turtle on the bike path, making sure an animal had its vaccinations and a clean cage, volunteering at an animal shelter*, etc.

One skit showed a rather callous and impatient owner walking/dragging a dog on a leash that was limping and whimpering. Another child, points out the limp and tenderly removes a thorn from the dog's paw. Another skit was an owner coming home from being gone all day and being greeted by a clearly desperate-to-go out dog, but the human is really hungry. The scene was frozen and the audience got to see the consequences of 2 different choices: In one, the owner laments how hungry she is, but still takes the dog out and is affectionate, then comes in and makes herself a sandwich. In the second scene, the owner puts her own needs first and shoos the desperate dog away so she can make her own food. Just when she's about to eat, she smells something funny coming from the other room, which the neglected dog had moments earlier retreated to. It is poop of course-- (the kids had fun making it out of brown playdoh.) Other scenes showed owners taking dogs for walk in the pouring rain and sacrificing an outing with a friend so his dog could be walked. Kids enjoyed using props and animal noses.

After the skits, I wanted to magnify the kids' awareness of the many ways that humans can help and show kindness to animals. Thus, I shared and we discussed examples of the ways listed above (in italics) that were not addressed in their particular skits. We went into details about how to do some of these acts of kindness and service, such as elaborating on various ways to protect wildlife through cleaning and protecting their habitats, who to call if you find a sick or injured wild animal, etc. We also talked about poaching and how poverty and/or greed are motivators.

## Kindness to Humanity Skits

*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

*To act like the beasts of the field is unworthy of man. Those virtues that befit his dignity are forbearance, mercy, compassion and loving-kindness towards all the peoples and kindreds of the earth. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 215

*Be kind to all peoples; care for every person;.... strive ye to gladden every soul.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, pages 244-245

*It is your duty to be exceedingly kind to every human being 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

*Care for the stranger as for one of your own; show to alien souls the same loving kindness ye bestow upon your faithful friends. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 34

*.....let your heart burn with loving kindness for all who may cross your path.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha,* Paris Talks, page 15

In groups of 2-4, children were to create a very short pantomime that demonstrated an act of kindness, and the rest of us were to guess what the act was when they were done. I asked the kids to *not* perform the following scenarios b/c it would be too easy to guess, and I also wanted them to stretch their notion of ways to express kindness—and these scenarios are too common already: Sharing of money, object or food and tending to someone who is sick or injured. So kids acted out sending/receiving an invitation to a party, helping someone find something, offering affection to someone who was sad, etc.

A version of this was also done at our local elementary public school in anticipation of a Red Grammer concert at the school. The lyrics to his song "Kindness" from his *Be Bop Your Best* CD were read and small groups kids were asked to come up with a still photograph illustrating one of the scenes depicted by the lyrics. The class also brainstormed on other ways to show kindness or acts of kindness the students had actually done or witnessed. These too were allowed as subject matter for the photo shoot. Kids got to choose the scene they were most attracted to. We just asked that they avoid using caring for the injured and sick and sharing an object since those were too obvious and easy; we wanted the students to grow in their awareness of how they could show kindness in their daily lives. We also asked that the scenes be of actions that are realistic that they can actually perform in real life. Props were brought in by the students after their first consultation on what their scene would depict. The scenes were created and then a digital camera was used to take actual photos. (Some scenes required a sequence of 3 photos and/or word balloons in order to be interpreted accurately). These photos were then enlarged, printed and put on display on mat boards in the school hallway, with corresponding lyrics from the song or a descriptive sentence. A poster containing the entire lyrics to the song was also posted. (Scrap mat board can often be obtained for free or very low cost from framing businesses.) Another option if you have the resources, is to put these photos on a power point program, and the whole school or a grade can gather in a main room and listen to the song as the photos are being flashed on a screen. It would be ideal if the scenes that match particular lyrics appeared when those lyrics are sung.

Another song that would go great with these skits is "That is a Mighty Power" by Vitamin L on their *Everyone's Invited* cassette.

## Sharing and Generosity Scenario

(For a puppet show about sharing and generosity see "3 Puppet Shows about Virtues and Unity", *The New Ball* and the role play called *"The Flood".)*

I announced that today's class we would be studying the virtues of sharing and generosity. Then we played a sort of virtue guessing game: I asked them to list all the virtues they thought were possibly shown in an act of generosity or sharing. They had fun naming as many as possible. This was the list they came up with—and I made them give an example if the virtue was not obviously related:

Moderation, friendliness, fairness, flexibility, self-control (controlling one's selfishness), respect, caring, wisdom, detachment, kindness, patience, and sacrifice.

Then I asked them to give examples of all the ways we can share and be generous—focusing on categories: time, things/toys, food, money, with our friends by not being possessive and jealous of them, service, sharing a burden or workload, and sharing parents with siblings. And more: to share and be generous with our love and affection, share and be generous with our virtues, and to share and be generous with no expectation of reward or of anything in return.

Then I did a skit with them. I explained that we were all school children and my house was a school in a remote part of Alaska. During school our remote village school area got hit with a massive and sudden, unsuspected snow blizzard. We have been trapped in the school for 3 days, and help will be arriving by helicopter in another day or so. We have eaten up all the food in the school kitchen and storage closets and have not had any thing to eat for a day and a half. We melt snow for water, but have searched high and low for any snacks in drawers and cabinets, but to no avail. I tell them we are all weak and tired, but that I am still searching. I discover a can of unopened honey roasted peanuts and gleefully cheer about it but then run off to another room, lock the door, and eat the whole thing myself. When I come out the can is empty (I had an empty one stashed in that room), and I talk about how yummy and satisfying it was.

Then I process with the kids, using questions and answers about what just happened, how it made them feel, and what are the possible consequences of my behavior. We talk about how I clearly demonstrated extreme selfishness and greediness, how I put myself first, how tacky it was for me to discuss how good it tasted. We talked about how it would effect my ability to have friends, and if I ever forgot my lunch, nobody would want to share with me. I emphasized how selfishness hurts everybody—including the one being selfish.

Then we replayed the scene—and as soon as I found the can, I offered it to every one in the room, serving all others before myself, asking if the amount I poured in their hands was enough, etc. We then processed that behavior, and all the virtues it showed: caring, consideration, thoughtfulness, generosity, etc.

*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

*..... 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

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

*Our greatest efforts must be directed towards detachment from the things of the world..... ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Paris Talks, page 87

## The Difference Between Sharing and Generosity

This activity consists of 4 mini-skits to demonstrate how generosity always involves sharing of some sort, but sharing does not always involve generosity. Generosity is what makes sharing truly meaningful. I point out that generosity is unifying, and selfishness creates disunity. For each skit, I asked for a student volunteer.

In the first scene, I have a piece of bread. As I am about to eat it, the student volunteer explains that she has lost her lunch and asks me for some. I say: "sure" and hand them an itty bitty piece, slightly larger than a crumb. I ask the class: "Did I share?" Most say "yes," which is correct. Then I ask: "But was I generous?" They all say "No."

For the next scene I hold up a piece of stale moldy bread and say: "Yuck, I think I better throw this out." The student then says he has forgot his lunch and asks me if they can have some bread and I say: "sure!"

So I give him the entire piece of the stale bread and keep the good piece for myself. I ask the class: "Did I share? (yes) but was I generous?" (No). I pointed out that we are not being generous when we share something that has little or no value to us.

In the next scene, I have a ball. The student asks if she can play with it. I say yes and give it to her. But then a few seconds later I take it back saying that time is up. Again, I ask if I shared, but was I generous?

In the last scene, the student asks if he can play with the ball, and I give it to him but firmly instruct him that he cannot bounce, throw or kick it, and he can only hold it with 2 hands and this far above the ground. Again the question was put whether I shared, but was I generous? I explained that we are not generous if we are too controlling with our gifts and if we put too many conditions on the use of an object.

(See previous listing for relevant quotes).

## Share It! (M)

Dancing and sharing on cue.

I read to the students the words from Rosenshantz' "Share It!" song, from their recording by the same name, *Share It*! Then I gave half the group Koosh balls, and said, whenever you hear the phrase "Share It!" from the chorus, you need to quickly but gently toss your ball to someone who does not have one. The song is very danceable and fun. (Rosenshantz recordings are always very humorous, with great beats, and often have meaningful messages.) Its a good idea to demonstrate a gentle underhand toss before beginning and encourage the kids to say "thank you" or "thanks" each time they receive a ball.

*Preschool version:*
Little ones can do and enjoy the above version, but the one described below is especially suited for them. You need Raffi's *Singable Songs For The Very Young* for this one. This activity uses the "Sharing Song". We happen to have little canvas heart-shaped pouches with straps, but any little baskets, boxes or pouches will do. If you do use heart-shaped receptacles, you can tell the kids that sharing is a way to show love and it comes from our hearts, hence the heart-shaped holders. The preschool class used gold-foil wrapped chocolate coins since it was first done for a unit on charitable giving and the fund. However, almost any small solid edible treats will do (preferably wrapped, since they will be changing hands frequently) . We used different colored foil wrapped chocolate coins for our unit on generosity. (Available at party stores, especially around Mardi Gras time).

First fill the pouches with the wrapped chocolate coins, deliberately not paying attention to equal distribution. *Before* handing out a pouch to each participant, (otherwise kids won't pay attention and just focus on their pouch contents) explain that during the chorus, one of the lines is "with you I'd like to share it". Instruct the kids to pull out a coin and put it into the pouch of another child *during the key phrase in the chorus of the song*. Ask them to try to do this with as many different kids as possible. Just so there is no anxiety attack over fairness of supply, explain that at the end of the song every one will get an equal share. During the non-chorus portions of the song, children can just dance, since it does have a bouncy beat.

At the end of the song, collect the pouches and demonstrate how some have many coins while others have few. You can point out that this is a big problem and causes sadness in the world today—some have far more than their fair share, while others have barely enough to live. Then very briefly and simply explain that one of the main teachings of Baha'u'llah is that we must have a more fair sharing of wealth and that there can be no peace until then. (See quotations under *Zymic Zelda*). Next, dump all the coins in a pile or in a bowl, and distribute them equally. If some are left over, then they can be offered to be given away to those not there, or cut up in equal segments.

## The Many Expressions of Love

We divided the group into 3 smaller groups. Aurelia, Anisa, and myself each got 4 or 5 kids. Each child was to choose 1 out of the 3 ways they planned to express love to others which they had written on their Personal Love Plan cards. (Based on an activity in Brilliant Star, Special Edition, 1996, Teaching with the Bonds of Love, page 28).

Then they were to create a short skit to illustrate that expression. They could use one or all the members of their group in their skit. Each child was thus the author of one skit. They enjoyed using dress ups and props. We all learned that showing love involves the expression of many other virtues such as service, kindness, sacrifice, caring, generosity, forgiveness, courage, humility, loyalty, mercy, obedience, respect, and tolerance. After each skit, the audience was asked to share what virtues besides love they witnessed in the behavior of the actors. Having students do a dramatic portrayal really assisted in my goal of getting them to be specific, practical, and concrete in their personal love plans.

*The brightness of the fire of your love will no doubt fuse and unify the contending peoples and kindreds of the earth, whilst the fierceness of the flame of enmity and hatred cannot but result in strife and ruin. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 96
*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 and not through the tongue; for the latter hath no importance, as the majority of men are, in speech, well-wishers, while action is the best.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 69

It is our duty and privilege to translate the love and devotion we have for our beloved Cause into deeds and actions that will be conducive to the highest good of mankind.
~Shoghi Effendi: Living the Life, page 2

If we profess loyalty to Baha'u'llah, to our Beloved Master and our dear Guardian, then we must show our love by obedience to these explicit teachings. Deeds not words are what they demand.....~Shoghi Effendi: Living the Life, page 4

## Magic Penny (M)

An interactive dance-drama about the reciprocal nature of love, smiles, and hugs—basically, one reaps what one sows. See above and next entry for quotes on love.

This is a well known children's song, which has been done by many musicians. Hopefully you can find a version of it that works for you. Mine came from a very old recording called *Cloud Journeys* by Anne Leif Barlin & Marcia Berman. All you need for this one is 1/3 as many hearts (cardstock, mylar, wooden, metal, whatever) as participants and the same number of pennies decorated with fabric paints or glitter glue.

First we talked about how "love is something if you give it away—you end up having more, and it comes right back to you." If you give regular pennies away, you have less, not more, but if you give magic pennies away, you end up having _____? (more). The song also talks about smiles and hugs in addition to love and magic pennies. The more you give, the more you _____? (receive).

So I gave some children some red mylar hearts with the word love on them, and other children some "magic pennies" (pennies that had been decorated with fabric paints). And some children got nothing.

The song's lyrics go like this: "love is something if you give it away, give it away, give it away, love is something if you give it away, you end up having more". They were to *find someone without a heart and give it to them with the words "give it away".* And whenever the song said "its just like a magic penny, hold on tight and you won't have any, but lend it spend it, you'll have so many they'll roll all over the floor"*—upon hearing the words "lend it spend it" they were to give to a penniless person their penny.* The song also sings about hugs and smiles, which we also did.

Nice bonding activity. If you give out more pennies or hearts than 1/3 of the participants, given the pace of the song, it will be hard for those lending/spending or giving away to quickly find someone who does not have what they have. Hearts and pennies exchange hands many times during the song, and this is also good to reinforce detachment and sharing. A nice touch, if you have the time to make them, is to have hearts and/or decorated pennies to give as gifts for all the participants. Or, if in class setting, kids can decorate their own pennies—but one side has to completely dry before doing the other.

Here are the words, and a few more details.

Love is something if you give it away, give it away, give it away.
Love is something if you give it away
You'll end up having more.

*The above is repeated for "A hug" and "a smile" instead of "love". Song ends with "love" again.*

*Chorus:*

It's just like a magic penny, hold it tight and you won't have any
Lend it, spend it, and you'll have so many
They'll roll all over the floor

*Here are some pantomime actions not described above:*

You'll end up having more: *start with the backs of the fingers of both hands touching in the center of body, then arch up and outward, as if indicating "a whole lot".*

It's just like a magic penny: *bring thumb and forefinger together to make little circle, or if you happen to have one of the magic pennies, hold that up*.

Hold it tight*: squeeze one hand into a fist and jiggle hand*

And you won't have any: *elbows bent, hold both palms open, rotate wrists back and forth, and shake head "no"*

You'll have so many*: start with the backs of the fingers of both hands touching in the center of body, then arch up and outward, as if indicating "a whole lot".*

They'll roll all over the floor: *make small circles with one hand moving from center of body to side to indicate "rolling"*

A Hug: *give someone a hug*

A smile: *get up close and smile real big at someone*

## L.O.V.E. (M)

A boisterous activity about the nature of love.

Little ones (2-7 year olds) always love this activity to the song called "L.O.V.E". You need Linda Arnold's *Happiness Cake* recording. Every tape I ever bought of hers was a hit for my little ones and many songs have spiritual/moral values in them. Her music is playful, whimsical, and a delight to listen to.

Materials: the song, a boombox of course, and as many paper hearts as participants, with a sticky backing to them so they can be stuck over the kid's hearts. I use double sided tape with a removable backing, so I can transport them easily w/o them sticking together. (When kids receive their hearts, they remove the backing, so I always bring a little bag for the trash. You can also use foil hearts that have a

backing with glue that needs to be licked, like an envelope. But little kids often hate the taste, and may be focusing on that instead of the song.) Before the activity, take all the hearts you need and divide them into 4 equal sized (if possible) groups. Each group of hearts then gets the letter L, O, V, or E written in gold in the center on each one. So if you have 20 kids, there will be 5 hearts with the letter "L", 5 with the letter "O", etc. When done, thoroughly mix them up.

Have kids sit down and form a semi circle around you, so your back is never facing anyone. Kids love riddles, so if most are 4 years old and up, tell them that the next activity is about the answer to the following 5 clues: 1)The world needs a lot more of it, 2) If everyone practiced it everyday, all day, we would have no war, fighting, or people hurting other people in any way, 3) You have all given and received it, 4) Its a 4 letter word, and 5) Its a virtue. If they still can't get it, tell them it begins with "L".

Next, ask them how to spell love and how many letters are there. (Even though that was in the clues). Then pass out the hearts, and tell the child which letter they are getting when you hand them their heart. As the leader, you should get an "L" to guide the action. Explain that the group will all start squatting on their feet. When they hear their letter they will jump up. When they hear it again, they squat back down.

The word "love" is spelled many times throughout the song, so the group is jumping up and going back down a lot. Two year olds will need reminding or a partner with their same letter—they tend to get over-excited and jump up and down randomly. The leader does additional actions to make it more educational and visually interesting. I do them in a squatting or standing position—depending on what action I did last. Here are the words and movements I do to the song. Whatever actions you choose to do, they should be warm, expressive, and related to the lyrics. It is more powerful if you sing along to the music.

If you have the time, you can run through the lyrics with the kids and train them to do the other actions as well. But they are often thrilled to just be jumping up and down, and if quite young, often can't act fast enough to the words. However, sometimes they just instinctively start to copy, and that's great. A good compromise is to teach them the actions to just the chorus.

CHORUS 2X:

L.O.V. E., there's a lot of love inside of you and me *(After jumping up upon hearing "L" and then waiting for "E", I hold my hands over my heart, and arch hands and arms out and up to indicate "a whole lot" and point to group of children with sweeping motion, looking at them, smiling broadly, then point to myself with both or one hands' thumbs, other fingers curled).*

L.O.V.E., there's a lot of love to share. *(After squatting back down upon hearing "L" and waiting for "E", hold hands over heart, then extend elbows, one at a time, towards the front and sides, unbending wrists and offering open palms as if to indicate giving & sharing.)*

(end of chorus)

Now though love is invisible *(I cover my eyes)*

You can see it everywhere *(I uncover my eyes and follow my arm as it makes an arc from left to right)*

You can see it in a smile *(I make a big smile and point to it with both hands close to my mouth)*

You can see it in a hug *(I hug child next to me)*

You can feel it when you care *(I hold hands over my heart to indicate feeling)*

CHORUS 1X

So don't forget to love yourself each and every day *(I shake my head no for "don't forget" & hug myself and wiggle torso back and forth a bit, looking very satisfied)*

The more you learn to love yourself (*I arch hands and arms out and up to indicate "a whole lot" then return to self-hugging)*

The more you'll have to give away (*hold hands over heart, then extend elbows, one at a time, towards the front and sides, unbending wrists and offering open palms as if to indicate giving & sharing).*

CHORUS 2X

*.....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

## Facets of Courtesy

Miscellaneous activities to elucidate the many aspects of courtesy.

*We, verily, have chosen courtesy, and made it the true mark of such as are nigh unto Him. ~Baha'u'llah:* Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 50

*O people of God! I admonish you to observe courtesy, for above all else it is the prince of virtues. Well is it with him who is illumined with the light of courtesy.....*
*~Baha'u'llah:* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 88

We discussed the notion that courtesy includes words but is not limited to them. For example, I said "Move it!" to a child as I pushed him/her out of the way. Then I asked the children what was a better way to do it, and of course they said to say "excuse me". Then I proceeded to say "excuse me"! as I shoved a child out of the way. I reiterated that words are often not enough, but actions have to support them. Then I said "pleeeeease" in a real whiny voice and they got the point again—that the attitude is also important.

Next I gave a child a Koosh ball, and demanded "give me that ball!". Then I asked the children for the polite way to ask . Then we played a toss and catch game to practice giving and receiving: The child who had the ball would call on another who had his/her hand raised. That child would ask "May I please have the koosh ball?" The other child would say: "Yes you may" then proceed to throw it to him/her, who then said "thank you" and the other said "you're welcome."

I also pointed out that in real life, even if you use good manners, it does not mean that you always get your way. (I pointed out that no matter how politely you ask, you probably will not get $100.00 from your parent!) Sometimes the person will say "no" or "in a little while" and that is not impolite (unless you are asking for something that they have had more than their fair share of time with). But if one uses good manners, it certainly increases their chances of getting what they want. I told the kids that if my daughters demanded something or were rude in expressing their desires, they automatically did not get what they wanted.

I really want children to understand that courtesy is more than just good manners and using polite words—it's an attitude of respect and caring towards others that can be practiced in a myriad of ways.

In the next 4 skits, students were exhorted to behave as they think Abdu'l-Baha would, for He is our perfect example of how a true servant of God should act:

## Moody Matilda

An interactive drama to teach courtesy & forbearance in the face of adversity. Kids should be admonished to maintain courtesy and respect at all times before the skit. (The costume could bump this one up to a level 2, but it can be done w/o much of a costume at all, and regular normal colored table settings).

The oldest girl and the oldest boy in the class were to play the parents, the rest were their children. (If your group is huge, then 2 different family groups can be chosen to be in the 2 separate scenes. It is important to choose the more mature and self-controlled kids for the second scene). I was Matilda the waitress at Dot's Diner. I was dressed in an outrageous white polyester dress with large lime green polka dots and lime green half apron, and fuchsia fringe on the sleeves and hemline. I wear white knee highs and lime green ankle socks, fuchsia pink shoes and belt, a blonde wig with fuchsia colored glasses. Even the tableware and napkins are lime green and fuchsia. I also had made up green polka dotted menus, and had a tray, pitcher of water, pen and tablet of paper, etc. just as real waitresses. (For more detail on the costume, see *Recipe for a New World Order* in level 3). I enter the room after the family sits at our dining room table.

In scene one, I am in a delightful mood, very gracious, friendly, cheerful, accommodating, kind, service oriented, courteous. The children have no trouble minding their manners as I set the table, pour their water, solicit orders, ask them questions and compliment them. The kids really enjoy making up wacky food items to order. That is why I leave the inside of the menus blank. A lot of humorous improvisational banter then takes place regarding the food. For example, once a child ordered "elephant foot", so I asked was that with or without toenails, clipped or unclipped? But in scene two, the family comes to the restaurant on one of my bad days. I am in a dreadful mood; crabby, annoyed, put out, curt, rude, irritated, impatient and even obnoxious and hostile. I put my foot on the table or chair, drink from one of their glasses, hurry them to decide, sit on the edge of the table as I take their orders, use one of their napkins to blow my nose, am chomping rudely on a wad of gum, get irritated at some of their requests, dump the table ware on the table instead of neatly setting it, etc. They managed to succeed in maintaining their manners, despite my best attempts to provoke them! And if the diners are really sweet to me, by the end of the interaction, I soften my attitude to demonstrate how even the worst attitudes can find little justification for continuing in the face of kindness and courtesy. (We discuss this in the debriefing.) Both the pleasant and unpleasant scenes end when I depart to give their orders to the imaginary kitchen staff.

The drama is designed to test the students steadfastness in showing many virtues, which we discussed: In the second scene, the family needed to show courtesy, detachment, forgiveness, mercy, self-control, and tolerance. They are to avoid stooping to revenge or spiteful behavior, and behave as Abdu'l-Baha would. Although, given that Abdu'l-Baha had a keen sense of justice, I doubt even He would of left much of a tip, if any! (We had a discussion beforehand about how returning ugliness with ugliness destroys unity and perpetuates a cycle of revenge and negative behaviors.)

I discussed with them how it is better to ignore rude behavior than to return it—but that one should not allow others to abuse them, however. Justice is a virtue! (By the way, I want you to know that I did not go so far as to humiliate or abuse the students— b/c I did not want to really hurt their feelings even though it was just a skit.) I gave them the example of how Abdu'l-Baha did not let an aggressive carriage driver bully Him and He refused to pay the exorbitant fee and did not tip the man. It will take years for children—(and I am not sure I have figured it out yet either) to figure out the fine line between noble detachment and allowing oneself to be abused. All I know is that in many Baha'i writings we are exhorted:

*Wherefore must the loved ones of God associate in affectionate fellowship with stranger and friend alike, showing forth to all the utmost loving-kindness, disregarding the degree of their capacity, never asking whether they deserve to be loved. In every instance let the friends be considerate and infinitely kind. Let them never be defeated by the malice of the people, by their aggression and their hate, no matter how intense. If others hurl their darts against you, offer them milk and honey in return; if they poison your lives, sweeten their souls; if they injure you, teach them how to be*

*comforted; if they inflict a wound upon you, be a balm to their sores; if they sting you, hold to their lips a refreshing cup.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of`Abdu'l-Baha, page 24

*Should any come to blows with you, seek to be friends with him; should any stab you to the heart, be ye a healing salve unto his sores; should any taunt and mock at you, meet him with love. Should any heap his blame upon you, praise ye him; should he offer you a deadly poison, give him the choicest honey in exchange; and should he threaten your life, grant him a remedy that will heal him evermore. Should he be pain itself, be ye his medicine; should he be thorns, be ye his roses and sweet herbs. Perchance such ways and words from you will make this darksome world turn bright at last.....*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of`Abdu'l-Baha, page 34

*.....when malevolence is directed your way, respond with a friendly heart.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 21

*Let not your heart be offended with anyone. If some one commits an error and wrong toward you, you must instantly forgive him. Do not complain of others. Refrain from reprimanding them, and if you wish to give admonition or advice, let it be offered in such a way that it will not burden the bearer. Turn all your thoughts toward bringing joy to hearts. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 453

I realize what a tall order this is—but it is surely the only way humanity is going to liberate itself from centuries of vicious circles of revenge and hate towards certain groups. I also pointed out that people often behave badly b/c something bad is going on in their lives—they are sick, hurt, stressed, whatever. I told them that maybe her boss had just yelled at her in front of the other employees, maybe her husband had left her the day before, etc. We should not judge b/c we are not in their shoes.

## The Grocery Line and the Baby

(Another role playing example of courtesy in action.)

Before doing the skit, I told the students that the guidance for how they should act is to be found in the following quotations:

*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

*Your utmost desire must be to confer happiness upon each other. Each one must be the servant of the others, thoughtful of their comfort and welfare. In the path of God one must forget himself entirely. He must not consider his own pleasure but seek the pleasure of others. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 215

*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

*You live to do good and to bring happiness to others.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Paris Talks, pages 112-113

*It is your duty to be exceedingly kind to every human being.....*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 90

*Be kind to all peoples; care for every person;.... strive ye to gladden every soul.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, pages 244-245

*Let him do some good to every person whose path he crosseth, and be of some benefit to him. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 3

The scene was a check out line in a grocery store. One child was the cashier. We used a toy cash registrar, grocery bags, and a long board on top of 2 stools. Students and myself each chose a few groceries from a bin. They each collected some fake money. We all stood in line. I was at the end of the line with a baby (doll), who promptly started screeching. I told her she had to wait until I got home to nurse her, and was clearly distressed at my baby's crying. I tried to soothe her in vain as I lamented at how long the line was. Of course the child immediately in front of me offered to let me go ahead of him, and the rest of the students were quick to follow his example. Soon I was up at the front and was full of gratitude and thanks. Then I quickly left, thereby giving their poor ears a rest. Then the customers enjoyed checking out their groceries.

Make sure you put a kid at the end of the line in front of the mother and baby who is mature enough to know what to do. If it is a young child—in age or spiritual maturity, they can be very self-centered or obsessed with fairness in turn taking, and it may not occur to them to sacrifice their spot, and they may pitch a fit if someone in front of them lets the mother cut in.

Also, I deliberately wore a long dress (instead of skirt or pants and shirt) so it was obvious why I could not nurse. I do not want to send the message that nursing (discreetly) in public is inappropriate! I asked them why I had worn the dress, and several knew exactly why.

Also, I always make a point of using inter-racial families in puppet shows and skits so children come to see this as healthy and natural. The oneness of humanity is not truly believed in or practiced until we all accept and respect inter-marriage between different ethnic groups. So, my baby was dark-skinned.

Before moving onto the next skit, we also discussed the virtues displayed by the customers: kindness, caring, thoughtfulness, sacrifice, detachment, courtesy, helpfulness, and mercy.

## The Cookie Courtesy Test

This role play pits self-interest against the desire to be courteous.

I told them they were to pretend that they were at a party and that I was the hostess. I was going to offer to each child a platter with cookies on it. I warned them that there was a hidden test in this activity. Then I said that if they followed the guidance in the following quotes, they would pass the test.

*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

*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

*We, verily, have chosen courtesy, and made it the true mark of such as are nigh unto Him. ~Baha'u'llah:* Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 50

*O people of God! I admonish you to observe courtesy, for above all else it is the prince of virtues. Well is it with him who is illumined with the light of courtesy. ~Baha'u'llah:* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 88

*Our greatest efforts must be directed towards detachment from the things of the world.....~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Paris Talks, page 87

So then I presented the platter and I would ask each student "would you like one?", and they were to reply, "yes, please." Then after taking one, they were to say "thank you" and I would say "you're welcome." The "hidden" test was that all the cookies were rather small, except for one, which was quite a bit larger. After the role play, we talked about how courtesy means not taking the biggest for oneself, and also not taking seconds until every one has had firsts. Usually, all students pass this test. If one does take the biggest cookie, that child should not be made fun of or embarrassed in any way. Usually, that child quickly recognizes his/her mistake and immediately breaks the cookie in half and replaces the other half on the plate or offers it to someone else. Another test could be if there are clearly not enough for all the guests, one might say, no thank you, until all others have been served. But I pointed out that if every one refused, the hostess may get her feelings hurt, thinking that no one liked her baking! The virtues relevant to this skit were: detachment, sacrifice, courtesy, fairness, and self-control.

## The Big Load

Another mini-skit to illustrate one of the myriad expressions of courtesy.

The next act was a student coming home from an Ayyam-i-Ha shopping trip, laden with boxes and bags and obviously struggling. She stood on the front porch and w/ difficulty, rang the doorbell. 4 students were chosen to answer the door. They immediately offered assistance in carrying them without prompting from me. The virtues of helpfulness and courtesy were needed. Guiding quotations:

*Confirm us in service to the world of humanity so that we may become the servants of Thy servants.....~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 302

*Service to humanity is service to God. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 8

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

*Each one must be the servant of the others, thoughtful of their comfort and welfare. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 215

*Be kind to all peoples; care for every person;.... strive ye to gladden every soul. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, pages 244-245

## Manners Skits

*We, verily, have chosen courtesy, and made it the true mark of such as are nigh unto Him. ~Baha'u'llah:* Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 50

*O people of God! I admonish you to observe courtesy, for above all else it is the prince of virtues. Well is it with him who is illumined with the light of courtesy.....~Baha'u'llah:* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 88

Next we broke into groups of 2 and 3 and each team chose 2 scenarios that were photocopied from Every Kid's Guide to Good Manners by Joy Berry. After a little rehearsing and adding personal touches, we performed them in front of the class. One child played the one without manners, and one played the one with. Nina and I played supporting roles. The contrast was truly striking and extreme. I normally do not assign negative roles to children b/c I think they really need practice doing the right things--no one needs practice doing negative behaviors (for they come a lot easier for many than the harder more noble expressions.) But I must say, especially the older ones in the class, do have fun with their nasty roles and they are entertaining to watch--and it may be even cathartic for the actors. The contrast does make the virtue seem all the more attractive, so I have decided to be a little less uptight about negative roles. Some examples of scenarios were table manners, interaction with a disabled person, doing a job together, being a good sport, starting a conversation, etc.

## Determination Skits

Children pantomimed skills they have learned or goals they wanted to achieve which required or will require perseverance, determination, and endurance. Some examples: Doing homework, learning to write, to rollerblade, to ride a bike with no hands, doing a puzzle, etc. They also acted out being frustrated in attempts to find something at a store or something they had lost and to keep on searching. The child who correctly guessed the action got to go next.

Since kids tended to focus on physical or mental goals, I pointed out that we should especially apply determination in acquiring virtues and spiritual habits, like memorizing prayers or serving the Cause in some way. We also talked about that there are times when it is practical or wise not to keep trying--when something is totally futile (though I did not use that word).

*Whoso hath recognized Me, will arise and serve Me with such determination that the powers of earth and heaven shall be unable to defeat his purpose.*
*~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 137

*With firm determination, with the whole affection of your heart, and with the full force of your words, turn ye unto Him, and walk not in the ways of the foolish.*
*~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 328

Persevere in your efforts, let not obstacles damp your zeal and determination and rest assured that the Power of God which is reinforcing your efforts will in the end triumph and enable you to fulfil your cherished desire. ~Shoghi Effendi: Arohanui: Letters to New Zealand, page 25

Perseverance is the magnet that will, in these days, attract the promised blessings of the Almighty Author of our beloved Faith. ~Shoghi Effendi, Dawn of a New Day, p. 99

## Honor Thy Parents

Teams of 2 consulted on and acted out real life conflicts they have with their parents. Child #1 is a son or daughter, child #2, a parent. Son or daughter acts out a time they showed disrespect or disobedience to their parent. Then I held a stick with 2 holographic 5 pointed stars glued together with a gemstone heart in the center up to the child's heart and exclaim: "Now your heart has been illumined by reading the

Revelation of Baha'u'llah concerning His teachings on behavior towards parents." Then the son or daughter reenacts the same scene with respect, obedience, cooperation, etc. (If time, have the team members switch roles.) We debriefed by contrasting the different consequences of disrespect & respect on our relationships with our parents, on unity in the home, and on achieving our desires. I asked them "Who usually ends up suffering the most when you disobey your parents? And who suffers when we disobey God?" Cleaning up messes, going to bed on time, TV time, and doing homework seemed to be the most common clashes.

*O My people! Show honour to your parents and pay homage to them. This will cause blessings to descend upon you from the clouds of the bounty of your Lord, the Exalted, the Great. .....Beware lest ye commit that which would sadden the hearts of your fathers and mothers. ~Baha'u'llah*: Family Life, pages 386-387

*If thou wouldst show kindness and consideration to thy parents so that they may feel generally pleased, this would also please Me, for parents must be highly respected and it is essential that they should feel contented, provided they deter thee not from gaining access to the Threshold of the Almighty, nor keep thee back from walking in the way of the Kingdom. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Family Life, page 392

*He must forgo his own rest and enjoyment and constantly strive to bring gladness to the hearts of his father and mother, that thereby he may attain the good pleasure of the Almighty and be graciously aided by the hosts of the unseen.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha*: Family Life, page 394

*The children's prosperity in this world and the Kingdom depends upon the good pleasure of parents, and without this they will be in manifest loss.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Education, page 290

## Contentment Pantomime

I assigned each student the task of thinking of something or some activity which makes them feel contented. I asked them not to tell anyone, and to develop a pantomime which expresses it. If they needed a partner to work with then they could share the information with them, but no talking or props were allowed. Then they went off in separate rooms to develop their skits. About 5 minutes later we regrouped in the living room and they performed their mini-skits in front of the class and we had to guess. We discussed how the more things in life which we are contented with or that make us feel contented, the more happy we will be, and the easier we are to please and get along with.

*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

*Anybody can be happy in the state of comfort, ease, health, success, pleasure and joy; but if one will be happy and contented in the time of trouble, hardship and prevailing disease, it is the proof of nobility. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Baha'i World Faith, page 363

## Humility Skits

I read students some descriptions of the virtue of humility from The Virtues Guide, and we discussed and shared relevant experiences. To prepare for the dramatic aspect of the humility lesson, I explained the

following: Animals have no free will but operate on instinct—they do not make a choice when it comes to their behavior. If they kill another animal in a fight, they are not being bad or immoral. People on the other hand, do have a choice and free will, and can behave immorally. An animal may also show courage when defending its young, but it is not really being virtuous because this is instinct. People have a choice as to whether to follow their animal impulses or to submit their inclinations to their higher, spiritual nature. For ex., they can attack someone they see as threatening, or they can practice forgiveness, detachment, self-restraint, and tolerance.

So for the next skits, kids were to indicate whether the actors were expressing their animal/lower nature, or their higher/spiritual natures by jingling a pretty wind chime for higher, or making animal sounds for lower at the conclusion of each skit. All skits had to do with humility and excessive pride, to support our focus on the virtue of humility. Children got to play main characters and act out both humility and pride so we could all experience the striking contrast, and they also played supporting roles. The scenes were written on cards. Students chose blindly their scenario. If they felt it was too hard, they could exchange it once.

The scenes were: (How would humility/too much pride look if):

You have an argument with a friend?
You made a mistake that hurt someone's feelings?
You have just moved into the biggest and fanciest house in town, complete with pool and someone is expressing how awesome it is?
You are taking an older friend who you admire very much to a really special and cool place in the woods and you lose your way and are lost?
You just won a race?
Your parent wants you to read a newspaper article on how TV advertising effects children?
You are a devout Christian who has just asked a Baha'i what the "Baha'i" means on their t-shirt?
You are a Baha'i in a debate about the existence of God with an atheist?

*Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. ~Baha'u'llah:* Arabic Hidden Words, # 68

*He must never seek to exalt himself above any one, must wash away from the tablet of his heart every trace of pride and vain-glory, ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, pages 264-5

*Take heed lest pride debar thee from recognizing the Dayspring of Divine Revelation..... ~Baha'u'llah:* The Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 51

*..... such as are conceited will not suffer themselves to be guided. They will be debarred from the Truth, some by reason of their learning, others on account of their glory and power, and still others due to reasons of their own..... ~The Bab:* Selections from the Bab, page 96

*We must be careful not to exalt ourselves lest we be humiliated. ~Abdu'l-Baha* Paris Talks p. 147

*Humility exalteth man to the heaven of glory and power, whilst pride abaseth him to the depths of wretchedness and degradation. ~Baha'u'llah:* Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 30

## Forgiveness Scenarios

First we had a discussion on the nature and challenges of forgiveness. I first asked them if it was true or false that one can not have a happy harmonious relationship of any kind unless they learn how to forgive.

They all knew that was true. I also asked them to raise their hand if they never did any thing that required forgiveness. No one raised their hand of course. I then emphasized how we all do things that are wrong or stupid, and we all need forgiveness, so we should remember that when someone needs our forgiveness. I also shared some sections from The Virtues Guide by Wellspring International on forgiveness, such as why it is important to forgive, what forgiveness and non-forgiveness look like, and how it feels when we are not forgiven. I always try to make these discussions meaningful, interesting, and personally relevant by asking children to relate them to their own personal experiences and sharing those experiences. We also talked about the notion that forgiving doesn't mean you allow a person to abuse you again and again. Prevention and forgiveness can go hand in hand. Also, parents and God can forgive, but that doesn't mean they do not give consequences. We discussed what sorts of things people do that upset us and we find hard to forgive, and how we have all done things like that.

Then I summarized 4 ways they can help themselves forgive others: 1) Follow Abdu'l-Baha's guidance to overcome a negative thought with a more powerful thought of love, 2) do not dwell on the offense or faults of the offender, rather focus on their positive qualities, 3) pray to God to help you forgive or for detachment from your pain and anger, and 4) try to understand why the person behaved the way they did—cultivate empathy and compassion. I reminded them that when we don't forgive, we hurt ourselves as well as the offender---i.e. holding grudges is spiritually damaging to us and creates disunity. We benefit when we let go of our grudges. We talked about grudges and how holding anger or bitterness towards someone is a burden/weight on one's own heart and how it can interfere with the light of God shining in it. If our hearts are like mirrors (a Baha'i metaphor), then having a dark heavy weight on it will block out the light of God, and it will be harder for us to reflect His beauty. It is very hard to show any virtues (which are a reflection of God's beauty) when we are filled with hurt, anger, hostility, bitterness, and resentment.

To illustrate this, each child was given the chance to hold a rope which had a dark and heavy weight on the end of it. (We used a black garbage bag filled with about 15 pounds of dirt. That was wrapped in a raggedy black cloth for more secure hanging. I wanted it to look unattractive.) We used a pulley, but that is optional—one can just throw the rope over a branch. Underneath it was placed a large red heart with a mirror in the center. (The heart as a mirror to reflect the light and beauty of God is a metaphor used extensively in the Baha'i Writings and we have used it for many years in the class.) I explained what sorts of things would upset/offend me (borrowing with out asking, yelling at me in front of others, not showing up for an engagement, etc.) Then I chose someone to be the offender and others to play supporting roles if necessary. Then I acted out several scenes and the rope-holder was to determine by my actions and/or words, whether I had truly forgiven the person who had offended me. If she/he thought that I had really forgiven, he/she raised the weight up and away from the heart, (which of course symbolized my heart) and if not, the weight was lowered onto the heart, symbolizing the burden of weight grudges place on our hearts and how they block the light of God from shining in them. A*t the beginning of each scene, the weight starts out halfway between the heart and the top of the bar, so it can go either way.* (And make sure you provide a loop for a handle to prevent rope burn. Children raise and lower by walking towards and away from weight. If you don't do it this way, and kids slide the rope from a standing position, they will need gloves.)

*The scenes were each played twice, one to illustrate lack of forgiveness, the other to show forgiveness.* (The second time round, the answer will be obvious, but this is not a test, its a demonstration and illustration, and kids love the physical challenge of the weight.) They were: 1., My birthday is coming and I am inviting kids, 2., I am thinking out loud about how I feel about the person who offended me, 3., The offending person accidentally leaves their lunch behind and I witness that, 4., Three kids are backbiting about the person who offended me and I make a contribution to the conversation, 5., The offending person waves and greets me., and 6., The offending person starts to approach me from a distance while I am with some of my buddies.
Then some of the kids wanted to develop their own skit, which they did in a humorous way. Students seemed to like this activity quite a bit—especially the challenge of pulling that heavy weight up or guiding it to land on the target of the heart!

*.....forgive the sinful, and never despise his low estate, for none knoweth what his own end shall be. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 266

*If any differences arise amongst you, behold Me standing before your face, and overlook the faults of one another for My name's sake and as a token of your love for My manifest and resplendent Cause. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 315

*Let not your heart be offended with anyone. If some one commits an error and wrong toward you, you must instantly forgive him.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 453

*....concentrate all the thoughts of your heart on love and unity. When a thought of war comes, oppose it by a stronger thought of peace. A thought of hatred must be destroyed by a more powerful thought of love. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Paris Talks, page 29

*Therefore, do not look at the shortcomings of anybody; see with the sight of forgiveness. The imperfect eye beholds imperfections.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 93

*Think ye of love and good fellowship as the delights of heaven, think ye of hostility and hatred as the torments of hell.*
*~Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 245

*Should any come to blows with you, seek to be friends with him; should any stab you to the heart, be ye a healing salve unto his sores; should any taunt and mock at you, meet him with love. Should any heap his blame upon you, praise ye him; should he offer you a deadly poison, give him the choicest honey in exchange; and should he threaten your life, grant him a remedy that will heal him evermore. Should he be pain itself, be ye his medicine; should he be thorns, be ye his roses and sweet herbs. Perchance such ways and words from you will make this darksome world turn bright at last; will make this dusty earth turn heavenly, this devilish prison place become a royal palace of the Lord - so that war and strife will pass and be no more, and love and trust will pitch their tents on the summits of the world.*
*~Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 34

## Trustworthiness Skits

I did a skit that demonstrated being untrustworthy and its consequences, then redid it portraying trustworthiness and its effects. Then groups of 3 designed their own skits to portray untrustworthiness verses trustworthiness, preferably using situations one of them had experienced. Kids could show trustworthiness in caring for pets, taking care of a neighbors home while they are away on a trip, returning lost money, keeping a secret, obeying parents when no one is watching, not cheating, lying, snooping, or stealing when its easy and tempting to do so, making good on commitments or promises, etc. I asked every team to make sure their skit illustrated the different consequences that trustworthiness and untrustworthiness had. After the second skit, in which the main character displayed trustworthiness, I placed a crown on his/her head, which they got to wear until the next child showed trustworthiness in a skit. The crown idea was inspired by the first quote below, which was read before the skits began.

*Trustworthiness is in truth.....the most glorious crown for your heads. ~Baha'u'llah:* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 38

*Trustworthiness is the greatest portal leading unto the tranquillity and security of the people. ~Baha'u'llah*: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 37

*The most precious of all things in the estimation of Him Who is the Sovereign Truth is trustworthiness.....~Baha'u'llah*: Trustworthiness, pages 335-336

*Blessed be the soul that shineth with the light of trustworthiness among the people and becometh a sign of perfection amidst all men. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Trustworthiness, page 340

## Exercise in Selflessness and Surrender

Students alternate between being sculptor and clay. Also known as *Magical Clay* in the Games Manual.

*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.

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.

## Skits for Various Virtues

(Moderation, patience, responsibility, mercy, happiness, and reverence)

Acting out a virtue turns it into a very concrete and practical behavior and reinforces the likelihood of its expression and application in real life. To illustrate more concretely the 6 virtues focused on in the camp, we did the following: Pairs of students dipped their hands inside a pretty basket. Inside the basket were small little folded cards with one of the 6 virtues written in a sparkly gold ink on the inside. On the outside of the card is a pretty *flower sticker.* On the inside flap are *smiling face, heart*, and *star* stickers. I asked the students why there was a flower sticker on the front of each card? Most knew the answer—that virtues are like flowers in the garden of the heart. (A metaphor I use over and over in my classes) I explained that like flowers, virtues bring joy and _____? (beauty) to the world, and produce _____? (happiness) in ourselves and others (hence the smiling face). And the heart sticker reminds us that showing virtues is a way to show _____? (love) to God and to _____? (others). The *star sticker* symbolizes that when we express virtues we _____? (shine) spiritually like stars in the _____? (darkness) of the world.

The instructions were: Each pair got to choose 1 card. (If they really could not relate to their particular virtue, they could try another). Each pair was to retreat into a separate room and develop a very short skit using the virtue on their card. They could use props and costumes. The first time they acted it out, they were to not use the virtue and make sure to demonstrate the negative consequences. The audience needed to guess which virtue was missing. With a limited number of virtues, this of course was relatively easy. Actors were instructed to not use the name of the virtue or a close synonym in their dialogue, b/c this would give it away even more easily. I asked the audience to show patience and wait until the end of the skit to guess so the performers did not feel short-circuited. Then the actors would re-do the scene to illustrate how different the consequences are when the relevant virtues are used. (It also works well to have the audience wait and guess only at the end of both skits.) Some skits required more than 2 actors and these were borrowed from the youth helpers. Some skits were best done with 1 child. Then the students alternated the main character when doing the second skit, showing how the consequences were changed with the virtue.

For *moderation*, it is helpful to have topics written out on cards related to the virtues to expedite the creation of the skits. However, students should be allowed to make up their own topics if they desire.

So for example, we explored *moderation* in relation to TV watching or computer/video game usage, candy, shopping, fashion, sports or hobbies, work, money, religion and friendships. (For example, a student pretended to call a new friend several times a day every day).

If your group has little or no experience in developing skits, then write a brief description of a scene that they can insert the virtue into. They can still work on acting skills and in filling out the scene with creative details. You can use the some of the scenes described below.

*Patience* was required on a long car trip, being very hungry and waiting for dinner, teaching a young child to tie his shoes.

*Responsibility* was needed in skits about pet care, putting one's bike in the garage or locking it up, doing homework, caring for a toddler outside near a yard with a tethered strange dog, leaving a lighter in reach of a young child, and in caring for the spiritual life of one's soul.

*Mercy* was illustrated in relation to a younger sibling breaking a beloved toy of yours, a friend who ditched you for someone else who moves away now needs a friend, your beloved pet is very old and in chronic pain, you come across a bully who has tormented you and he/she is sobbing alone.

*Happiness* was demonstrated doing boring chores, in a hard class at school with a very strict and grumpy teacher, and in not obsessing about a perceived bodily defect, such as a pimple or the shape of one's nose. (This is also detachment, but I pointed out that happiness is so often dependent on our ability to detach from things we don't like in life.)

For the skit on showing happiness in school, I shared the following quote then told the students that science has proven that when we are happy, we learn better and more easily, and when we are sad, are abilities are weakened.

*Joy gives us wings! In times of joy our strength is more vital, our intellect keener, and our understanding less clouded. We seem better able to cope with the world and to find our sphere of usefulness. But when sadness visits us we become weak, our strength leaves us, our comprehension is dim and our intelligence veiled. The actualities of life seem to elude our grasp, the eyes of our spirits fail to discover the sacred mysteries, and we become even as dead beings. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Paris Talks, pages 109-110

*Reverence* was portrayed in respect for nature while walking in a forest with a bag of food and its wrappings, and in waiting for someone to finish prayers before asking an important question.

We also usually debriefed and analyzed the content of each skit when it was complete. For example, we would discuss how other virtues are so often linked to one virtue (like detachment, contentment and self-control with moderation). Thus, practically always, when one is practicing a virtue, other virtues will also be shown. Indeed, many more virtues were demonstrated than the one chosen in each skit and students pointed those out also.

Here are some examples using 3 more virtues, *cleanliness, purity of heart*, and *truthfulness:*

*Cleanliness:* You are hiking in a park and see a pile of dog pooh in the middle of the path. A group of hikers is coming up the path behind you. (Some brown socks were used for the poop, kids used sticks for removal).

*Purity of Heart:* You are allowed to invite 4 kids to your birthday party. 3 are already decided upon. There are 2 more kids you are considering. One you really like, but he/she is quite poor and will not be able to afford much of a present. The other one you don't like all that much b/c they are really bossy and prone to bullying, but he/she is wealthy and you know would bring a very exciting gift.

*Truthfulness/Honesty:* Your best friend stole the answers for a test from the teacher's desk. The teacher knows you were alone in her classroom with this friend. She asks if you know anything.

*Tip: Students love it when humor and fantasy are employed*. If the humor and fantasy are not carried too far, the educational value of a skit is not lost, but perhaps even enhanced b/c it is much more memorable.

*Some examples:*

For *reverence*, a student had to restrain himself while his sister was praying even though he urgently needed to borrow her magic flying broom.

For the *happiness* one about nose shape, the student wore a pig nose. He lamented in front of a mirror about it and even refused to accept a phoned in invitation to a swim party b/c of it. When he showed happiness, he did complain about the shape of his nose in a mirror, but also cheered himself up by recalling all the wonderful things in his life, and accepted the swim party invitation. Then I came on stage and said that it was 25 years later and Oliver was now a wealthy man. So he could afford a nose job. He then enters, clearly delighted with his new nose—which was a walrus snout!!

In *patience*, the dinner pasta consisted of socks.

For immoderation in friendship, 3 boys were happily playing ball, and I carried in a male bust with a blonde wig, long gaudy dress, and feather boa on. "She" flirtatiously caught the attention of the oldest boy, who then promptly ditched his friends for her. On 2 different days they tried to invite him to play, but he was too infatuated with "Hilda", who was snuggled up to him each time as they sat on chairs. (They called on the phone, then they came to his door). Then on the 3rd day, Hilda dumped him for movie star Tom Cruise. So the ex-boyfriend then called his former buddies, but they had bought only 2 tickets to go to an amusement park. They were also a bit cold after having been brushed off earlier. When the skit was re-played with *moderation*, the oldest boy did end the ball game promptly for Hilda, but on the next day, he accepted his friends' invitation to play and told Hilda he needed to spend some time with his buddies. All the students could relate to being ignored when a friend found someone new and exciting. And they thought it was hilarious.

When demonstrating irresponsibility with pet care (kids love to wear animal noses and tails), a student was too busy reading to clean the kitty litter box, even when the "cat" meowed in a very complaining tone and pawed at her. So the cat then proceeded to relieve herself all over the room, which is what really happens when one does not clean the litter box enough.

When illustrating irresponsibility with caring for one's bike, a girl informs her mom that she is going to ride over to the park. Her mom says to go ahead but to remember to lock her bike. The girl responds that she will in a dismissing way. (We used a tricycle the neighbor had b/c it was small enough to ride in our living room, and b/c an older kid would look funny on it. Sure enough it got a lot of laughs.) When she gets to the park she notices a sign about a bike race that really interests her. She has a lock, but exclaims its too much of a hassle and goes off to pretend to swing, with her back turned away from the bike. I played the thief, and was wearing a comical devil mask. With great enthusiasm I made off with the bike, looking even more ridiculous riding it than the girl. The girl returns and is quite upset to discover her bike gone. She walks all the way home, pretending to step on rocks and sticks and injure her bare feet. She comes limping in, and her mother demands to know what happened. She tells her mom the truth when asked if she locked the bike---and then asks for a new bike so she can be in the race. The mother says absolutely not, she will have to earn the money by weeding and doing other extra chores. When replayed with *responsibility*, the girl locks the bike of course, even though she complains that its a hassle to turn the combination lock. I show up when she is pretending to swing, with the silly devil mask on, and try very hard to try and shake the bike free, being very flamboyant in my attempt and in my frustration. I fail of course. The girl then rides the bike home and asks and obtains permission to be in the race.

When illustrating immoderation with computer games, the user set up a pretend computer. He eats from a potato chip bag as he plays, looking totally obsessed. Then another child came by every few minutes with a sheet of paper showing a different month. A few pillows are hidden under a cloth nearby, and every few months, the user stuffs one under his belly. He refuses phone calls from friends. After 12 months he wonders out loud why no one calls him anymore. He then steps on a scale and gasps that he has gained 20 pounds. This led to a discussion about balancing play, exercise, relationships, etc. with computer or TV usage—and how some kids really do not learn social skills or start to get adult diseases b/c they are not moving their bodies. Then depression often results.

Sometimes the interest and/or humor just comes in the melodrama and unusual gestures. For example, when acting out irresponsibility regarding caring for a toddler outside near a dog, the scene went like this: An older girl played the mother. She asked her son to watch his little brother outside in the yard while she did some work inside the house. She warned him that his little brother was fascinated with the dog that was tied up in the neighbor's yard. She admonished him to keep a close eye on the toddler. He readily agrees, and takes his little brother outside, and they roll a ball back and forth. A child dressed as a dog, with a nose, tail, and ears on a headband, is softly yipping nearby. All is going well until a friend approaches and starts to engage the older brother in conversation. They start chatting away, and the toddler crawls over to the dog and pulls on its tail. It promptly bites him on the stomach and he begins to wail loudly. The two older kids rush over and pull him away from the dog and lift up his shirt to reveal a nasty red mark. They are horrified and carry him by the feet and hands into the house. Upon hearing the commotion, the mother comes dashing over. (Ask the wailing child to tone down volume so mother can be heard.) She gets really upset when she sees the wound and tells the older brother he is grounded for

the summer and must earn the money to pay for the stitches. (We put the red mark on his stomach so the shirt would cover it and it could not be seen before the dog bit him.) When they replayed it with *responsibility*, the friend comes by and starts chatting to the older brother, who momentarily stops rolling the ball and forgets about his little brother. The little brother starts to crawl towards the dog, but this time, the older brother notices, stops him, and informs his friend that he has to keep a close eye on his little brother. Then the 3 roll the ball together, while the 2 older ones talk. When the mother comes out of the house, she is pleased that she was able to get so much work done and that all is well, and offers to take them to the park.

The skits were video recorded and students really enjoyed watching themselves on the TV screen later that day.

*Quotes on happiness, moderation, patience, mercy, and responsibility:*

Happiness: (See quotes under *Recipe for True Happiness Skits*)

Moderation:

*In all matters moderation is desirable. If a thing is carried to excess, it will prove a source of evil. ~Baha'u'llah:* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 69

*.....take heed not to outstrip the bounds of moderation and be numbered among the extravagant. ~Baha'u'llah,* The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, p. 190

*Whatsoever passeth beyond the limits of moderation will cease to exert a beneficial influence. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 216

*The civilization, so often vaunted by the learned exponents of arts and sciences, will, if allowed to overleap the bounds of moderation, bring great evil upon men. Thus warneth you He Who is the All-Knowing. If carried to excess, civilization will prove as prolific a source of evil as it had been of goodness when kept within the restraints of moderation. Meditate on this, O people, and be not of them that wander distraught in the wilderness of error. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 342

Patience:

*He will, certainly, repay all them that endure with patience and put their confidence in Him. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 239

*Be patient under all conditions, and place your whole trust and confidence in God. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 296

*He, verily, shall increase the reward of them that endure with patience. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 129

*Blessed are the steadfastly enduring, they that are patient under ills and hardships, who lament not over anything that befalleth them, and who tread the path of resignation.... ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 129

*.....this earthly life shall come to an end, and everyone shall expire and return unto my Lord God Who will reward with the choicest gifts the deeds of those who endure with patience. ~The Bab:* Selections from the Bab, page 161

Life afflicts us with very severe trials sometimes, but we must always remember that when we accept patiently the Will of God He compensates us in other ways. With faith and love we must be patient, and He will surely reward us. (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 30, 1951)

Mercy:

*The Almighty beareth Me witness: To act like the beasts of the field is unworthy of man. Those virtues that befit his dignity are forbearance, mercy, compassion and loving-kindness towards all the peoples and kindreds of the earth. ~Baha'u'llah,* Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 215

*..... we must strive to become more spiritual, more luminous, to follow the counsel of the Divine Teaching, to serve the cause of unity and true equality, to be merciful, ..... so that the light of the Spirit shall be apparent in all our deeds....~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Paris Talks, page 87

*.....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

*Children must be most carefully watched over, protected and trained; in such consisteth true parenthood and parental mercy. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha*: Education, page 263

*.....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..... 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

Responsibility:

*Each human creature has individual endowment, power and responsibility in the creative plan of God. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 293

*.....become leaders in the effort to establish the oneness of humankind. What is higher than this responsibility? In the Kingdom of God no service is greater..... ~Abdu'l-Baha,* The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 83

*Some things are subject to the free will of man, such as justice, equity, tyranny and injustice, in other words, good and evil actions; it is evident and clear that these actions are, for the most part, left to the will of man. But there are certain things to which man*

*is forced and compelled, such as sleep, death, sickness, decline of power, injuries and misfortunes; these are not subject to the will of man, and he is not responsible for them, for he is compelled to endure them. But in the choice of good and bad actions he is free, and he commits them according to his own will.*
*For example, if he wishes, he can pass his time in praising God, or he can be occupied with other thoughts. He can be an enkindled light through the fire of the love of God, and a philanthropist loving the world, or he can be a hater of mankind, and engrossed with material things. He can be just or cruel. These actions and these deeds are subject to the control of the will of man himself; consequently, he is responsible for them.* ~*Abdu'l-Baha,* Some Answered Questions, p. 248

## Group Storytelling with Virtues

We played a story game in which every student chose blindly a picture from a lotto game out of a cloth bag. The pictures were of animals and objects. There were also tiny paper dolls to choose from of a baby, boy, girl, man, and woman in different skin colors. I made sure that at least 2 humans were included in the final selection by giving one to an older student and starting the story with a boy or girl. Students were then presented with many different colored squares face down in a golden heart shaped box. They were to each choose one. Each square had a virtue written in gold on it with little tiny gems on each end of the virtue word with rays of light coming off each gem. The blank side of the square had a larger gem in the center. Each square was not only differently colored, it had different colors and shapes of gems. (The flower metaphor for virtues could also be used instead). To make it easier, the teacher can let students select the virtue they feel they are familiar with as opposed to choosing blindly. However, I have found that if they are also allowed to choose the lotto card object, most kids will choose an animal, and then the story basically turns into a traveling zoo. Non living objects, such as an umbrella, stroller or lemon actually make the story more interesting if integrated creatively.

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 stick in 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. This activity works best with kids ages 10 and up, and a group size under 10. 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.

## Virtue Commercials

This dramatic activity using the virtues was really enjoyed by every one. I explained that they all live in the future and family and societal breakdown is now such a major problem that the government, (who has heard that they are experts on virtues,) has hired them to do TV commercials to convince everyone to really concentrate on developing and teaching virtues. Teams of 2-4 chose a virtue from the poster list in the classroom. They were to graphically depict the consequences in relationships of not having a particular virtue. Then the audience would guess which virtues are missing, trying to get the exact one. In the first skit, they were not allowed to use the name of the virtue, a synonym, or its opposite (for example: "You are being so impatient!") as this would give it away. After the exact virtue was labeled, the teams were to show the contrast and consequences if the virtue was practiced.

I videotaped all skits and they loved watching themselves. We viewed groups showing extreme selfishness, then wonderful generosity, dishonesty and truthfulness, meanness and kindness, etc. We did a little de-briefing and elaborating on the consequences of the virtue being absent and benefits of it being present after each skit. I found that groups needed boundaries and guidance, but could handle creating unique character personalities and costumes. I suggested a direction for the dialogue with my group, but let them fill in the details. It was definitely helpful to have older youth or adults working with each group. It also helps to have a poster that lists the virtues in the room of the performance for reference.

## The Flood

An imaginary crisis which inspires and illustrates the virtues of sacrifice, generosity, sharing, caring, and most of all, the power of unified action.

We begin by me explaining the scene: We all live on a far away planet in a far away galaxy. The planet is a beautiful and good place, though it tends to have 1 or 2 major floods a year, in which every inch of ground is under 10 feet of water. So all the stores and houses had floating abilities. We are beings that need to drink a few ounces of a certain "Life Force" liquid every day in order to stay alive. This liquid comes from underground springs, which are inaccessible during flooding. So when the rains start to get prolonged, the beings store enough of the liquid to last until the flood waters recede. We are experts at predicting, without error, the time that the flood waters will block access to the "Life Force" springs. So we have just enough "Life Force" to last this one more day, since the professional "spring-finders" have informed us that by tomorrow, the springs will be accessible again. I explain that we are one big family, and here we are floating on our house boat. I pour out the last of the "Life Force" drink (raspberry lemonade) into little (decorated and washed white film) vials.

Prior to this scene, an expressive child has been chosen to play the surprise visitor. She has wet her head and clothes in the tub to simulate the fact that she has been swimming for miles. (Her houseboat sprang a leak and sank). Just as I finish pouring the liquid into the same number of vials as there are children including myself (with one extra for the visitor which is kept empty), she bangs on the side of our "boat" on cue. I jump up and fling open the door. She is panting and looking distressed. I immediately wrap her in a towel as she explains what happened to her boat. We welcome her in and inquire if she has had her Life Force drink for the day. No, she has not, but oh dear, our container is empty. But we have not drank ours yet--but if we do not we will die. Of course, as predicted since they have been learning all about the beauty of sacrifice and generosity, several children offer her theirs--but I protest, claiming that as their mother, I would be devastated if they died. So, as I had hoped, one child comes up with a brilliant idea--if we all share just a little from each of our vials, we can fill the visitor's. I explain that we will only suffer some fatigue if we don't drink a full vial. This we do. We then discuss the virtues involved in this skit: sacrifice, generosity, sharing, caring, and most of all, the power of unified action.

(To prepare for the above skit, one must fill almost to the top, all the vials—which are the same quantity as there are children, including the person playing the parent. Have an extra empty one close by for the surprise visitor. Then use the filled vials to pour it back into a container. This way, when the parent pours all the liquid into the vials, there is no extra—which forces the problem solving situation with the surprise visitor. Try to find an usual looking container. Also, have a towel ready in the room for the wet guest.)

*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 joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed..... ~Baha'u'llah:* Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 93

*..... 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

*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

*Be kind to all peoples; care for every person;.... strive ye to gladden every soul. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, pages 244-245

## The Scar-Faced Child

A role play to encourage kindness, caring, detachment, courage, sacrifice, and justice.

In this act, I drew ugly black and red marks on one child's face using chalk. I explain that this child has permanent scars from being burned in a fire. The scene was the school playground. I played a flashy student--popular mainly because I have money and know how to use it. (I rarely allow students to role play the bad guy--I learned long ago that they get carried away and usually abuse the role. Also they do not need to be practicing negative behavior!) I summon the group to me except for the scarred child, who I belittle and insult. I offer all the others an invitation to my birthday party which is at Kings Island—an expensive amusement park. I wave the tickets in their faces, exclaiming how fun it will be. I tell them if they are a friend of scar face they are no friend of mine, etc. Of course the idea is that the kids will band together and show their friendship with the scarred child and refuse to come to my party, which is exactly what they do. I storm off angrily. Then I share these quotes and discuss the relevant virtues shown by the kind kids: kindness, caring, detachment, justice, sacrifice, courage, etc.

Baha'u'llah tells us to be ..... *a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 285

*To act like the beasts of the field is unworthy of man. Those virtues that befit his dignity are forbearance, mercy, compassion and loving-kindness towards all the peoples and kindreds of the earth. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 215

*Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. ~Baha'u'llah:* Arabic Hidden Words, #68

*Put away the garment of vainglory, and divest yourselves of the attire of haughtiness. ~Baha'u'llah:* Persian Hidden Words, #47

*Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship. ~Baha'u'llah:* Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 14

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

*Be the source of consolation to every sad one, assist every weak one.....*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 453

*It is your duty to be exceedingly kind to every human being.....*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 90

*Be kind to all peoples; care for every person;.... strive ye to gladden every soul.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, pages 244-245

*For the attributes of the people of faith are justice and fair-mindedness; forbearance and compassion and generosity; consideration for others; candor, trustworthiness, and loyalty; love and loving-kindness.....~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Secret of Divine Civilization, page 55

*Be ye the helpers of every victim of oppression.....*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 3

We must not allow the fear of rejection by our friends and neighbours to deter us from our goal: to live the Baha'i life. (From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, July 13, 1972: Lights of Guidance, page 529)

## The Stolen Toy

A role play which provides ample opportunity to practice the virtues of forgiveness, mercy, helpfulness, and compassion.

Before doing this skit in front of the entire class, the actors are prepped and told what is going to happen, and how they are to respond. This scene takes place on the school playground. I explain to the whole class that it is in the middle of the school year and a new child has just moved to our town and has been in school for a few weeks but nobody has made friends with her--in fact she has been basically completely ignored. She is feeling, hurt, angry, lonely, rejected, and desperate. Her parents got into a big argument this morning and she is starting to wonder if her world will ever be a happy and secure place ever again.

Then the action begins: She spies a group of 4 having a jolly time playing with a koosh ball--but as usual, nobody invites her to play. She stands nearby, clearly wanting to join, and feeling forlorn. To get attention, she grabs the toy and runs and hides it. The kids all get angry and protest loudly and are rather surprised. But before they can report to the teacher, I ring a bell and announce its time to go home and they need to catch their bus. The next day the same group is sitting in a circle saying a prayer by Abdu'l-Baha for spiritual qualities. They notice she is crying and ask what's wrong. She sobs that her lunch is lost. They all volunteer to go look for it and one of them finds it of course, and presents it to the girl. She is very touched by his kindness, especially since she grabbed the toy from him and his friends the day before. Without a word she gets the toy and returns it to him. They smile and a relationship is born.

We then discuss what the outcome might have been had everybody laughed at her predicament, or ignored her suffering, or had delighted in eating their lunch in front of her empty stomach. We talked about the vicious cycle of revenge, and how an act of kindness can break the cycle. I reminded them that sometimes people are so angry or hurt inside it takes hundreds of acts of kindness to break the cycle. But even if a person has wronged you, and you are justified in being offended or angry, negative acts or comments directed towards that person never do any good and destroy any chance of unity growing. We talked about the importance of the virtues of forgiveness, mercy, helpfulness, and compassion.

*To act like the beasts of the field is unworthy of man. Those virtues that befit his dignity are forbearance, mercy, compassion and loving-kindness towards all the peoples and kindreds of the earth. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 215

*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.....~Baha'u'llah:* Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 93

*Act in such a way that your heart may be free from hatred. Let not your heart be offended with anyone. If some one commits an error and wrong toward you, you must instantly forgive him. Do not complain of others. Refrain from reprimanding them, and if you wish to give admonition or advice, let it be offered in such a way that it will not burden the bearer. Turn all your thoughts toward bringing joy to hearts.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 453

*In every instance let the friends be considerate and infinitely kind. Let them never be defeated by the malice of the people, by their aggression and their hate, no matter how intense. If others hurl their darts against you, offer them milk and honey in return; if they poison your lives, sweeten their souls; if they injure you, teach them how to be comforted; if they inflict a wound upon you, be a balm to their sores; if they sting you, hold to their lips a refreshing cup.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 24

*Should any come to blows with you, seek to be friends with him; should any stab you to the heart, be ye a healing salve unto his sores; should any taunt and mock at you, meet him with love. Should any heap his blame upon you, praise ye him; should he offer you a deadly poison, give him the choicest honey in exchange; and should he threaten your life, grant him a remedy that will heal him evermore. Should he be pain itself, be ye his medicine; should he be thorns, be ye his roses and sweet herbs. Perchance such ways and words from you will make this darksome world turn bright at last; will make this dusty earth turn heavenly.....*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 34

*Be the source of consolation to every sad one, assist every weak one.....*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 453

*.....when malevolence is directed your way, respond with a friendly heart.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 21

## Cool Colleen

This is about obedience to parents and resisting peer pressure and temptation. The virtues needed were detachment, trustworthiness, obedience, steadfastness, and courage. Here is the scene:

Before changing into costume, I told the students that they were all sisters and brothers whose parents had told them to stay inside and clean their rooms and do their homework. Their parents went off for the day and were going to be gone for a long time. They were going to get a visitor. No matter how obnoxious she got, they were not to get nasty in return. I dressed up as Cool Colleen. I just used a wig, dark sunglasses, shiny gold metallic shirt, black boots, etc. Cool Colleen rings the doorbell. They know her from school. A pre-selected child answers (you can't have 17 kids rushing to the front door!) I barge into

the living room and try to get them to come over to my house for pizza and ice cream and a new movie. When they show resistance, I try to tempt them with a really good time, try to bribe, to insult them with names like “wimps” and “chicken” and use threats such as “I won’t be your friend” and “I’ll tell everybody at school what babies you were.” I exclaim how un-cool it is to obey your parents—they will never find out any way, etc.. I walk off defeated and annoyed.

Afterwards I quiz them on the techniques Colleen employed to get them to do what she wanted (threats, insults, temptations, bribing, pleading, etc) and pointed out that peers and acquaintances will use these techniques in the future to get them to do all sorts of things that are wrong such as cheating, smoking, stealing, lying, vandalism, etc. I ask the students what virtues they practiced: detachment, obedience, steadfastness, trustworthiness, and courage.

(This skit is also used in our unit on honoring parents. When we do that unit, I share with them many writings about the importance of obedience to parents, etc. See quotes under “Honor Thy Parents.”)

*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, page 100

*Trustworthiness is in truth the best of vestures for your temples and the most glorious crown for your heads. ~Baha'u'llah:* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 38

*Trustworthiness, wisdom and honesty are, of a truth, God's beauteous adornments for His creatures. ~Baha'u'llah:* Trustworthiness, page 334

*The companions of God are, in this day, the lump that must leaven the peoples of the world. They must show forth such trustworthiness, such truthfulness and perseverance, such deeds and character that all mankind may profit by their example....*
*~Baha'u'llah:* Trustworthiness, page 334

*I counsel you, O friends of God, to comport yourselves with the utmost trustworthiness in your dealings with my servants and people. ~Baha'u'llah:* Trustworthiness, page 335

*Number me with such of Thy servants as have detached themselves from everything but Thee, have sanctified themselves from the transitory things of this world, and have freed themselves from the promptings of the voicers of idle fancies.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Baha'i Prayers (US edition), page 57

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

....the children have the duty to obey their parents..... (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of New Zealand, December 28, 1980 in Lights of Guidance, page 219)

*Beware lest ye commit that which would sadden the hearts of your fathers and mothers. ~Baha'u'llah:* Family Life, page 387

Trustworthiness is one of the great qualities which must characterize Baha'is.... (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Dominican Republic, February 17, 1980: Lights of Guidance, page 143)

We must not allow the fear of rejection by our friends and neighbours to deter us from our goal: to live the Baha'i life. (From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, July 13, 1972: Lights of Guidance, page 529)

## Wily Wanda

An interactive drama teaching about giving to the Fund, steadfastness, detachment, and insights into advertising.

This piece was performed on stage at 2 different summer schools and the audience feedback was great.

The one described below was done in my living room with my students.

The students are each given a $5.00 bill of play money and told that they have earned this money for their favorite charity/church/temple or for the Baha'i Fund if they are Baha'is. They worked hard for the money but plan to sacrifice it for spiritual purposes. A very crafty sales lady named Wily Wanda will ring the doorbell and try to weasel the money out of them. You decide how much you want to prep the class for what is to come: You can state that they are to practice the virtues of steadfastness and detachment, and define and give examples of steadfastness and detachment. I reminded the kids that steadfastness and detachment are usually expressed together: We show detachment from our desires, our fears, our weaknesses, our insecurities, etc., when we are steadfast. The children play while I get into an outrageous costume. (Think 1970's upper class middle-aged suburbanite—with a flamboyant taste. Red high heels, loud jewelry, white gloves, hideous wig, polyester red dress, white purse, ugly white hat, etc.) I ring the door bell and a pre-selected student answers. (Though in real life I hope they would never open the door to such a person!) I barge into the living room.

I use several exaggerated sales techniques to get them to buy an empty plastic milk carton for only $80.00: (The amount if all the students combined their $5.00). First I gush how cute and pretty and handsome they are and that they are so lucky because I am here to inform them that for a limited time only, they can now purchase my most prized product. I give my "product" a flashy name—"Cartonne de la Ecstasy", explaining that this means "Carton of Happiness" in French. Then I rapidly start declaring such things as: *Everyone* has one, its a limited edition, their satisfaction is fully guaranteed, I will cheerfully refund *whatever's left* of their money at any time with no questions *answered,* what a good deal it is—its *only* $80.00. I then insist that it will make them popular, then attempt to provoke insecurity by informing them that they will be the only ones if they don't get one.

Then I desperately begin extolling its numerous virtues such as: it comes with its own sticker (the label), its fully assembled, it can be used as a birdbath with a drain (the cap) if cut in half, its has beautiful curves, comes with its own handle, the cap comes off effortlessly, you can make sounds with it by beating on it or filling it with pebbles, the last bit of milk still in it will begin to smell bad and you can use it as a weapon to ward off annoying people, it is light-weight, within 1 year it will be a collectors' item, .....etc.

I lower it to half price. They still resist and I then accuse them of being un-American and sarcastically demand where their consumer mentality is. When that fails I tell them my husband has just left me with ten children. They take pity, and almost give in out of compassion. I lower the price to $5.00, hoping one kid will succumb, but no luck. Then the real test comes: I pull out a bag of large marshmallows and say they can have it for $80.00 dollars. Still no luck. So then I go down to $40.00. A few start to waiver. Then I slowly tear open the bag and eat one in front of them, really exaggerating the joy of each bite, the luscious feel of the marshmallow, as if each bite puts me in a state of ecstasy. Sensing that a few individuals are sorely tempted and are succumbing, I offer individual marshmallows for $5.00 each. Three give in, figuring this is all a game anyway, and the money isn't real but the marshmallows are! The other children are appalled but probably jealous and lusting too.

Then thanking those that gave in, I depart. If no one gave in at all, I stomp out of the house highly annoyed. When I come back in I immediately take off the wig and hat (so they will hopefully now take me seriously). I announce (this may or may not be good child psychology--you decide) that those who showed steadfastness can have 3 marshmallows. When I saw the buyers' snug and possibly gloating faces as they ate their marshmallow, I had to make a point! Usually those that get 3 take pity on the buyers and share. We did a little debriefing, and I listed the techniques I used on them, explaining how advertisers use these same methods to manipulate them. One girl, who is particularly kind, said she felt that if I had ten kids to feed alone, that we should show generosity and compassion—but I pointed out that I gave ample evidence that I was not trustworthy and asked why she would believe anything I said.

*Some Tips:* To make it easier to remember all my ploys, I had written key words on the milk jug itself, then camouflaged it a bit by having scribbled "WW" in the same red ink all over it. I flaunted the "artwork", saying that it was my own personal insignia, etc. It is important to first offer the carton and the bag of marshmallows for the cost of the group's total assets. Otherwise, the skit could end prematurely if just a few give in. The entire group will never fall for the ploys. Also, if a child does buy the carton, make it unrewarding by saying that the one in your hand is a demonstration model only, and that theirs will be mailed.

As part of the debriefing, you may want to share some of the quotes below, and also remind students that we are continually warned not to throw away spiritual rewards and spiritual bounties for material ones, that material things are as nothing compared to the spiritual ones. (The carton being empty is a good symbol of this.) The sacrifices we make in this world will be recompensed with much greater delights. Thus, the giving of 3 marshmallows for being steadfast, symbolizes this— in the end, those that were steadfast got more than those who were not.

*The world is but a show, vain and empty, a mere nothing, bearing the semblance of reality. Set not your affections upon it. ~Baha'u'llah,* Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 328

*Barter not the garden of eternal delight for the dust-heap of a mortal world. ~Baha'u'llah*, The Persian Hidden Words #39

*He, verily, shall recompense the charitable, and doubly repay them for what they have bestowed. ~Baha'u'llah*, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 278

Steadfastness is a treasure that makes a man so rich as to have no need of the world or any person or any thing that is therein. Constancy is a special joy, that leads us mortals on to lofty heights, great progress, and the winning of the perfections of Heaven. ~Shoghi Effendi: Bahiyyih Khanum, page 148

MORE RELATED QUOTES:

*Blessed is the man who hath detached himself from all else but Me....*
*~Baha'u'llah:* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 17

*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, page 100

*Our greatest efforts must be directed towards detachment from the things of the world..... ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Paris Talks, page 87

*Number me with such of Thy servants as have detached themselves from everything but Thee, have sanctified themselves from the transitory things of this world, and have freed themselves from the promptings of the voicers of idle fancies.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Baha'i Prayers (US edition), page 57

*Such must be thy steadfastness in the Cause of God, that no earthly thing whatsoever will have the power to deter thee from thy duty. Though the powers of earth be leagued against thee, though all men dispute with thee, thou must remain unshaken. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 339

*Therefore, do not follow self; ..... Proceed with perfect steadfastness, and with heart, soul and tongue, turn unto Him, and be not of the thoughtless. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha*: Baha'i World Faith, page 434

*Today is the day for steadfastness and constancy. Blessed are they that stand firm and immovable as the rock ..... ~ `Abdu'l-Baha*: Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 17

*O ye beloved of God, these are days for steadfastness, for firmness and perseverance in the Cause of God. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 294

*The friends of God must arise with such steadfastness that ..... they will not shift or waver in their resolve, their determination, their enkindlement, their devotion and service in the Cause of God. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha*: Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, p. 295

## Eye-wareness Game to go with Role Plays

This game is great follow up after a group participates in numerous role plays. I did not put it in the New World Order Games Manual b/c it is completely linked to dramas. You will have noticed that many of the dramas have extensive quotes which relate to the situations and virtues expressed in the dramas. This game is played using those quotes. It was originally played after my class had experienced the following role plays: *Wily Wanda, The Dar, The Flood, Cool Colleen, The Stolen Toy, The Scar-Faced Child, Moody Matilda, The Grocery Line and the Baby, Zymic Zelda, and The Big Load.* This game can also be played after having read many stories or even after playing games which teach Baha'i concepts or virtues, as long as you have a compilation of relevant quotes.

The game was designed to promote one of the 4 goals of the Core Curriculum, **Spiritual Perception.** This is defined as "Penetrating inner vision and the acquisition and utilization of a Baha'i perspective. The discovery of purpose and meaning. The bringing to bear of Baha'i spiritual values, principles, and laws upon the individual's expanding consciousness of issues and problems. As such it includes the capacity to apply, analyze, and evaluate, using Baha'i Law, principles, and qualities as the standard for discernment."

Based on this definition, I include relating and applying Baha'i teachings to everyday life and situations as spiritual perception. I really want children to understand how relevant and applicable the Baha'i Writings are to everything they do, everything they experience, and to all personal and world issues. A strong Baha'i is one who uses the Writings to guide their actions, applies the Writings to problems and relationships, uses the Writings as a standard for behavior, for determining what is good and bad, true and false, right and wrong. That is why it is so important that Baha'i children develop a strong and intimate relationship with the Writings and memorize them, so the wisdom they contain are accessible to consciousness as needed.

About the game: I had made large cards for all of the dramas we did on 2 overnight sessions. These cards had the title of the drama, but also some colorful drawings so new readers could recognize them easily and it made the game more interesting and colorful. So for example, for *Moody Matilda*, the card had silverware and glasses on it, and the drawings and lettering were done in fuschia and lime green with polka dots—which matched my costume. *Cool Colleen's* card had a video tape, ice cream cones and picture of a pizza slice on it, along with dark sunglasses. *The Flood* had a boat on water, with planets in the sky, since it took place on a far-away planet. *The Scar-Faced Child* card had a sad looking face with a scar and tickets on the other side, *The Dar's* lettering evolved into vines and leaves and had a green gem, *The Stolen Toy* had a hand touching a Koosh ball, *and Wily Wanda's* had marshmallows, $ symbols all over it, and a box that said "The Fund?" on it, then the word "or" and an arrow pointing to a purse with "WW" on it. All the cards utilized the colors associated with the main costume used, if there was one. Each card also had a small number in the right hand corner.

I had created a 5 page compilation of quotes from the Writings which all related to at least one (often 4 or 5) of the dramas. (The relative quotes are all listed in this manual with the dramas/role plays). I coded each quote by writing after it all the numbers (which represented role plays) which the quote could apply to. The students gathered in a circle on the floor and I spread the cards out in the middle. Then I would read a quote, tell the students how many cards could relate to it, and then each team would try to determine which cards went with each quote, showing their choice by holding up a card. I often asked them to explain their choice, so they wouldn't just randomly go through all 10 cards in hopes of a correct answer.

For example, *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, went with *The Dar,* who gave the children magical powers which were to be used to make the world a better place, and warned the students not to use the powers only for their own advantage, as the hunters in Nicaragua did.

*No power can exist except through unity. ~Baha'u'llah:* Consultation, page 93, went with *The Flood* in which all children combined their "Life Force" liquid to save the life of a ship-wrecked survivor.

Because the group was so large, and it was not feasible to have all sitting around the cards on the floor, we divided the group into 4 teams of 4, with the 17th child being the score keeper. He used a dry erase board. Then each team had an "A" pair and a "B" pair. For the first round the "A" pairs of all teams got to play, for the second, the "B" pairs. Often, a team member held up a skit I had not chosen, but was very aptly able to explain how it did relate—in which case they got a point. I had 5 pages of relevant quotes, but we only did one page.

I had prizes for everyone for this game. The winning team got first pick, but they were basically all the same. The prizes were adjustable rings with eyes on them. The pupils were different colors and some had lashes, but there were enough so that everyone got one they liked.

The eye of course represents the inner eye or spiritual perception. I explained that our inner vision or spiritual perception is sharpened when we learn to apply Baha'u'llah's and Abdu'l-Baha's Words to our daily experiences and behavior, to see how relevant they are to everything we do and how they can guide our choices in life.

## Lena and The Dragon Slave Children

A story about courage, faith, and the power of prayer, with related activities. There is a comic strip-style illustrated version of this story in Brilliant Star, July/Aug. 2002

Jackie Mulhall and I wrote this story late one night. We deliberately put in some very classic (cliche?) imagery for familiarity's sake. It was originally written for a preschool class. I later changed it and made it more scary for older children. You can adapt it to fit the age level of your group. I can assure you, if told

with flair, they will be on the edge of their seats wide-eyed and attentive! With older kids, (like around age 8 and up), I make the room very dark and read by a pale blue light when Lena enters the dark tunnel. This really heightens the suspense.

The reference to not picking up toys in the first paragraph was to get the children to associate that habit with something negative and undesirable—and maybe take pity on their parents who as you may note, tend to do daily what the dragon slave children are forced to do! You can also relate the dragon to our lower nature—which imprisons and enslaves us unless we have spirituality and faith. (Here one must learn to control and direct one's animal impulses, not to be a slave to them ---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)

QUOTES RELATING TO THE STORY OF LENA AND THE DRAGON SLAVE CHILDREN:

*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

*Thou art He Who changeth through His bidding*
*abasement into glory,*
*and weakness into strength,*
*and powerlessness into might,*
*and fear into calm,*
*and doubt into certainty.*
*No God is there but Thee, the Mighty, the Beneficent.*
*~Baha'u'llah*: Prayers and Meditations, page 249

*In Him have I placed My whole trust*
*and upon Him do the faithful place their complete reliance.*
*~The Bab*: Selections from the Writings of The Bab, page 27

*Heed not your weaknesses and frailty;*
*Fix your gaze upon the invincible power*
*of the Lord, your God, the Almighty....*
*Arise in His name, put your trust wholly in Him,*
*and be assured of ultimate victory.*
*~ The Bab,* as quoted in Century of Light, p. 53

*Rely upon God. Trust in Him. Praise Him,*
*and call Him continually to mind.*
*He verily turneth trouble into ease,*
*and sorrow into solace, and toil into utter peace.*
*He verily hath dominion over all things.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha*: Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 178

*Strive as much as ye can*

*to turn wholly toward the Kingdom,*
*that ye may acquire*
*innate courage and ideal power.*
~ *`Abdu'l-Baha*: Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 206

*Look not upon thy weakness and thy powerlessness:*
*Look rather upon the might of thy Lord*
*that hath encompassed all horizons.*
~ *`Abdu'l-Baha*: new translation taken from Tablet of the Heart

*He whom the grace of Thy mercy aideth,*
*though he be but a drop,*
*shall become the boundless ocean,*
*and the merest atom which the outpouring*
*of Thy loving-kindness assisteth,*
*shall shine even as the radiant star.*
~ *`Abdu'l-Baha:* Baha'i Prayers (US edition), page 32

*Trust in the favor of God.*
*Look not at your own capacities,*
*for the divine bestowal can transform*
*a drop into an ocean;*
*it can make a tiny seed a lofty tree.*
~ *`Abdu'l-Baha*: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 131

*Remember not your own limitations;*
*the help of God will come to you.*
*Forget yourself. God's help will surely come!*
*When you call on the Mercy of God waiting to reinforce you,*
*your strength will be tenfold.*
~ *`Abdu'l-Baha*: Paris Talks, page 38

*Now we must not consider our ability and capacity,*
*nay, rather, we must fix our gaze upon*
*the favors and bounties of God, in these days,*
*Who has made of the drop a sea, and of the atom a sun.*
~ *`Abdu'l-Baha:* Tablets of the Divine Plan, page 7

"Remembrance Of Me" from *Make Firm Our Steps* CD by Mark Mcdowell contains the verse:

*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

There is another lovely musical version of this quote called "Power of Thy Name" from *King of Days* CD by Barb Qualls. Available through www.special-ideas.com .

# LENA AND THE DRAGON SLAVE CHILDREN

Long, Long ago, in a far away land there was a lovely little village nestled at the bottom of a mountain at the edge of a forest. Now this village was a pleasant place to live except that it had one very big problem. In the mountain next to the village there was a deep, dark cave, and in that cave there lived a nasty, dirty, stinky, mean, fire breathing dragon. Now, that dragon was a *really* lazy beast. He never liked to clean up after himself. Why, when he played with his toys, he never put them away afterwards! He never washed his plate after dinner and he didn't even build himself a bathroom to go in!

The people of the village lived in constant fear because every once in a while that dreadful dragon would swoop down on the village, grab a child in his talons, and take him or her home to be his slave. Those poor unfortunate children would be forced to clean up his playthings, wash his dishes, sweep up bones, and shovel mounds of dragon manure. OH, groooosss!!!

As you can imagine, this was very upsetting for everyone. The villagers were forever trying to rescue their children. Big brave men would hike from the village up the mountain to the dragon's cave, bearing swords, spears, arrows, and torches of fire, but they were never able to defeat the nasty dragon. They only came home tired, burned, and empty-handed. Things went on this way for years.

I didn't tell you about Lena yet. In the village lived a little tiny girl. Her name was Lena. Everyone in the village called her "teeny leeny." Lena may have been teeny but she had big dreams and a big heart. On nights when the wind blew down from the mountain into the village, Lena lay awake in her bed. Sometimes, if she listened hard, she could hear the mournful voices of the dragon slave children floating in on the breeze through her open bedroom window. What do you think she heard? (Heeeeelp us, please saaaave us, heeeeelp!)

It was at those times that Lena knew in her heart what she wanted to do most in life: Rescue the dragon slave children from their wicked dragon master!!

When Lena shared her dream with her family they all laughed and laughed. “How can a tiny child conquer a giant dragon? Why, even our strongest, bravest, biggest men have been unsuccessful! Lena, you’re way too tiny to do such a big thing”! her parents and brothers told her.

But Lena knew a secret that her family and those big strong men didn’t know: With the help of God, even the tiniest person could do more than 100 men.! This belief gave Lena courage and hope. She knew that if God wanted her to free the slave children, nothing, not even a dragon, could stop her. What do you think Lena did to get God’s help and to know what God wanted her to do? Pray!!!

For weeks and weeks she prayed for a way to help the children. Then one night after praying with all her heart, she had a very clear dream. In her dream she walked outside her house and found a simple basket under some bushes. Inside the basket wrapped in a golden cloth was a most unusual wand. It looked as if it was made of gold and silver and it was tipped with a single feather. As Lena gazed at the wand, a shiny blue bird flew down and landed on her shoulder. It began to sing a sweet melody in her ear which Lena could fully understand. The bird told her that who ever was touched by the wand would be able to fly home to their nest, but that the holder of the wand would be wingless.

Just then, Lena woke up suddenly. Her heart was beating fast. She clearly remembered the dream and was seized with a very strong feeling that the wand in her dream was magical, but real--- and could be used to save the dragon slave children. The sun was just rising and the rest of the family was still sound asleep. She immediately got out of bed and ran to the same place outside she had seen in her dream. Sure enough, nestled under the same bushes was the very same simple basket. Lena dashed over to it and with great excitement flung open the lid.

Just as in the dream, a golden cloth lay covering something. Lena held her breath as she gently unfolded it.....And there was the very same wand!!!. She immediately thanked God for this wonderful gift. She wasted no time and ran back inside to write a note to her family informing them that she had gone to the mountain dragon cave to free the children. She threw on her traveling cape, wrapped some bread and cheese along with the wand in a handkerchief, filled a pouch with water, and set off. But as the door shut behind her, a breeze blew in and carried her note into the fireplace. Her parents never found it.

Lena set out on her journey full of hope and determination, knowing that God was with her. As she climbed the mountain, she prayed continually to God for courage and strength. But between the prayers she could not help but think about the second thing the bird in her dream had told her...*"The one who held the wand would be wingless*...." She had an anxious feeling that she may not be able to return home even if the slave children were freed. But she still continued to climb up the mountain past big jagged boulders and wind swept twisted trees. It was hard, hard work, but God gave her the strength to keep going up and up.

By the time she reached the mouth of the cave, her village was just a tiny speck below. Now the sun was setting, and the cave was dark but---a last ray of light shone on a small hole next to the cave-- too tiny for big men. Lena got down on her hands and knees and could just barely fit in the hole. When she got inside, she realized it was a narrow tunnel. It was very dark and she felt cold and frightened. Again, she prayed for God's assistance and much to Lena's surprise and relief, the wand began to glow a warm, soft light. So, using the light, she crawled along the twists and turns of the tunnel not knowing where it would lead. Then suddenly, by the light of her wand, much to her horror, Lena saw a pair of glowing green eyes staring right at her!!! Her heart seemed to stop. Who do you think it was?

Thank God!, it was not the dragon, but a beautiful red silky fox. He spoke to her kindly, in human words. He said: "Follow me, I will show you the way to the children."

Lena felt God's loving care through this friendly fox. She crawled behind the fox for quite a distance until they came to what seemed a dead end. "This is where I leave you" the fox said. He pointed his nose towards a large moss covered boulder. "I am not strong enough to move this but God willing, you can." Lena was quite sad to bid farewell to the fox, but oh so grateful for his companionship and guidance. She thanked him and offered him her bread and cheese, which he gladly nibbled. They shared a bit of water together then in a flash, he was gone.

Lena studied the rock boulder for a moment, then knew exactly what to do. She knelt on her knees and chanted a prayer for the remover of difficulties. Soon the wand felt very warm in her fingers and seemed to pull her hand towards the rock. When the wand touched the stone, it immediately began to crack and broke into a million pieces. Each piece sprouted wings and flew out of the tunnel! To Lena's joy, there was now an opening in the wall! She peered through it and saw ten village children!!! They were huddled around a fire. She listened to their weak and tired voices as they discussed preparing for bed. Their work was done for the day and they were exhausted, dirty, sad, and oh so, so, homesick. The dragon was nowhere to be seen. He must be in his own private chamber, Lena reassured herself. She began to softly whistle an old village folk tune. The children immediately looked up in wonder. They were amazed to see a little girl's face in a hole in the cave wall above them. Lena beckoned with her hands for them to climb up to her. Still stunned, they managed to scramble up the wall onto ledges, but terribly afraid that at any moment the dragon would enter. They were skinny, underfed children, just the right size to fit into Lena's tunnel. She grabbed hold of each of their hands and pulled them up, amazed at her own strength.

The children were so excited and hopeful. Using her glowing wand, Lena led them, on hands and knees through the tunnel. They barely made a sound for fear of being caught by the dragon. Finally, they arrived at the other end and joyously climbed out and hugged each other. They immediately began to scramble down the mountain. But before they got very far, a foul smelling, odorous cloud of green gases wafted over them. They all froze with terror. What do you think they smelled?

Next, the ground trembled beneath their feet and they heard a low, rumbling growl. Horrified, they began to whimper and cry. “The dragon has found us out!!!” They cried. “We will be severely punished! You will get it the worst!!!”, they told Lena. Just then, the hideous, green, slimy, scaly, stinky creature appeared from out the mouth of the cave’s main entrance. Lena was terrified to the bone, but she remembered the wand and firmly told the children to not run away. She ordered them to encircle her and they did just that (because they knew running was useless). Lena yelled: “Fly away home dear ones, to your nests you go!” And as she did so, she tapped each one on the head with the wand and they immediately rose up in the air and like a streak of lightening were gone. The dragon could not track them they flew so fast. He was billowing smoke and was horribly angry by now. Lena was the only one left. She began to tremble uncontrollably as the dragon lumbered towards her, furiously gnashing his very sharp teeth, shaking the ground with each step....Lena closed her eyes and begged God to help her.

Immediately she felt silky fur against her tiny leg. It was the friendly fox!!! He seemed to smile and nodded towards the wand. Lena then knew what to do. She mounted the fox and quickly tapped him with her wand just as the dragon lunged for her hand. But Lena was prepared—she had switched the wand around and she bravely thrust it *handle first* into his filthy, slimy, smoking mouth. Right at that moment, the dragon’s wings began to droop and shrivel up. He let out a terrible screech and tried to grab Lena and the fox, but they were already high in the air flying home to her nest. “God is Great, the Help in Peril!” they sang as they flew towards the guiding lights of the village.

THE END

*Note to teachers*: When we read the story to little kids, (who tend to have short attention spans and need frequent physical activity), we stopped reading at the point where Lena found the wand in her *waking state*. We then took the kids outside where to their great delight, under a bush, was a basket, and in the basket, were a bunch of the wands (described below) wrapped in gold cloth. Then we walked back to the house and continued the story. Also, if your group would not be overly scared, turn off the lights when Lena enters the cave, and read by a blue light or tiny flashlight. My students loved this....

**Related Activity: Virtue Hunt**

See how many virtues kids can find in the story which Lena expressed. Here are the ones the authors know of—there may be more:

Compassion/Caring
Idealism
Courage
Faith
Hope
Gratitude (She thanks God and the fox)
Consideration (leaving a note for her family)
Willingness to sacrifice her life for others
Generosity (sharing food with the fox)
Determination
Perseverance
Wisdom (knowing what to do and when to do it)
Service

**Related Craft: Wand Making**

Make wands so you can play "Rescue the Dragon Slave Children" game with children. We suggest you at least put a feather at the end of the wand to symbolize the power of flight. We used the flashiest, sparkliest pipe cleaners we could find. We bent the bottom 1/3 into a loop and twisted it onto the rest of the pipe cleaner so you have a handle. Then we cut pretty purple, bright blue, and pink straws in 1/3rds and for each wand, slid that 2 inches of straw down the pipe cleaner until it stopped at the handle loop. Then we found fluffy matching colored feathers and attached one to the end of the pipe cleaner—so the purple straw pipe cleaner had a purple feather, etc.—but any feathers and any straws and any pipe cleaners will do.

**Related Game: Rescue the Dragon Slave Children**

One person is the dragon. An adult or older youth is a good choice for this role, but not essential. If you want, give him or her a slightly scary mask. I wore an alligator nose/mouth in this class. (They can be a dragon, an ogre, a goblin, or any kind of monster you wish). Several kids are the slave-prisoners and the Dragon stands guard over them. The dragon and his or her prisoners should have a defined area using a rope, rug, tape or chalk drawn on pavement. The dragon can't step outside of or chase rescuers beyond the bounds of the marked area. The prisoners can't step out of the bounds unless freed.

One or more other kids are the rescuers and they have wands. (If there are more than 2 rescuer children, you will need 2 dragons, otherwise the game will end way too fast.) If they can touch a child-prisoner with the wand (and the prisoner is aware of it—since it is a feather) that child is free to fly away—but if the dragon touches the rescuer, the rescuer has to drop the wand and become a prisoner. If the child is touched by the wand and is outside the prison boundary, the dragon cannot re-claim him or her by touching them---unless the freed child picks up a wand and becomes a rescuer and gets touched trying to free another. The wand may be retrieved by others that are free. The rescuers win if all the children escape, but the dragon wins if all the children are captured. If the game is too easy for the rescuers, you can allow the dragon to step one foot out of the circle when trying to touch a rescuer. Or you can allow the dragon to re-capture a freed (i.e. touched by the wand) slave if the dragon touches them before they get out of reach.

Encourage kids to work together—if several try to free the captives at once, coming from different sides of the taped boundaries, they have a much better chance b/c the dragon can't go after kids in front and be guarding his/her rear at the same time. Sacrificing one's own freedom for the release of others is definitely a possibility in this game, as it was in Lena's story.

## I Think You're Wonderful (M)

This one is on Red Grammer's *Teaching Peace* CD. Available at www.bahaibookstore.com. It is especially appropriate for preschool and early elementary age. We have used it for lessons on kindness, the power of goodly speech and of focusing on the good in others, and showing appreciation and love.

Whenever the lyrics “I think you’re wonderful” are sung, dancers simply hold both hands of another, look into their eyes, and sing the phrase. If that is too intimate, they can just point to someone, instead of holding hands,-- but to make it more meaningful, they should still try to look them in the eyes and sing the phrase. (I demonstrate how unfulfilling and shallow it seems to say “I think you’re wonderful” to someone while staring off into space.) The children let go after the phrase, and try to do this with as many different people as possible. They can do free form dancing in-between holding hands or pointing.

It was interesting that almost half the class opted out and wanted to just watch after I described the actions. But within a minute into the song, all but 2, including the 10 yr. old boys, were attracted and wanted to be in on the playful and loving spirit of the song. They got up and danced with as much abandon as the littlest girls! I confess that I had set the tone by being really dramatic and doing exaggerated ballet-waltz-like movements. And I had told those on the couch that if they did not want to dance or sing, fine, but they were not exempt from being pointed to by the rest of us for the “I think you’re wonderful” phrase. The song became one big affirmation for all of us.

## Warm Fuzzies (M)

Pantomime and dance about affirming others.

We listened, danced and did creative dramatics to a song called “Warm Fuzzies” from the VanManens’ *Barley Bread and Reindeer Milk* cassette. (They are Baha’is, so Special Ideas or the BDS may carry this tape). We first discussed what warm fuzzies are and kids and myself gave examples. I talked about how some are verbal and some are non verbal, but a warm fuzzy is any act or words that help a person feel good inside, i.e., special, happy, cherished, respected, cared about, valued or loved. We noted that all warm fuzzies are an expression of at least one virtue, especially kindness, caring, friendliness, and love. I asked the kids what would we have in the world if every body only gave others warm fuzzies? (World peace, world unity) and I shared this quote by Abdu’l-Baha to reinforce that notion:

*“It is your duty to be exceedingly kind to every human being 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

(This activity goes well with *The Power of Words and the Power of Put Downs and Put Ups* .)

During the song, several moods are depicted and I asked children to be actors and actresses and show those moods in facial expressions and body language along with me, while we danced. Each of us chose a pom pom to represent a warm fuzzy. (If possible, I try to heat these up in my oven or in a pan on the stove—but I have burned many this way, so one needs another person to check on them!) Anyway, during particular parts of the song which talked about warm fuzzies, *children were to gently touch the face of another child to symbolize giving them a warm fuzzy, and the facial expression would change accordingly.* We were sad, mad, scared, grouchy and happy, etc. I emphasized gentleness with the touch and to touch different kids each time.

Here are the lyrics, and some more details in the body actions—which were deliberately melodramatic to make it more fun:

Now when you’re down, you’re feeling bad, you’re feeling low, you’re feeling sad *(Every body droops, walks slowly, looks really sad)*

You gotta find someone you love, and get a warm, warm, warm, warm fuzzy *(upon the word “warm” kids present their cheeks to each other for gentle stroking, then cheer up upon receiving a “warm fuzzy”)*

CHORUS:

*(Any time during the chorus it mentions "warm fuzzies" kids rub each other's cheeks and then look very happy)*

Warm Fuzzies feel so good, they make you feel just the way you should

Warm fuzzies feel so fine, early in the morning or half past nine

So when you're down and feeling bad *(faces and bodies look depressed)*

Go get a warm, warm, warm, warm, warm fuzzy

(end of chorus)

Now when you're mad, infuriated, you feel you're not appreciated *(Every body looks really angry with faces and bodies, makes fists, stomps, sulks, pouts, etc.)*

You gotta find someone you love, and get a warm, warm, warm, warm, fuzzy *(kids rub each other's cheeks and then look very happy)*

CHORUS

Now when your mom, is feeling grouchy, and she's just sitting there on the couch-y *(I sit or pretend to sit on a couch, looking highly unpleasant and irritated)*

You gotta give some of your love, give her a warm, warm, warm, warm fuzzy *(Kids give me warm fuzzies and I cheer up dramatically.---- This can be dangerous if you have 30 kids pressing pom poms on your cheeks! Its better if more women are available to play extra moms in this situation*).

CHORUS

Now if you have a scary dream, you want to hide, you want to scream *(We all look terrified, tremble, hide under our arms or clothing, and scream. I draw the kids to me as if seeking comfort, as I act extremely frightened)*

You gotta find someone you love, and get a warm, warm, warm, warm, fuzzy *(kids rub each other's cheeks and then look very happy and relieved)*

CHORUS

More relevant quotes:

*A kindly tongue is the lodestone of the hearts of men. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 289

*We have created you from one tree and have caused you to be as the leaves and fruit of the same tree, that haply ye may become a source of comfort to one another.*
*~The Bab:* Selections from the Bab, page 129

*Be the source of consolation to every sad one, assist every weak one.....*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 453

*Be kind to all peoples; care for every person..... strive ye to gladden every soul.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, pages 244-245

## The Power of Words

A graphic activity which uses a bit of drama to teach about the effect of being hurtful with words. (Goes well with "Warm Fuzzies" and "I Think You're Wonderful" songs. See also quotes from next activity below.)

*.....the tongue is a smoldering fire, and excess of speech a deadly poison. Material fire consumeth the body, whereas the fire of the tongue devoureth both heart and soul. The force of the former lasteth but for a time, whilst the effects of the latter endureth a century. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 264

*One word is like unto springtime causing the tender saplings of the rose-garden of knowledge to become verdant and flourishing, while another word is even as a deadly poison. ~Baha'u'llah:* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 173

*.....one word hath the influence of spring and causeth hearts to become fresh and verdant, while another is like unto blight which causeth the blossoms and flowers to wither. ~Baha'u'llah:* Writers and Writing, page 407

*A kindly tongue is the lodestone of the hearts of men. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 289

I hold up a large paper heart decorated with rhinestones and explain this stands for a person's soul or spiritual heart, and it is precious and beautiful. The gems represent the attributes of God. (Another metaphor from the Baha'i Writings). Then children go around a circle and as they hold up an evil Indonesian mask to their face, blurt out a put down or insult, etc. As they do this, I tear a rip in the heart, explaining that this is the effect it has on others. The mask, I tell them is ugly and it represents their inner self when they are mean to others. Then they share ways to affirm and serve others, and as they do, they hold up an iridescent star to their heart and they get to place a sparkley Band-Aid on one of the tears on the heart. (See activity below where to get holographic bandaids.)

## The Power of Put Downs and Put Ups

A more elaborate version of *The Power of Words* using the same props.

This is a somewhat elaborate activity to illustrate the impact our words and actions can have on the hearts of others. First we talked about verbal putdowns. I gave them examples of verbal ones such as saying "so what!" "shut up", "go away". I told them that verbal put downs were basically any worded insult or belittling comment. Then I pointed out that non-verbal ones can be just as hurtful. Using students, I acted out examples of non-verbal put downs such as eyeball rolling or lip curling if you are paired with someone you do not like, scooting away from someone sitting next to you, holding your nose as someone walks by, handing out only a few invitations to your party in a public setting, and demonstrating that you can do something that someone else cannot. The example I used for this one was explaining that let's pretend one student had trouble learning to tie his shoelaces and simply could not do it. I asked him to untie his shoelace. I untied one of mine. Then I proceeded to very snobbishly and gleefully tie my lace in front of him obviously showing off my skill and exalting myself.

Then to graphically and visually illustrate the effect of put downs we did the following: I presented a large red heart covered with rhinestones. I asked them what it stood for (the human heart or soul). I asked them what the gems stood for, (inner beauty, the virtues). We then talked about how beautiful the human soul is, and how in the Baha'i writings it says that we are mines of divine gems, the virtues. I asked: "Now, why would anybody want to damage such a beautiful creation of God?" I explained how we are really quite ugly inside when we give put downs. So next, I asked each child to go around the circle and share a put down they have received, heard, or given, and as they do, they put an ugly Balinese evil goddess mask up to their face to symbolize how ugly they are inside when they say or do those things. And as each child shared a put down, I ripped a tear in the heart to illustrate the effect it has on the receiver. (The

more beautiful the heart, the more the kids are mortified at this. It really makes an impression to tear such a lovely thing.) Name calling was the most common put down, calling others stupid, fat, ugly, etc., and saying "shut up" and "go away" were some others. I asked the students to give different ones than the ones which had already been shared.

Then I asked them to list all the emotions they feel when they hear a put down directed at them. Here is the list they came up with: sad, mad, hurt, embarrassed, humiliated, lonely, discouraged, miserable, excluded, unloved, stupid, bitter, sour, aggressive, and insecure. I then asked them if they enjoy feeling this way and if they wanted to experience these feelings in Baha'i class? Of course they don't, so I emphasized that they therefore must not give put downs.

We all agreed that put downs in any form are not kind, create negative feelings, and thus destroy unity and are definitely not allowed!!!

We talked about why people may give put downs such as: having a bad day, being upset or feeling unwell, frustrated, jealous, angry, or hurt, parents or teacher yelled at you, feeling insecure and needing to put yourself up above someone else. I explained what "misery loves company" means, and how when some folks are feeling low, they like to bring others down with them. Also, some wrongfully think that by putting others down, they bring themselves up. The truth is however, spiritually, they are bringing themselves down,---known as debasing. Also, when one gives a put down they are usually saying more about themselves than anyone else.

Then I asked them what is the worst thing they can do when someone gives them a put down? They all knew the answer—give one back. We talked about how that just makes it worse and continues the cycle. I also talked a little about justice and how if someone is really abusing you verbally or physically, its okay to stand up for yourself, but you can do it w/o belittling them or fighting—unless you are being seriously physically attacked. Just walking away takes more courage than getting revenge. We gave few brief examples of things you can say that are not return attacks, such as "That is not true and you know it" or "Why do you feel the need to say those things to me?" or "How would you feel if someone said that about you?" I told them how it is unlikely that someone will continue to abuse you if you show them kindness in return—they feel bad about hurting someone who is nice to them. Abdu'l-Baha, our exemplar, said:

*Wherefore must the loved ones of God associate in affectionate fellowship with stranger and friend alike, showing forth to all the utmost loving-kindness, disregarding the degree of their capacity, never asking whether they deserve to be loved. In every instance let the friends be considerate and infinitely kind. Let them never be defeated by the malice of the people, by their aggression and their hate, no matter how intense. If others hurl their darts against you, offer them milk and honey in return; if they poison your lives, sweeten their souls; if they injure you, teach them how to be comforted; if they inflict a wound upon you, be a balm to their sores; if they sting you, hold to their lips a refreshing cup.* (Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 24)

Next we listened to a song called "Talking 'Bout a Put Down" from Vitamin L's *Everyone's Invited* recording. Red Grammer's "Use A Word" and "I Think You're Wonderful" songs from his *Teaching Peace* CD and the VanManen's "Warm Fuzzies" from their *Barley Bread and Reindeer Milk* recording also go perfectly with this lesson. "I Think You're Wonderful" and "Warm Fuzzies" have dramatic activities to go with them in this manual. Another song that goes extremely well with this lesson is called "Don't Laugh at Me" by Peter, Paul, and Mary, from a CD by the same name. It is very beautiful and touching. It can be obtained as part of a teacher's kit created to combat bullying in schools that includes a video at www.dontlaugh.org. You can also hear the song at http://www.operationrespectct.org/song.htm. If that link doesn't work, try www.operationrespect.org and click on the resources link to hear the song and read the lyrics.

Next I asked them: "If we are all one in spirit, if we are all connected, then what you do to others_____?" And they answered correctly: "Comes back to you." We talked about how what you do to others, you do to yourself spiritually. We discussed how both Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha over and over again explained that we are all one, we are all spiritually connected, --like the waves of one ocean,

the leaves of one tree. Therefore, I asked, when somebody gives a put-down, who is hurt? They immediately said that it hurts the giver as well as the receiver. To prove they were right, I shared the following quotes from the Baha'i Writings, after asking what the word "beware" means. We determined that is used to warn people of danger, to prevent people from getting hurt.

*.....beware lest your hands or tongues cause harm unto anyone among mankind. ~Baha'u'llah,* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 85

*.....the tongue is a smoldering fire, and excess of speech a deadly poison. Material fire consumeth the body, whereas the fire of the tongue devoureth both heart and soul. The force of the former lasteth but for a time, whilst the effects of the latter endureth a century. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 264

*Beware lest ye harm any soul, or make any heart to sorrow; lest ye wound any man with your words, be he known to you or a stranger, be he friend or foe.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 73

*Beware! Beware! lest ye offend any heart.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 453

*O people of Baha! Ye are the dawning-places of the love of God and the daysprings of His loving-kindness. Defile not your tongues with the cursing and reviling of any soul.....~Baha'u'llah,* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 129

In sum, the students learned that to hurt others physically or emotionally is spiritually damaging to themselves. What you do to others, you do to yourself.

Then we discussed put ups, and how they have the opposite effect of put downs—and how they too can be verbal or non-verbal. (Such as compliments, smiles, and hugs.) They make people feel loved, cared for, cherished, respected, happy, special, and valued, and they definitely promote unity.

Next I presented a symbolic prop: I had taken 2 holographic foil stars and glued one on top the other, one gold, one silver, and then put a heart shaped red rhinestone in the center and glued the whole thing on a tongue depressor size stick.

Then I showed them a holographic box that contained sparkling holographic patterned Band-Aids. (It is more time effective to have the Band-Aids out of their wrappers, so the only thing students have to do, is peel off the protective covering. Also, its preferable to use Band-aids that are pretty to reinforce the notion that kind words are beautiful. A good source for sparkley band-aids is www.smilemakers.com. Product #BAN24, called Glitter Stars and Strips Bandages. (Amazon also carries these, search under "holographic bandages" or "holographic bandaids" or "Glitter Stars and Strips Bandages.")

We talked about how we shine spiritually when we give put ups. Then I asked them to share a verbal put up, describe a put up, or act a non-verbal one out, and as they did, they were to hold the shiny star prop up to their heart. Then they got to choose a Band-Aid and stick it on one of the tears on the heart. I pointed out that put ups help heal, but the heart will always have scars-- that even people in their 50's can still be hurting from childhood insults.

To shed light on the spiritual consequences of our words, and summarize the spiritual lesson, we ended the activity with these 3 quotations, emphasizing the metaphors used for positive & negative words:

*One word is like unto springtime causing the tender saplings of the rose-garden of knowledge to become verdant and flourishing, while another word is even as a deadly poison. ~Baha'u'llah:* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 173

*.....one word hath the influence of spring and causeth hearts to become fresh and verdant, while another is like unto blight which causeth the blossoms and flowers to wither. ~Baha'u'llah:* Writers and Writing, page 407

*A kindly tongue is the lodestone of the hearts of men. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 289

*The Lord of celestial wisdom saith: A harsh word is even as sword thrust; a gentle word as milk. ~ Baha'u'llah :* The Tabernacle of Unity, pages 8-9

## Recipe for Nearness to God Skits

*Nearness to God is possible through devotion to Him, service to humanity, unity with mankind, loving-kindness to all, acquisition of praiseworthy virtues, and sacrifice of self. Nearness is likeness.~Abdu'l-Baha* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 148

(This quote is actually various segments of a much longer quote. I used the words and concepts I felt the kids could relate to, but did not alter any of the wording or the meaning by abbreviating it. We used this for our unit on God and also for our unit on Life after Death, since it is clear from Baha'i scripture that paradise in the next world is being spiritually "nigh unto God".)

I chose teams of 2 and asked each team to put their hand into a basket and pull out a small card stock square. Written in sparkling ink on each square was one of the "ingredients" from their memory verse. (The quote above). They were to develop a short skit to illustrate that ingredient and the rest of us were to guess which one it was. We used sheets with the memory verse on it for reference. The audience was asked to wait until the performers were done before guessing. After applauding, they were to raise their hands and the performer kids alternated calling on audience kids until one of them got the exact phrase that they were trying to depict. Many times more than one phrase was applicable, and I explained that it is frequently the case that in the expression of one virtue, others are often displayed. The ingredients were:

devotion to Him
service to humanity
unity with mankind
loving-kindness to all
acquisition of praiseworthy virtues
sacrifice of self

An example of how one team did this is: one girl played the mother, the other the daughter. The mother asked the daughter to clean up her room. The daughter did, but only partly, doing a rather poor job. So she asked her again, and again she did better, but still not great. The third time, the daughter did a perfect job. After the audience figured out that they were acting out "acquisition of praiseworthy virtues" I asked the kids to label which virtues the daughter was acquiring: obedience, cleanliness, orderliness, thoroughness, and excellence. Another group portrayed acquisition of praiseworthy virtues by showing how 3 children over a 3 week period learned cooperation with a tinker toy set. They enacted 3 different scenes, accompanied by 3 different signs, saying week 1, week 2, & week 3. They started out in week 1 being very selfish and grabby, the second week a little less so, with a little more generosity, then in the 3rd week, really working together to build something really cool, and being very selfless and flexible.

Sacrifice of self was enacted by a person risking their life to rescue someone in a burning building.
Another example was martyrdom for their faith. And yet another was someone volunteering to do an unpleasant service for the Baha'i community b/c no one else would—clean the Baha'i Center bathroom every week.

Devotion to God was portrayed by a child turning down a very enticing invitation to a party b/c his family was hosting a fireside. Another example was a child saying prayers before eating dessert—which meant she got the last and smallest piece.

## Telephone Teaching

Even if one prepares oneself to teach by lots of prayer, has faith in God's assistance and relies on spiritual forces, and sincerely attempts to express virtues when engaging another human heart, one still needs to know what to say when asked questions. I offered that one simple way is to focus on the "3 onenesses": God is one, though we call Him by many different names. We discussed some of those names. Humanity is one--we are all related spiritually and physically. In the spiritual world we are one according to Baha'i scripture ("waves of one sea, leaves of one tree."). We are one family, children of one God. And finally, religion is one--there is only one religion, the religion of God, which He has progressively revealed to us throughout history through His Messengers. The so called different religions are really just different chapters in the same book.

2 children volunteered to do a role play using 2 different cordless phones (from 2 separate lines, so the caller really did dial and call the other student): One child was a schoolmate who called his/her friend who is a Baha'i to inquire why he/she was not in school that day. (It was a Baha'i Holy Day, Naw-Ruz, the first day of the Baha'i New year, on March 21st) The Baha'i child then answered questions such as: Why weren't you in school today? What is Naw-Ruz? What is a Baha'i? Who is Baha'u'llah? What do you believe in? etc.

Any pairs that wanted to try this exercise were given a chance to do it in front of the whole class. Each pair was given a time limit of 3 minutes.

*Say: 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

## Baha'u'llah Has Come (M)

Dancing and pantomime about teaching.

Then we danced to a song called "Baha'u'llah Has Come" from the *Feast at My House* cassette by Marie and Roger Gervais. Half the students were given little booklets on the Baha'i Faith, and whenever the singer sang "Baha'u'llah Has Come" they were to present and give the booklet to a student who did not have one, symbolizing sharing the teachings with others. Thus the booklets go back and forth among the students throughout the song. I asked the students if they wanted to dance with their eyes closed if they did not have a booklet, to symbolize not being awakened yet by the new Revelation. Then when someone handed them the booklet they got to open their eyes. Then the person w/o the booklet would play a person not yet awakened and they closed their eyes. The students wanted to do this version the most, so we did and it worked out and was fun. The tape can be obtained by calling the Canadian Baha'i Distribution Service at 800-465-3287.

*Strive ye then, with all your hearts and souls, to awaken those who slumber.....*
*~ `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

## Casual Conversation

A game using conversation to sneak in phrases about the Baha'i Faith.

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. The audience is asked to not make sounds or obvious facial expressions that give away that the statement is being or just has been, delivered. 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.

## Photographic Principles

Making still poses representing Baha'i principles.

I grouped them into teams and asked them to create a still photograph of one of the principles or teachings found in the Baha'i Writings. They could use props but no words or movement. The teachings they portrayed were: Teaching the Faith, the education of children, equality of women and men, unity in diversity, and kindness to animals.

This technique can be used to illustrate virtues as well. For example, children think of events or incidents in their lives in which they felt really happy and content, and then create a still photo using themselves and others, if necessary, depicting it, and the rest of us are to guess the scene. They really got into this and did several "shots" each.

Indeed, by promoting the principles of the Faith, .....the Baha'is are constantly engaged in laying the groundwork for a permanent peace, the Most Great Peace being their ultimate goal.
(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, January 31, 1985: Lights of Guidance, page 438)

## The Zax Conflict

Roi and I enacted The Zax from Dr. Seuss' The Sneetches and Other Stories. We each had a zany wig on, one white, one black. I had also used permanent markers to draw a giant "S" and a giant "N" on 2 t-shirts for simple costumes. Another person narrated using a photocopy of the pages. We did not have the time to memorize, so I held the book so we could glance at it. But we knew the short and simple text well enough to be acting more than reading. We had such fun with this short story—playing two indignant and snorting Zax, one south going, the other north going, who refuse to step out of each other's way to let the other one pass. It was a perfect example of communication failure. At the end I asked the students to describe the attitudes and behaviors which contributed to the problem and they were very adroit at answering: pride, rudeness, stubbornness, selfishness, attachment, etc. Then I asked them to label what virtues were missing which could have helped prevent or remedy the situation. They had no trouble guessing: humility, detachment, sacrifice, cooperation, respect, consultation, courtesy, flexibility, etc. We then re-enacted it with those virtues. Kids enjoyed consulting on ways the Zax could stay in their own

tracks but continue going on their way. For example, one could leap frog over the other, or go under between the legs of the other.

*This Wronged One hath forbidden the people of God to engage in contention or conflict and hath exhorted them to righteous deeds and praiseworthy character.*
*~Baha'u'llah*: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 88

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

*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

*O people of God! I admonish you to observe courtesy, for above all else it is the prince of virtues. Well is it with him who is illumined with the light of courtesy....*
*~Baha'u'llah:* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 88

*Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. ~Baha'u'llah:* Arabic Hidden Words, #68

*O contending peoples and kindreds of the earth! Set your faces towards unity, and let the radiance of its light shine upon you. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 217

## Skits to Reinforce Class Rules

Every classroom should have a list of rules posted which support unity, learning, and spirituality.

We had a discussion on what rules are, why we need them. Students were very eager to contribute examples and ideas. We summed it up by saying that we need them to protect our bodies, our feelings, our souls, our things, our relationships and the world. They guide and teach us and enable unity. We had an elaborate discussion on what the world would be like if there were no rules (very scary) and what would happen in a sport and in traffic if there were no rules. We discussed the notion that laws are basically rules that are much more serious, with bigger consequences if one breaks them. I also pointed out that rules that protect feelings are as important as those that protect our bodies. Experience shows that children who consistently feel fear, hurt, anger, etc, often grow up to not only hurt others feelings, but also other's bodies and things through aggressive acts. The Messengers of God give us rules or laws that protect all aspects of life, since all aspects are interrelated and influence each other.

Then I asked them to ponder what kind of class they wanted to have, i.e. how do you want to be treated by your classmates, what kind of feelings do you want to feel here? Then I asked them what are the qualities of a peaceful, loving, and spiritual class? So we made a list on a dry erase board. The heading read: "A spiritual classroom is one in which there is.....". The list included a lot of the virtues. Then I asked them to think of rules for the class that would create these qualities and feelings. We wrote these down also, on a giant sheet of paper taped to the wall. Many of the qualities were covered by one rule, and many rules touched on the same quality.

We discussed the word commitment. I defined it as "a promise we make to ourselves and others that we keep no matter what." I asked them: "Will you agree to do what ever it takes to create a spiritual classroom and obey these rules? Will you be committed to them?" The group agreed of course. I told them that after class I will organize and summarize the rules, type them up and print them out on a sheet of paper. Then next class, all students can sign it, like a contract. Then the signed rule list will be taped on

the wall in the classroom to serve as a guide—and I will frequently refer to it and remind children to look at it when they stray and ask them to figure out which rule they should be heeding.

Then I assigned teams of two. (I always create teams with wide age ranges, and try to avoid putting buddies and siblings together so kids can bond with a wider number.) Each member of the team got to dip their hand into a brass bowl full of little squares, each with a number on it, 1-12. Then they were to match the number to the chart on the wall, and devise a mini-skit to illustrate the expressing of the rule. So each team got to do 2 skits. I gave them some examples by acting out a few myself that were not chosen by the kids. I said they could show themselves beginning to break the rule, so long as they showed themselves correcting it and ultimately obeying it. If they felt they could not create an expression of the rule, they could choose another. I instructed them that the setting of their skits should be my house or the classroom. They could use props. They were to keep their chosen rules secret. In the skit, they should not use the key words in the rule. Every student was also given a copy of the list of rules. So then each team went off into a separate room to create their demonstrations.

When everyone was ready (about 15-20 minutes later) we all gathered in the living room. I chose a team to go first and others had to guess which rule, using their list. It quickly became clear that there is a lot of overlap in the rules and that many of the same virtues are expressed in compliance with many rules. The first team to decipher the first performance's rule correctly got to go next. To save time, each team did both of their skits in a row while on "stage". If a team that had already performed guessed correctly first, then the team that supplied the correct answer to the second skit got to go next. To show courtesy and respect the audience had to be quiet during each skit, they could not blurt out the answer before the end of each skit, they had to raise hands to be called on, and applause was a must! Students really enjoyed this, plus they constantly read the list of rules to determine the correct answer, plus they practiced and witnessed obeying the rules, so it was a fun way to familiarize them with these very important standards.

Here is our list of rules. It is really too long, but the students developed them in consultation, and so during the summarizing process, I did not want to eliminate too many (even though some concepts may be covered under another). Most of the rules lent themselves quite easily to pantomime or role play. Drama is a favorite activity for most of my students and it really elucidates concepts and makes them personally relevant to kids.

WE ARE COMMITTED TO FOLLOWING THESE RULES THAT WE CREATED TOGETHER FOR A SPIRITUAL CLASSROOM:

1. Show kindness by being caring, friendly, helpful and by sharing and never using put downs
2. Show reverence during prayers and reading Sacred Writings
3. No backbiting or gossip
4. Respect the teacher, other students, and things
5. Show cleanliness (for example, by picking up after yourself, washing hands before eating, checking for mud on shoes)
6. Follow directions and obey the teacher
7. Work hard and strive for excellence
8. Strive for unity and practice cooperation
9. Use indoor behavior (no yelling or running)
10. Show good manners and courtesy ( for example, listen to others who are speaking, raise hand to speak, sit still during discussions, wait until all are seated at the table to eat, ask permission to leave room)
11. Leave toys and personal belongings outside of classroom
12. Show virtues in general, especially trustworthiness

Since this is a rather long discussion activity, I found that the perfect break is to play the very danceable song "Baha'i School" from the *Loving Hands* recording by Susan Engle and Jean Marks. A good time is before beginning to make the rules that support the qualities of a spiritual classroom. The song's lyrics are full of the virtues the kids came up with for a spiritual classroom. I ask them to listen for those, and give them each 2 silk scarves to dance with and show them varied ways to wave the scarves in unison.

## We are Building the Kingdom of God (M)

A song and activity to promote an awareness of our beloved institutions, and an understanding of the role of the Word of God, love for Baha'u'llah, love for each other, and for our institutions in building the Kingdom of God on earth.

Supplies needed: Eric Dozier's song, "We are Building the Kingdom of God" on his *To the Glory of God CD*, any book by Baha'u'llah, pretty cloth for the table, 14 sturdy chairs, 14 large un-ruled index cards, markers, tape, up to 37 paper hearts with Baha'u'llah's name written on each one, preferably in gold. Quantity of hearts depends on number of participants. (It would be even better to have more decorative and fancy cards than index cards, if possible, to highlight the beauty and special-ness of the Baha'i institutions).

(Ask kids what the Kingdom of God on earth means). Then say something like:

We build the kingdom of God on earth by unifying and connecting people's hearts and minds through their love for Baha'u'llah. This oneness and love is achieved through the power of the Word of God—thus, the Word of God is the source of love and unity for the whole world.

*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

So.....on the table here, is a book containing the Word of God for this Day and Age, the Writings of Baha'u'llah. It is the centerpiece and foundation of our Kingdom.

But b/c we live in a material world, we need more than spiritual love and unity to create the kingdom of God. Baha'u'llah, Abdu'l-Baha, and Shoghi Effendi have given us institutions to support the building of the kingdom. They are: Huqúqu'llah, the Funds, the Feast, the Mashriqu'l-Adkhar, Marriage, the elected administrative institutions of the Universal House of Justice, National Spiritual Assemblies, Local Spiritual Assemblies, and Regional Baha'i Councils. There are also the appointed institutions of the learned: The Guardianship, the Hands of the Cause, the Continental Counselors, the Auxiliary Boards, and their assistants. They are essential to our success in building the Kingdom of God on earth. So when we "build our kingdom" of connected and unified people, we must rely on the institutions for support and guidance, we must use them as well as the Word of God in Baha'u'llah's writings, and we must love them.

Without the spirit of real love for Baha'u'llah, for His Faith and its Institutions, and the believers for each other, the Cause can never really bring in large numbers of people. For it is not preaching and rules the world wants, but love and action..."
~Shoghi Effendi: Directives of the Guardian, page 72

The thing the friends need - everywhere - is a greater love for each other, and this can be acquired by greater love for Baha'u'llah; for if we love Him deeply enough, we will never allow personal feelings and opinions to hold His Cause back; we will be willing to sacrifice ourselves to each other for the sake of the Faith, and be, as the Master said, one soul in many bodies.
~Shoghi Effendi: Living the Life, page 16

(Have sturdy chairs all about the room, each with a card taped to its back with the name of one of the institutions written on it.)

During the song, whenever it says *"We are building the Kingdom"* one person will come forward with their love for Baha'u'llah (a paper heart with His Name on it) and connect/unify with another who has already joined the support network. (That phrase is said about 37 times during the song, mostly towards the end of the song. If you have more than 37 participants, people can join in pairs). This is how it starts:

The first person must first connect with the Word of God (i.e. touch the book with their paper heart). The next person will connect with that first person by pressing their paper heart to the body of the first. And so it goes. Hearts are held in position by pressing only, not by grasping. By the time the song is done, everyone doing the activity should be connected, and all the support institutions utilized—i.e. one *or more* people must be standing on, sitting on, or touching a chair with the name of an institution on it, and all chairs have occupants. However, in the end, (unless you have a small group), not everyone will be touching a chair, --just as in real life, not every one is on an institution or uses every institution directly---but everyone will be connected to someone who is, via 1-5 people.

The other catch is, since it is our love for Baha'u'llah that connects and unifies us, and inspires us to love and obey our institutions, the hearts must be held between the connections, and not dropped, no matter how hard it gets to be. This is steadfastness.

(Children love this activity—its a fun way to teach about our institutions—and in the end, we are all in a tangled group all connected, some using the chairs, and we are all trying not to let the paper hearts we have pressed against another person slip.)

This can also be done as an audience participation performance at a convention or summer school. I shared the dialogue above, but had the 14 chairs lined up on stage, facing backwards to hide the cards that were taped on the backs, facing front of chair. 14 students were standing lined up, also facing away from the audience. On cue, when I said "Baha'u'llah, Abdu'l-Baha, and Shoghi Effendi have given us institutions to support the building of the kingdom. They are:", The child first in line turned around with her chair, so that she and her chair were facing the audience, and the audience could see the card. The child clearly stated the name of her institution, then stood poised, with her hands resting on the back of her chair. Then the next child turned with his chair, and so on down the line in domino fashion, until all 14 were called out and facing the audience.

At the end of the dialog, we staggered the chairs around a low table or stool with a pretty cloth covering it, that had The Writings of Baha'u'llah on it. The chairs were positioned so people could see the cards, and so those using them would not be facing away from the audience. Then the 14 children lined up away from the set up. A student with a gold tray full of the red paper hearts with Baha'u'llah's name written on them stood by. The first child in line, when the first phrase "We are Building the Kingdom" is sung, will be the first to take a heart and place her hand, pressing the heart, on the book. The audience was encouraged to get in line or come up when the spirit moved them, take a heart representing their love of Baha'u'llah, and join in the building of the Kingdom—but only when that phrase is said, one at a time. In the beginning of the song, its is said somewhat infrequently, and at first it seems that the song will end before all the chairs are filled. But the last 1/3 rd of the song really repeats the phrase over and over, very fast.

More Supporting Quotes for Building the Kingdom Activity

*Through each and every one of the verses which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed, the doors of love and unity have been unlocked and flung open to the face of men. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 95

*Wherefore, O ye Baha'is, strive ye with all your might to create, through the power of the Word of God, genuine love, spiritual communion and durable bonds among individuals. This is your task.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 246

*Praise be to God, today the splendour of the Word of God hath illumined every horizon, and from all sects, races, tribes, nations, and communities souls have come together in the light of the Word, assembled, united and agreed in perfect harmony. Oh! What a great number of meetings are held adorned with souls from various races and diverse sects!....Notwithstanding such diversity they associate in perfect harmony and unity, love and freedom; they have one voice, one thought and one purpose. Verily, this is from the penetrative power of the Word of God!*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 292

*And this is clear: a power above and beyond the powers of nature must needs be brought to bear, to change this black darkness into light, and these hatreds and resentments, grudges and spites, these endless wrangles and wars, into fellowship and love amongst all the peoples of the earth. This power is none other than the breathings of the Holy Spirit and the mighty inflow of the Word of God.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, p. 53

*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

*There is no greater means to bring about affection between the white and the black than the influence of the Word of God. ~Abdu'l-Baha:* Power of Unity, page 69

*Naught but the celestial potency of the Word of God, which ruleth and transcendeth the realities of all things, is capable of harmonizing the divergent thoughts, sentiments, ideas, and convictions of the children of men. Verily, it is the penetrating power in all things, the mover of souls and the binder and regulator in the world of humanity.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 292

*.....all the powers of the earth are impotent either to establish universal peace or to promote the oneness of the human world. Nothing short of the power of the Word of God and the breaths of the Holy Spirit can ever succeed.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Prominent People, page 265

*.....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

Shielded by the institutions which their hands have reared, abiding securely in the stronghold of their love for Baha'u'llah and their devotion to His Faith,.....they (the followers of Baha'u'llah)..... must press forward.....towards the shining goals they have set themselves to attain. ~Shoghi Effendi: Dawn of a New Day, page 127

## We are Building the Kingdom of God Version II (M)

This is a simpler version of the above activity using the same song by Eric Dozier "We are Building the Kingdom of God" on his *To the Glory of God CD*.

We first discussed what the Kingdom of God on earth might mean (world unity, peace, no more suffering, etc.) I ventured that from a Baha'i perspective, the way to build the kingdom of God is to unite people's hearts--to connect people and teach them that we are all one, that we are all connected spiritually. We can do this by promoting love and unity through the teachings of Baha'u'llah. Baha'u'llah teaches that when a majority of the world's peoples are united in love for each other and for God and His Messenger, we will have world unity. Simply stated, that when most people's hearts are connected spiritually to each other through God's Revelation, when they are united in love for each other and for Baha'u'llah, we will have peace on earth.

So each child chose 3 blocks, and each block had a heart on it to symbolize the human heart and love. We repositioned ourselves in a circle around a rectangular coffee table. A book of Baha'u'llah's Writings was placed flat on the table b/c it is His Revelation which is the foundation of the Kingdom of God on earth, the source of love and unity for all.

*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

I explained that in the following song, whenever one hears, "We are building the kingdom of God", the next person in the circle places one block (representing a person and their heart) on the table connected to any of the other blocks already there. The first block is to be placed touching the book of Baha'u'llah's Writings. Kids are encouraged to place blocks in a stable position. The phrase is said 37 times, so a few kids had to go up together to make it so every child got to go 3 times. The goal of course is to build a large block structure with every block supporting and/or touching another block, symbolizing the kingdom of God--which is essentially a spiritual kingdom created by love and unity of all peoples. I think kids got the message that the foundation of the Kingdom of God is not wood or bricks, but souls united under Baha'u'llah's Revelation. Yes, we do need real buildings, but they are not the essential construction materials!

## Immerse Yourselves

*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

This was the first memory verse assigned for our unit on the importance and power of the Creative Word. First we discussed the verses' imagery, where pearls come from, how beautiful and valuable they are, how vast, powerful, deep, and mysterious the oceans are, how they are the source of life for the planet b/c rain comes from the evaporation of their water into clouds, and they provide nourishment for millions with their plants and fish. I explained that no one knows for sure how deep the oceans are and what is in those depths. There are volcanoes, great canyons, and undiscovered creatures. God's Words are the source of spiritual life, and the more we explore the depths of His ocean, the more mysteries/secrets we will unravel and the more pearls of wisdom we will find. We will not discover pearls if we just dip our big toe in (read His Words quickly w/o thought). We need to immerse—go deep, and explore by thinking deeply.

I presented the group with a set of 11 cards. Each card had a word from the memory verse written in sparkly blue ink. The words were: 1) Immerse yourselves, 2) Ocean, 3) My words, 4) Unravel, 5) Secrets, 6) Discover, 7) Pearls, 8) Wisdom, 9) Lie, 10) Hid, 11) Depths

The cards were made from 6 different colors of blue 8 ½ X 11 cardstock. The full sheet was folded into fours, then cut into those quarters. Each quarter was then folded and with the fold at the bottom, cut with a wavy pattern to simulate waves. That way, the waves were at the top, and when opened the word was on the lower inside half. On the front, back, and inside, I had put attractive stickers of ocean life—shells, coral, and fish. On the back of each card in a corner, was a number (which corresponded to the above list and to its order of appearance in the phrase.) I put so much effort into making them look nice b/c I felt this would emphasize how special their memory verse was.

The cards were laid on a silky blue cloth (to represent the ocean), and students each chose one, not seeing the writing inside. (When there were more students than cards, two children shared one card. If there are more cards than students, kids can do more than one.)

Students were instructed to keep their word a secret, be gentle with their cards, and to remember their number. Then I called each child individually by number into a separate room, shut the door, and gave them an idea of how to act out their word, or asked them for their idea to see if it would be clear for others. Here are the suggestions as to how to act out each word:

1. *Immerse yourselves:* take a deep breath, hold nose and squat down, or just take a deep breath and act out a dive, going down to the floor.
2. *Ocean:* make wave motion with wrist and forearm to the side, or use both arms and hands and go forward, dipping and rising.
3. *My words:* point to self with both hands, then take one hand with fingers all touching thumb to mouth, and as open mouth, spread fingers out and draw hand away from mouth.
4. *Unravel:* hold one hand out flat or as if holding an imaginary cup, use other hand to go in circular motion upward, thumb and forefinger touching, follow with eyes, end with as if pulling out an imaginary string.
5. *Secrets:* child is to whisper in my ear, I look surprised—as if hearing something really interesting
6. *Discover:* child is to walk over to a shelf and poke around, then look in a basket and pull a toy out. He is to look surprised and pleased. (Be sure to remind child to face audience).
7. *Pearls:* child holds hands as if on a hinge like a clam shell—base of hands touching, open up, then use top hand to pull out pretend pearl and admire it.
8. *Wisdom:* child faces audience, closes eyes, places hands on each side of head, rotates palms away and extends arms, to simulate radiance or thought emanating from mind.
9. *Lie:* child lies down
10. *Hid:* child hides object in front of others.
11. *Depths:* child raises hands over head, lowers them as she sinks down to ground level.

After each child assured me they knew their number, their card was given back to me. Then after all the rehearsals, (which were extremely quick), the students were invited into the living room. They were asked to be a courteous and respectful audience by being quiet and attentive while others were performing. They were told that all the skits stood for words from their new memory verse, but I deliberately did not recite it again. After each skit, you were to raise your hand if you think you know what word was being shown. The actors would call on you. The first to get it right, got to go next. If the first person to get it right had already performed, then they chose the next to go. We started by me calling out any number. The students seemed to enjoy this simple dramatic exercise.

After all the skits were done and had been correctly guessed, I asked the students to sit in order of their numbers. (I wanted them to be able to see all the skits, so they did not line up against a wall but formed a half circle with the “stage” in the front and center.) I told them that they were now going to do the entire verse in order, and as soon as one was done, they were to sit back down and the next in line was to get up and perform. Then I asked #1 to begin the action. She came up and did her immersion movement,

and as she did so, I said “Immerse yourselves”. Then I immediately said “in the” and number 2 came up and did his ocean movement and I said “ocean”, etc. They got the hang of it right away and it looked really nice as a completed piece. I just filled in the words between the action words and said the action words as they were being performed.

## Baha’i School (M)

Dancing and using scarves to symbolize linking of hearts in children’s classes.

The song “Baha’i School” is from the *Loving Hands* recording by Susan Engle and Jean Marks. First I elaborated on how in Baha’i classes, one of the goals is to create unity between all students by connecting hearts, linking hearts, and how I expected all of them to get to know and play with everybody, not just a few. So for this next activity, I gave them each a silk scarf and showed them how to form links with each other by one holding the scarf with 2 hands, and the other person letting go of one end and wrapping the scarf around the other childs’ scarf then grabbing onto both ends. I told them that whenever they heard the word “Baha’i School” on the song, they needed to form a link with one or more others, and to try to link with different people each time. Then they were to undo it for the next one. The song is very danceable and the children made some wonderful designs with many linked scarves.

## We Recycle (M)

This one works well with preschoolers and early elementary. It comes from the Van Manen’s recording by the same name. These are wonderful Baha’i musicians and I recommend any of their stuff. This one was created to support a class on the environment. My friend and neighbor who teaches the Baha’i preschool class wanted to end the year on caring for the environment. She read the statement on Nature and relevant Baha’i quotes which of course emphasize oneness, interdependence, and justice in healing environmental problems. The virtues of compassion, respect, detachment, caring, etc. of course are all relevant too. So the lesson focused on those things, (along with a presentation on earthworms to show interdependence that was highly engaging). But the class needed some humor and large motor activities to break up the more cerebral parts. So the puppets of Landfill Larry and Wasteful Wanda were introduced. These parts could also be played by some playful adults with some silly clothes or wigs. The puppets can be animals—(Larry was a rat, Wanda a make believe furry creature), or humans.

Before the song, a garbage bag of crumpled paper, cereal boxes, wadded up grocery bags, paper tubes, etc. was presented, along with a trash can and recycle bin. Any trash will do as long as its not filthy, breakable, heavy, or sharp. The kids were instructed to throw the garbage into the recycle bin *during the chorus parts*. But the puppets would be throwing stuff into the trash can or removing it from the recycle bin to put into the trash. During the non-chorus parts puppets (or people playing those parts) freeze, and kids are not allowed to touch the trash during that part. The kids were also told that to make it even more fun, they could try to toss the trash into the recycle bin from a distance—but sometimes the puppets would intercept it in mid air! It became a competition, full of laughter and silliness. We liked the fact that the kids were associating throwing things out as being undesirable and got concrete, physical practice in the habit of saving things for recycling. Acting that out in the song would go far deeper into their memory than just saying it.

Here is the chorus:
*We recycle, we don’t just throw it away.*
*We recycle, so we can use it once again someday.*

## Happiness H2O

Teams of 2 kids are formed. Each team consults on one source of happiness for both members of the team and creates a very simple pantomime to express it. This is done in separate rooms and the decision

is kept secret from the other teams. When all teams have come to an agreement about one source of happiness for each pair/team, everybody gets into a swimsuit. We then go outside. A team is chosen to be the first to act out their source of happiness through pantomime. The other teams form the audience and they get large cups of water. (A large receptacle full of water is nearby for refilling.) I know ahead of time the answers. As soon as any one in the audience guesses correctly, I shout "YES!" and the team that was pantomiming immediately turn and run to try to escape the gush of water coming at them. The audience can take one large lunge forward with their cups but can't chase the actors. (The water part of course can be left out for winter or indoor settings, but it was mid summer and the water was refreshing. This was done during a day camp, and the kids had swimsuits.)

## Joy Gives Me wings (M)

This fun song by Jennifer Russell is on *The Virtues Songs* Volume 2. (Available through www.virtuesproject.com.) We used it in our lesson on happiness. I think it is in the Calypso style so it was very danceable. We went into the living room and I read the words to the song. One of the phrases talks about being thankful for my life and appreciating the gifts this day brings. I told them that they would be a lot happier in life if they had an attitude of gratitude, and focus on the good things in their lives, not on what they don't have or don't like.

Then everybody got silk scarves, and we had a blast—sometimes dancing and moving our scarves in impromptu unison, sometimes just doing our own thing. I encouraged them to make flying motions for the chorus part that says "joy gives me wings", to make strong muscles with both arms for the part that says "joy gives me strength", and to touch the forehead with both hands and extend outward for "joy clears my understanding."

*Joy gives us wings! In times of joy our strength is more vital, our intellect keener, and our understanding less clouded. We seem better able to cope with the world and to find our sphere of usefulness. ~`Abdu'l-Baha:* Paris Talks, page 109

## Recipe for True Happiness Skits

This one is based on a list generated from many quotes on happiness. When we did this, we used the cards from the *Hunting for Happiness* game in the New World Order Games Manual (under Highly Active Games). Each card contained one of the sources of true happiness from the list. However, if one does not have those cards, an easy way to assign sources of true happiness would be to have the list of sources of true happiness numbered. This list was entitled "Recipe for True Happiness". The numbers then can be put on small squares of paper and into an attractive bowl or sack. Pairs choose one numbered square or one card from the *Hunting for Happiness* game and then develop a skit to illustrate it. Then that square or card would be removed from the bowl. If a pair got a source they could not relate to or understand, they were allowed to choose another until they found one they liked.

Everyone in the audience has the list of sources of true happiness in large print on a piece of paper. (Or you can have one big list on a dry erase board or poster board). The audience tried to guess which source was being illustrated. The actors were asked not to use key words or phrases from the list in their dialogue so that it was not too easy. I advised the kids that many sources could easily be portrayed at once, but they still had to guess the exact one. Audience members could not just read through the list out loud hoping to hit on the right one. This drama reinforced the student's memory of what the sources of true happiness are, and they had a lot of fun with it. The list generates thought provoking analysis about what the culture says will give us happiness in contrast to what the Baha'i Revelation says will do so.

We also used the list and related quotes at a Feast. It was great fun. The quotes were read as the spiritual portion of feast. The paper had a 3D smiley sticker on each side of the title of the Feast. Then after the administrative portion, everyone received the list, which was titled "Recipe for True Happiness", which was also adorned with smiley stickers.

Participants had a choice of 2 options: Drawing on a dry erase board or acting in pantomime. First I demonstrated one of each of the methods. The group had no trouble coming up with great ideas. Even the 7 year olds were able to draw or act out something that we could guess. An adult should be the facilitator who selects people to perform. Before playing, the facilitator should ask people to not raise their hand to perform or draw unless they have an idea in mind. It gets boring and awkward if a child in their eagerness to be the center of attention raises their hand, is chosen, then stands before the group trying to formulate an idea.

Its also important to ask the audience to wait until the drawing or acting is done before guessing which source of true happiness is being shown so that a performer gets to finish their "masterpiece." Then the performer gets to call on audience members who have their hand raised indicating they think they know the answer.

Before the feast I had recruited 3 young ones for the grand finale. On cue to the lively and joyful music starting, (from Tchaikovsky's Nutracker) the 3 came leaping and dancing out of a room. Each was wildly waving a baton that had a long ribbon attached to it, wearing a hilarious rubber wig called an Inside-out Ball that look like a sea anemone. (Available from Hearthsong Catalog at www.hearthsong.com, item # 724499. Everybody goes nuts over these—they have many uses and are amazingly tantalizing to fondle. To use them as wigs, it takes two to stretch them over a child's head and girls must wear high up ponytails or the wig will slide up and off on their hair.) This performance was totally unrehearsed and got the audience really laughing. The answer for what they were demonstrating was of course, Laughter, smiles, rejoicing = source of happiness for others.

Here is the list and supporting quotes: (Key words used for list are in **bold**).

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

*.....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, pgs. 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

## Digging for Diamonds (M)

Pantomime to a song about our inner wealth, our virtues.

This one is by the well known Baha'i musician, Red Grammer, from His *Hello World* recording. We do this at our Ayyam-i-Ha party that has the theme "Inner Beauty". At the end of the party, kids are given gifts that relate to the theme of inner beauty: For example: Heart boxes filled with gems. Heart boxes are really cheap after Feb. 14 at many stores. Oriental Trading Co. Catalog often carries reasonably priced miniature heart boxes. Phone: 800-228-2269 or www.orientaltrading.com. This company also sometimes sells small heart-shaped tins with a clear opening in the lid. I like these b/c they are not too feminine for boys nor too suggestive of valentine's day. They are about $8.95 for 12. Item # IN-65/90091. If they don't have them try www.exclusivelyweddings.com or www.favorsandflowers.com. You can also search for "clear top heart tins" in a search engine. Also less feminine and often even more appealing than the plastic faceted rhinestones are real polished un-drilled gemstones. They are also known as polished tumble stones. (If we use the real gemstones instead of the plastic faceted rhinestones we do not give out the crowns mentioned below. They would not glue well, nor look right and are too heavy for the crowns). Some great sources for the real gemstones, (i.e. cheaper w/ assortment options) I found on the internet in 2007 are the following: wire-sculpture.com, www.gemsbymail.com, and stores.ebay.com/MINE-2-ROCK. (In addition to a nice assortment of gemstones, the ebay store carries tiny nuggets of iron pyrite, which is fool's gold. No other place I could find offered anywhere near affordable prices. The shipment that I got from the Gems by Mail source had more colorful stones than the Wire-sculpture source, but was also a bit more pricey.) Choose the small sizes of the pyrite and gemstone sizes if you want to give a variety and to keep the cost down. 9 easily fit in the heart tins described above.

The Virtue Crowns come from *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. Miniature geodes also go great with this theme and come from Oriental Trading Company, Inc, at www.orientaltrading.com, phone 800-228-2269. The lyrics to the song were printed for those who did not want to dance/act, and I encourage them to at least sing.

At one Ayyam-i-Ha party, the preschool class got up on stage with their teachers to lead the audience in the actions. The teachers came out in overalls and hard hats with a lamp affixed to the forehead. They and the preschool students had black charcoal (or can use black chalk or pastel) smeared on their faces. (It would have been cute to have all the little ones in costume like the teachers, but most did not own overalls and hard hats, so we just costumed the teachers.) The preschoolers were wheeled out on stage in two's and threes in a wheelbarrow, suggesting that they were the real gems:

*"Children are the most precious treasure a community can possess, for in them are the promise and the guarantee of the future."* The Universal House of Justice, Ridvan Letter, 2000

The teachers then said something like: *"And now we are going to guide the audience in how to mine for the gems in the human soul."* Then they and the preschoolers demonstrated the actions as I read the lyrics. The actions are described halfway down the page that comes after the lyrics below.

For another, more simple audience participation/pantomime song that would also go great with a program theme of inner beauty, see "Beauty is What You Do".

The lyrics to Digging for Diamonds:

# DIGGING FOR DIAMONDS

(by Red Grammer)

I'm digging for diamonds, looking for gold,
tunneling 'round down deep in my soul.
Cause everything that I might be,
is laying down there just a-waiting for me.

There's ruby reds and lapis blue,
topaz, turquoise, emeralds, too!
I never know what I might find,
but whatever it is, I know that it's mine.

Chorus:

Whoa, diggin' for diamonds,
whoa, prospecting for gold,
I know I'm gonna find them
waitin' for me down deep in my soul.

It's hot down there but I can take the heat.
The pressure on the coal makes the diamonds sweet.
It gets dark but that's alright,
cause I'm gonna carry me a great big light.

I'm pouring down sweat, swinging my axe,
Puttin' in the hours and thems the facts.
Every gem I get to shine,
my Lord! It feels so fine!

Chorus:

Whoa, diggin' for diamonds,
whoa, prospecting for gold,
I know I'm gonna find them
waitin' for me down deep in my soul.

Mama's got gold and Daddy, too.
Brother and sister, I know they do.
I got, you got, he got, she got,
everybody got gold and that's the truth.

Double Chorus:

Whoa, diggin' for diamonds,
whoa, prospecting for gold,
I know I'm gonna find them
waitin' for me down deep in my soul.

**Here is the dialogue that precedes the interactive dance:**

*The Great Being saith: Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 260

*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:* Gleanings, page 287

*In the readings you just heard, Baha'u'llah mentions gems. What might those gems inside of people be? (Virtues. Ask for or give examples of virtues).*

*How are virtues like gems? (Very beautiful, very valuable, need polishing & precious).*

*Every human being is really very, very beautiful, valuable and precious inside because every human is like a mine rich in gems of divine virtue.*

*Do you all know what a mine is?*

*Are the gemstones lying all over the surface in the mine or do people need to dig down deep for them?*

*Are they shiny when they are in the ground or do they need to be polished?*

*Well, just like precious gemstones the beautiful gems of divine virtue inside people can be buried deep beneath the surface and can be hard to find--it can take a lot of time and effort to bring them forth and polish them.*

*Parents help with this but you can too--by practicing them.*

*If most people worked hard at mining and then polishing their gems of divine virtue, we'd have peace and happiness everywhere all over the world.*

*Now we are going to listen to, dance, and do actions to a song about the gems in the mine of the human soul.*

(It is less time consuming and more efficient for short attention spans if you share just the phrases to do actions with. Ask the audience to come to the front, and then go over these phrases 2x. Ask them to do the actions for practice as you read the phrases and demonstrate them yourself).

*Digging for diamonds, prospecting for gold*—make digging motions, toss behind back

*Tunneling round down deep in my soul &*
*Waiting for me down deep in my soul*—fingers together, palms flat facing down, parallel to floor at sides of body, bring together and as you do bend wrists so backs of hands are almost touching move downward towards heart

*Is laying down there just a-waiting for me*---bring open hand, flat palm facing up, away from center of chest, fanning out away from body, point to self with thumb, fingers curled

*Ruby reds, lapis blue, topaz, turquoise, emeralds too*---make a circle with thumb and other 4 fingers, hold up as if examining in light OR using forefinger and thumb of each hand touching, form a triangular gem shape

*I never know*---shake head with elbows bent, palms facing upward

*Know its mine*—point with thumbs of both hands to self

*Hot & take the heat*---look hot, hang tongue out, etc.

*Pressure*—press palms together with fingers of hands in opposite direction, so it does not look like praying hands, wrists bent, tips of fingers pointing towards elbows, horizontal to floor

*Gets dark*—squint eyes as if trying to see in dark

*Big light*—explain that the big light can be your religion which sheds light on the beauty buried in your soul, act out by holding up pretend lantern or flashlight

*Pouring down sweat*—wipe pretend sweat off of forehead

*Swinging my axe*—explain briefly how an axe is used in mining then demonstrate swinging a pick axe

*Every gem I get to shine*—rub shirt as if polishing a gem on it, make a circle with thumb and other 4 fingers, hold up as if examining in light

*My Lord! It feels so fine*—smile real big, place hands on heart, lift chin up, open arms up wide

*Mama, daddy, brother, sister, I, you, he, she, everybody*—point to one's mama, daddy, brother & sister. And since not every one there will have all these family members present or in existence, one can point to any mom, dad, boy, and girl. Of course for "I" , oneself is pointed to, and any one for "you", any male for "he", any female for "she", and sweeping arm motion for "everybody".

**This is the dialogue after the song:**

*Now is the time to give out the party gifts. There are 2 kinds. One is for children 9 and older. It is a geode. The outside is plain, and not much to look at. But like a person, its what's on the inside that counts. Each geode has inner beauty that you can discover when you take it home and gently break it open by tapping it with a hammer. Place it inside an old sock or wrap it in a cloth to protect your eyes from flying fragments.*

*The second kind are for children 8 and under. They are little heart boxes filled with 9 gemstones. The boxes are heart shaped to remind you that the best way to show love to God, to others and to yourself, is by showing your virtue gems. The gems can be put on these crowns of virtue. Virtues are like the gems on a King or Queen's crown. The more you have and the brighter they shine, the more you show the world how noble you really are!*

*Then please think about which divine virtue each gem stands for in you--although in reality you have many more than these.*

*Maybe your parents and friends can help you because they know you so well and may notice gems in you that you did not know you had.*

(Next phrase is optional—do only if crowd seems content to handle more dialogue).

*I'd like to give an example using my students. (Have student you are honoring stand and place a gem in their hand as you speak.) One of Camille's virtue gems is patience. She never complains or acts irritated when she has to wait. Nicholas has the virtue of excellence well polished. He always knows his memory verse perfectly in class. Etc.*

*Please listen to and sing along with the closing song while we get the gifts ready for you. After the song is over, please line up in a courteous manner--you can polish that gem of virtue right now!*

(The song was Red Grammers' "See Me Beautiful", from his *Teaching Peace* recording. We had the lyrics in the program.)

## Happy Naw-Ruz to You (M)

This song is also under Level Two as an adult performance with an audience participating. That one is more elaborate and involves a rehearsal. The one below can be done in a class with kids with no rehearsal, --it just takes going over the lyrics and movements once or twice with the kids. It is basically an abbreviated version of the Level Two one. The song comes from a recording called *Feast at My House*, by Marie & Roger Gervais, distributed by the Canadian Baha'i Distribution Service at 800-465-3287. It is not listed on their website, but they still have copies of the tape. Marie told me they have plans to turn it into a CD and market it here in the US.

Here are suggestions of how to have a lot of fun with the *Happy Naw Ruz to You* with a group of kids:

If you have one, place a globe or picture of the earth in a central location. Give kids silk scarves if you have those. Show kids a blow out, (those party gadgets that when blown, uncurl). Don't hand them out until after the instructions.

Tell the kids that they are to turn toward someone and blow on it when the lyrics say "Happy Naw Ruz to You." Remind children to not get so close that their uncurling blow out hits someone in the face.

For "Happy Naw Ruz to me," with flair, we are to point to ourselves with both hands, using thumbs, with the rest of our fingers curled. I demonstrate what it means to do this with flair for the dramatically challenged.

For "Happy Naw Ruz to the whole wide world" we all should blow our blow outs toward the earth picture or globe

For the line "We're one big family", we should hug someone--- or if that's too intimate, hold hands or link elbows.

The scarves are for utilizing in whatever way a person wants—I am continually amazed how often, when you give a reserved person a prop, it gives them permission to let go of inhibitions. (For example, for the line "We'll bring it in style" we can grab ends of scarves on our own shoulders and slide up and down over shoulders, by alternately pulling on different ends--looking like a model who is showing off)

There are several other lines the teacher can alert the kids to perform actions to, such as:

For the line "We're gonna say some prayers" we can place our own palms together, as in praying hands, close eyes.

For "We're gonna kick up our heels" we can kick up our heels.

For "To the Naw Ruz beat" we can wiggle/shake our hips in exaggerated fashion, with elbows bent and hands in fists

## The Covenant Cure

A skit to illustrate the importance of Abdu'l-Baha's role in preventing schism, interpreting doctrine, and promoting unity in the Baha'i Faith. This was originally done with preschoolers, and one can adjust the level of language based on the audience. The preschoolers were not informed ahead of time that this was a role play. It was fascinating to see how quickly they formed separate camps and how some were so disturbed at the disunity.

A youth or adult (A) is eating a meat sandwich. Another person (B) walks in and greets the one eating, but soon inquires into the type of sandwich the other is consuming. Upon being informed that it is meat, person B confidently asserts that meat eating is not in keeping with the Baha'i teachings on kindness to

animals. Person A objects claiming that people do not have to be vegetarians to be Baha'is. They begin to argue, each offering good reasons why their particular stance is correct. Finally person B declares that she is going to start a new Baha'i group that does not eat meat. Person A then says that, in that case, she will have her own group of meat eating Baha'is. They are really angry and cross their arms and turn away from each other.

At this point a child or adult (C) who has been informed before the skit, comes in the room holding a book that has Abdu'l-Baha's writings in it. She is alarmed at the disunity and inquires as to what is the matter. Person A and B each self-righteously give their side of the argument. Person C listens patiently and then says that Baha'u'llah does not like disunity—He rejoices when we are unified. To protect our unity, Baha'u'llah appointed His Son, Abdu'l-Baha, to guide us and explain His teachings after He left this world. Baha'u'llah said that whatever Abdu'l-Baha said would be the will of God. And this is what Abdu'l-Baha says about meat eating:

*.....eating meat is not forbidden or unlawful..... ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Lights of Guidance, page 295 (Page # depends on which edition).

*The time will come when meat will no longer be eaten. Medical science is only in its infancy, yet it has shown that our natural diet is that which grows out of the ground. The people will gradually develop up to the condition of this natural food. ~Abdu'l-Baha*: Lights of Guidance, page 297 (Page # depends on which edition).

(If you don't have this book handy, just type these quotes up and insert them into any book by Abdu'l-Baha, b/c basically the book is a prop. It's just important that the quotes are truly accurate).

After Person C reads the quote, the other 2 seem contrite and cease acting so defensive, threatened and intolerant. They acknowledge Abdu'l-Baha's authority and admit that the other's view has truth in it and that they should be friends and be more accepting of each other's differences. They hug (or shake hands) and begin to talk about planning a Baha'i Feast together, joking about who will do the refreshments and what they will be.

(If studying the Guardian or the Universal House of Justice, one could find quotations from them that clarify a point that persons A & B are arguing about. Though the Universal House of Justice does not interpret the Creative Word as Abdu'l-Baha and the Guardian do, they do provide unerring guidance on subjects not expressly covered in the Holy Texts. Abdu'l-Baha's Will and Testament provides ample quotations on the Divinely guided authority of both Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice. The Kitab-i-Aqdas provides the authority for Abdu'l-Baha's role as interpreter and guide.)

*If any differences arise amongst you, behold Me standing before your face, and overlook the faults of one another for My name's sake and as a token of your love for My manifest and resplendent Cause. We love to see you at all times consorting in amity and concord within the paradise of My good-pleasure, and to inhale from your acts the fragrance of friendliness and unity, of loving-kindness and fellowship. Thus counselleth you the All-Knowing, the Faithful. We shall always be with you; if We inhale the perfume of your fellowship, Our heart will assuredly rejoice, for naught else can satisfy Us. To this beareth witness every man of true understanding. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, pages 315-316

*Conflict and contention are categorically forbidden in His Book. This is a decree of God in this Most Great Revelation. ~Baha'u'llah*: Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 221

*The purpose of the Blessed Beauty in entering into this Covenant and Testament was to gather all existent beings around one point so that the thoughtless souls, who in every cycle and generation have been the cause of dissension, may not undermine the Cause.*

*He hath, therefore, commanded that whatever emanateth from the Centre of the Covenant is right and is under His protection and favour, while all else is error. ~`Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, page 209

*As to the most great characteristic of the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, a specific teaching not given by any of the Prophets of the past: It is the ordination and appointment of the Center of the Covenant. By this appointment and provision He has safeguarded and protected the religion of God against differences and schisms, making it impossible for anyone to create a new sect or faction of belief. To ensure unity and agreement He has entered into a Covenant with all the people of the world, including the interpreter and explainer of His teachings, so that no one may interpret or explain the religion of God according to his own view or opinion and thus create a sect founded upon his individual understanding of the divine Words. The Book of the Covenant or Testament of Bahá'u'lláh is the means of preventing such a possibility, for whosoever shall speak from the authority of himself alone shall be degraded. Be ye informed and cognizant of this. ~Abdu'l-Baha,* The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 455-456

*Were it not for the protecting power of the Covenant to guard the impregnable fort of the Cause of God, there would arise among the Bahá'ís, in one day, a thousand different sects as was the case in former ages. But in this Blessed Dispensation, for the sake of the permanency of the Cause of God and the avoidance of dissension amongst the people of God, the Blessed Beauty (may my soul be a sacrifice unto Him), has through the Supreme Pen written the Covenant and the Testament; He appointed a Center, the Exponent of the Book and the annuller of disputes. Whatever is written or said by Him is conformable to the truth and under the protection of the Blessed Beauty. He is infallible. The express purpose of this last Will and Testament is to set aside disputes from the world. ~Abdu'l-Baha,* Baha'i World Faith - Abdu'l-Baha Section, p. 357-358

*O ye beloved of the Lord! In this sacred Dispensation, conflict and contention are in no wise permitted. Every aggressor deprives himself of God's grace. It is incumbent upon everyone to show the utmost love, rectitude of conduct, straightforwardness and sincere kindliness unto all the peoples and kindreds of the world, be they friends or strangers. ~`Abdu'l-Baha:* Will and Testament, page 13

*....if on some point or other a difference ariseth among two conflicting groups, let them refer to the Centre of the Covenant for a solution to the problem. ~`Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, page 195

## Hearts and Hands (M)

This one is by Tickle Tune Typhoon, on a recording by the same name as the song. One of the musicians in this group is a Baha'i.

Here are the words and actions. Students are instructed to do the actions with as many different people as possible—i.e. to not just interact with one's good friends. Participants are also encouraged to dance during this upbeat song, especially since there are lyrics that don't involve any pantomiming. Before playing the song, the lyrics were read and the accompanying actions were demonstrated, and the students were to mimic me. Then only the key action words were read again and the students were to show the appropriate actions. This double run through is necessary for remembering what to do.

Heart to heart *(press chest against another chest, as in hug)*
Hand in hand *(hold someone's hand)*

CHORUS:
People helping people
Heart to heart, hand in hand *(motions same as above)*
People helping people
Heart to heart, woman and man *(press chest against another chest, as in hug)*

Reach out a helping hand *(starting with hand near chest, unbend elbow with open palm, extend towards someone)*
Children gather round
Black, white, yellow, red
Tan and all the brown
Open up your heart *(have hands over heart, open outward like a double gate)*
Know that you belong
When we stand together
We keep each other strong *(link elbows with someone, and the outside unlinked arms make a strong muscle by flexing and bending.)*

CHORUS

Look at the chain of life *(bend own index fingers and hook together to mimic chain)*
Creatures great and small *(raise arms to indicate height, then bend index finger and thumb with about an inch between them to indicate small)*
Clouds, trees, butterflies *(form large circle with arms to indicate cloud, arms up and extended with palms facing down, fingers spread out to indicate trees, and cross wrists, palms down, and flap hands by bending at wrists to indicate butterflies)*
Yes we need them all *(shake head yes)*
Everywhere around the world *(have both arms bent in front of chest, palms facing chest, unbend and extend outward to indicate everywhere, make circle with index finger of one hand pointing down, as if turning a globe.)*
The sky, the sea, the land *(sweep arm upward to point to sky, for sea, make wave motions by bending elbow and wrist, moving up and down, and for land, hands facing down make circular motions, hands and arms parallel to the floor.)*
All things link together *(link elbows with someone)*
Joining hearts and hands *(press chest against another chest and hold someone's hand)*
Joining hearts and hands *(same)*

CHORUS

## With Two Wings (M)

This one is on Red Grammer's *Teaching Peace* CD. Available at www.bahaibookstore.com.

*The world of humanity has two wings -one is women and the other men. Not until both wings are equally developed can the bird fly. Should one wing remain weak, flight is impossible. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 302

We discussed how humanity is the bird, and to fly means to progress and attain happiness. (This interpretation is based on other writings by Abdu'l-Baha, which will be shared later.) Then I read a beautifully illustrated and very short story called "Learning to Fly" from *Brilliant Star* Baha'i children's magazine, March/April 1999, pages 13-15. It is done in comic book style. It uses the metaphor in the memory verse. A woman and man are physically connected, with each having one wing. I explained that men and women really are connected---spiritually, emotionally, and financially, etc.--- when we marry. The story illustrates how both have to be strong and work together in unity to achieve their goals.

Next I read them a short book called Wings of a Bird by Bambi Betts. It simply and beautifully illustrates the concept that women and men are like the wings of one bird. If one wing is undeveloped, the whole bird suffers.

Then it was time for some physical movement so we went into the living room and danced and "flew" to "With Two Wings". Before beginning, I read the lyrics. The lyrics talk about needing 2 wings for the "dove of peace to fly". I explained that the role of women in peace would be explored in later classes in May.

Each child chose 2 scarves and tied 1 corner of each together to form 2 wings. Then they draped the 2 connected scarves over the backs of their necks, and held onto opposite corners. The scarves can be draped over the front of their arms or held behind. Kids can move arms forward and back or up and down for flying motions. Students were instructed to make flying movements *during the chorus only*. During the part of the song where the male sings alone and bemoans that all he can do is flutter w/o his female counterpart, students were to wave one arm only and remain in place. Likewise, when the female voice laments her lack of 2 wings, students would wave the other arm by itself and remain in place. I told the kids, that if their shoes were off, so that they could feel like they are soaring up high, they could prance along on the couch, sturdy wooden coffee table, the chairs and slate shelf below the fire place. They were not allowed to jump up and down on the furniture. Being allowed to walk/stand/prance on my living room furniture was an exception, and they should never do this at home or at others' homes—or here-- unless given permission. It is simply very inappropriate under normal circumstances. The scarves and being able to leap up onto the furniture definitely added to the enthusiasm of this activity.

## The Two of Us

Male/female partners were to create a brief demonstration of how 2 people working together can complement each other or be a helpmate. We again discussed what it means when someone or something complements another and that it is not the same as *compliments.* It means to balance or harmonize with.

Examples: one child tried to carry a table, the second child enabled them to do it. One child wrote a phrase, another illustrated the phrase with a drawing, one child could not reach something high up, but together, with one on the other's shoulders, they could, etc.

*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

*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

The original idea for this cooperative activity came from A Manual on Non-Violence and Children page 133, compiled by Stephanie Judson. I have embellished it in the variation below. 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 2 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 girls' 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. Thus counselleth you the Pen of Revelation, if ye be of them that believe. ~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.

*Symmetrical Sculptures Variation:* This was done in preparation for a Red Grammer concert at our local elementary public school. Kids listened to the lyrics of "Rapp Song" from his *Teaching Peace* recording. Its all about working together in unity and the beauty of diversity. The quotations above and below are appropriate to the themes in the song.

*The diversity in the human family should be the cause of love and harmony, as it is in music where many different notes blend together in the making of a perfect chord. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha* Paris Talks, page 53

*If you meet those of different race and colour from yourself, do not mistrust them and withdraw yourself into your shell of conventionality, but rather be glad and show them kindness. Think of them as different coloured roses growing in the beautiful garden of humanity, an rejoice to be among them. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Paris Talks, page 53

Here are a few of the lyrics and some of the discussion that went with them:

*Now the differences are great and the differences are small, but that's just part of the beauty of it all. We're all like notes that make up a song, we need everybody so come on sing along.*

Differences (diversity) make the world so much more beautiful and interesting. How boring if all the colors on a rainbow were just one color, or a garden just had one type and color of flower! But we need unity to make the best of that diversity and to prevent conflict.

Like different notes in a song, we would like you to work together in unity to create a formation. So instead of a song that the ears hear, you are going to create a formation that the eyes see. Each group

will need to consult on a formation and then present it to the rest of the class. And remember diversity is beautiful and interesting, so let's not bore our class mates by presenting the same formations. And to show unity in diversity we ask that all are connected in the formation, i.e. all are touching another.

You can be standing, kneeling, sitting, lying down, or any posture. Be creative! The design of a formation can include combinations of many postures, just as long as there is a pattern. A good song always has a pattern, or melody. (Students were shown photos of synchronized swimming patterns and yoga positions for ideas of ways to form their bodies and formations.)

Let's do an example right now. (Teachers choose a group of students and create a symmetrical pattern with 4-8 kids. These need to be upper elementary age.)

*Now some folks think that they are the best. They don't know how to get along, they say the heck with the rest. So they go their own way and they do their own thing. But the song sounds weak when its time for them to sing.*

The group sings a song they all know together, or the chorus of the Rapp song. The teacher or a previously cued student steps away from the group and with an arrogant look begins to sing their own song. Then another formation is made, and the same thing happens—a member of the formation steps slightly away from the group and does their own posture that ruins the symmetry.

The formations could be presented at a school-wide assembly using the "Rapp Song". The students will need to have practiced their formation well. Since only their class mates will have seen the formations, it would be fun to present their creation like a masterpiece. About 10 kids can hold up a giant parachute while the formation group scrambles under, then the parachute could be lowered on them. They should be given about one minute to form. Then on cue, the parachute (any large cloth will do) should be pulled off the group to present their surprise formation to the rest of the audience. The person running the sound system should pause the music as the formation is unveiled to dramatize the effect. After applause, the group should then depart from under the parachute, and another group would take their place as the music starts up again, thus starting the sequence over.

At our local school, a digital camera was used to take photos of the formations from a ladder. These photos were then enlarged, printed, and put on display on mat boards in the school hallway. A poster containing the entire lyrics to the song was also posted. (Scrap mat board can often be obtained for free or very low cost from framing businesses.)

## Never Too Poor

This one teaches kids that no one is too poor to make a contribution of some kind. Just because they are kids with no formal employment, does not mean that they can't support fundraising efforts. We did this one in conjunction with our unit on the Baha'i House of Worship. I first read a story about Nettie Tobin from pages 8-9, *Brilliant Star*, Jan/Feb. 1998. There is also a brief description of her story in the Core Curriculum's Lesson Planning Guide, The Central Figures: Abdu'l-Baha, Level One on page 35. Nettie was very poor but fervently desired to contribute to the building of the Mother Temple of the West. She donated the cornerstone for the temple—using much determination and perseverance to get it to the building site.

The instructions are: If you had no money, and were as poor at Nettie Tobin, how would you support the Temple project? Be realistic —i.e. choose a way that you really could successfully do. Can you do this for the Chilean Temple? Pantomime, and we have to guess how.

## The Zealous Baha'i

A fast-paced role playing game which demands metaphorical thinking.

This skit was audience participation and was done at Green Acre one year for the talent show night. It was a comedy on teaching the Baha'i Faith, filled with metaphors, bad puns, and commentary that had the ring of truth.

I introduced this skit/game by explaining that in order to be an effective teacher of the Faith, we should not only pray and deepen in the Writings, but also be able to relate the Faith to current world conditions or to people's personal situations. We also must be able to seize an opportunity to insert the Faith into conversation whenever we can w/o being perceived as over-eager or manipulative—and that means being alert to subjects that relate to the Faith in some way. But since this was comedy, I wanted to take it to the extreme and show how we can be over-zealous in our search for relevance. However, I do really think it a very good mental exercise in itself to see how many things can relate to the Baha'i Faith. Actually, I have been continually amazed throughout my life at the breadth of Baha'u'llah's Revelation in that it seems to relate to everything on some level. But for this skit, the actors playing Baha'is are going to have to relate objects of varying ridiculousness to the Faith. View it as a mental exercise for the real thing.

I reminded the audience that teaching the Faith is a sacred act, and that this skit was not meant to make of it a mockery. But I also reminded them that teaching the Faith can be fun and creative too. And perhaps this improvisational skit may have some lessons for us on how *not* to teach as well!

So here is the scene/game: A brave, enthusiastic, intellectual, and good natured seeker is responding to a notice in the newspaper of a fireside. (This person should be played by someone who is confident & quick witted and can make interesting observations and playful & colorful conversation.) He/she rings a pretend doorbell, and a Baha'i who the seeker has never met, answers with intense enthusiasm and they sit down at a table.

(For stage aesthetics, it would be more visually interesting if the two sat across each other on couches, floor pillows, or chairs, with a coffee table or low platform between them. It's always best to be able to see as much body language as possible.)

Scattered about the stage are various objects. To give people confidence and examples, I played the Baha'i for the first 3 objects presented, which are on the table instead of the stage.

Early on in the conversation the seeker inquires about one of the objects on the table. The main goal of this game/skit is for the Baha'i host to be able to quickly and creatively incorporate objects into one's conversation and relate them to the Faith, so that the object does not ruin the spiritual focus.

This whole interaction of souls exploring spiritual concepts--- then all of a sudden the physical world abruptly ends the exploration via a cell phone call, a new love interest, a new hobby etc., ---- reminds me how both seekers and Baha'is so easily get distracted by the material world and detour off the path of their spiritual quest. And steadfast Baha'is should be alert to when this is happening and endeavor to lovingly and creatively bring those sidetracked back on track. This skit/game is a playful version of this. Of course I recognize that small talk and discussing non-Baha'i related subjects is all part of weaving bonds of fellowship with others and that any Baha'i who obsessively brings up the Faith will end up being perceived as proselytizing, and alienate and scare potential seekers. This skit pokes fun at those types too.

The objects on the stage being in full view of the audience gives potential participants time to think of a link to the Faith. If you have a really talented group of folks who are naturals at improvisational acting, the objects can be in a covered basket, and audience members can toss or carry them up to the stage and surprise the host—who has to really think fast on his/her feet! *Its important to remind the audience to give the host time to expound on the current object before assaulting them with another.*

After the first 3 objects have been used, anybody from the audience can ring the doorbell with a new object, greeting the Baha'i host and indicating that they are a Baha'i coming to join in the fireside. One does not want the table/stage too get too cluttered with too many people dialoguing—it will become confusing, muddled and not so fun. So, I excuse myself, claiming I have to leave to catch a plane early the next AM. After the new host deals with a few objects, another Baha'i rings the doorbell, and the current host also has a good excuse to leave.

After a while, a new seeker rings the doorbell indicating that they are a seeker. Seekers can bring an object from the stage also, to torment the determined Baha'i host with. The original seeker then excuses him/herself to go home. The skit ends when it starts to lag or all the objects are used up—whichever happens first.

This game is very improvisational, so one never knows how it will turn out—a lot depends on the humor, wit, and skill of the audience. The person introducing the activity should remind audience members to give fair time to the current hosts and seekers on stage and let them get through a few objects before ringing the doorbell to replace them. Some audiences will be super eager to join in and actually form a line to get on stage, others will shrink in their seats. Most children can't handle the fast paced metaphorical thinking that this game demands, but can often get the jokes and the humor. Sharp and deepened youth can do it if they are brave enough. The seeker role is easier, , b/c one just has to show interest in the objects and carry on the discussion and make decent conversation, whereas the Baha'i host has to apply the object somehow to the Baha'i teachings. When I explain the game, I urge children under 12 to just watch—it can get really slow and awkward if a kid gets up there and can't handle the metaphorical demands of the interaction. With the right group, this skit/game can be absolutely hilarious.

We also did this activity at our day camp on teaching the Faith. The students were ages 7-12, with 2 youth helpers. First I defined the word "zealous" and went through the part of the introduction that explains the purpose of the activity. Then I asked one of the youth to play the seeker. Before the seeker arrived, however, every student was given an object. They are to play my children who keep interrupting the teaching exchange by bringing in their object. They can pretend to be a baby or any age. They have been advised to wait until I have successfully related the previous object to the Baha'i teachings before bringing up a new one. The students go in a pre-set order so they are not jockeying for stage time at the same time. I act exasperated each time they interrupt me, engage in a brief impromptu interchange with them, and then shoo them away. But my seeker guest has taken an interest in the object that my child has presented and so in order to stay on the Baha'i theme, I desperately link it to the Baha'i writings. We had a whole lot of fun with this.

Also, if you want to use this game with an audience of children 9 years and up and allow them to play the Baha'i teacher role, then choose much easier objects than those below. For example most older deepened children can get the metaphorical links in objects such as these two:

A *flashlight:* Baha'u'llah's teachings guide us to Divine truth like a giant flashlight in this world full of the darkness of ignorance, false teachings, war, and hate.

*I am the guiding Light that illumineth the way. ~Baha'u'llah:* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 169

a *homeopathic remedy:* Baha'u'llah's Revelation is the Divine remedy for this very sick world.

*....the teachings of Baha'u'llah are the very healing of the sick world, the remedy for every need and condition..... `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 440)

Here are some objects we used at Green Acre and brief possible connections to the Faith:

*Lipstick:* Bring up how ephemeral lipstick is, just like the physical world and wealth, thus we should put our energy into those activities which have spiritual and eternal effects.

*Behold ye not the world, its changes and chances, and its varying colours? Wherefore are ye satisfied with it and with all the things therein? Open your eyes and be of them that are endued with insight. The day is fast approaching when all these things will have vanished as fast as the lightning, nay even faster. Unto this beareth witness the Lord of the Kingdom in this wondrous Tablet. ~ Baha'u'llah:* Huququ'llah, page 497

*The world is continually proclaiming these words: Beware, I am evanescent, and so are all my outward appearances and colours. Take ye heed of the changes and chances contrived within me and be ye roused from your slumber.*
*~Baha'u'llah:* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 258

*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

*A giant stuffed Lizard:* Seeks the sun, loves the sun, we should too, in the form of God's Revelation, the Sun of Reality. (The sun is a symbol used extensively in the Writings—usually representing God, His love or teachings, or His Manifestation). Or one could tie Lizard into how in our Faith, kindness to animals is explicitly stated.

*The people of perception are the seekers of the truth, and not of the places of its appearance, nor of its dawning points; therefore, they will adore the Sun from whatever point in the zodiac it may appear, and they will seek the Reality in every Sanctified Soul Who manifests it. Such people always attain to the truth and are not veiled from the Sun of the Divine World. So the lover of the sun and the seeker of the light will always turn toward the sun, ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Some Answered Questions, page 76

*Bottle of salad dressing:* Sometimes we need our world shook up before we are ready for use by God's will. Or use as symbol of race unity—oil and water, when they come together are much better than when separate. Or, God has to shake up the lives of segregated peoples in order to force them together—lots of stories of how calamities bring warring tribes/ethnic groups etc. together in unity. Or life is a salad, but its like w/o dressing without religion.

*Binoculars:* Relate to how Baha'u'llah's teachings enable us to have a penetrating vision into world and personal affairs

*Mosquito repellent:* Prayer and deepening in God's Word helps repel harmful spiritual parasites

*Cup:* Many people get fixated on the receptacle and can't see that the water of life is the same in different religions. Or talk about Hidden Words # 2 Persian:

*How strange and pitiful; for a mere cupful, they have turned away from the billowing seas of the Most High, and remained far from the most effulgent horizon.* There are lots of uses of the cup metaphor in the Writings:

*The seal of the choice Wine of His Revelation hath, in this Day and in His Name, the Self-Sufficing, been broken. Its grace is being poured out upon men. Fill thy cup, and drink in, in His Name, the Most Holy, the All-Praised. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 12

*Deodorant:* Masks bad smells, does not get at root of problem, really need good cleansing bath. Just like most political acts—just masks root causes. Need God's Revelation for today to cleanse the world of foul odors of corruption, etc.

*Ear plugs*: The Hidden Words says: *stop thine ears, that thou mayest hearken unto the sweet melody of My voice; ~Baha'u'llah:* Persian Hidden Words, # 11. Also, Baha'u'llah frequently mentions how people should have attentive ears or incline their ears to His words, but they do not.

*Open your ears that ye may hearken unto the word of God, the Help in peril, the Self-existent.~Baha'u'llah*: Persian Hidden Words, # 52

It is astonishing how frequently Baha'u'llah mentions eyes and ears in His Writings. One can also relate earplugs to those beliefs and activities which prevent us from hearing His Divine call: religious prejudice, materialism, alcohol, ignorance, etc.

*Toothpaste:* Prevents cavities forming. Its like God's laws, which prevent bad/destructive habits from forming which eat away at our spiritual purity and health.

*Floss*: Flossing is like applying God's laws, its not always pleasant, but very good for you.

*Comb:* Gets the tangles out, just like the Revelation of Baha'u'llah has the ability to get the tangles (problems) out of the world. And it sometimes hurts.

*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

*Squirt bottle*: Refreshes and revives plants like prayer does for our soul.

*Orange or Kiwi:* What's inside is what matters, not the outer shell. Or choice fruits: *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

As you can see, the possibilities are only limited by your imagination and willingness to make far fetched connections! Just be playful, expressive, and not afraid to be silly.

## Chosen Channels and Inspired Instruments

This title is based on quotes about teachers of the Faith being channels or instruments through which God's will and bounty flows, chosen by Him, inspired by Him and His hosts. For example:

For the believers,..... whether capable or not, whether poor or rich, and whether influential or obscure, are after all but mere channels through which God carries His message to mankind. They are instruments, whereby He communicates His will to His people. ~Shoghi Effendi, (Dated 18 March 1934 to an individual believer, The Compilation of Compilations vol II, p. 219)

*Try with all your hearts to be willing channels for God's Bounty. For I say unto you that He has chosen you to be His messengers of love throughout the world, to be His bearers of spiritual gifts to man, to be the means of spreading unity and concord on the earth. ~Abdu'l-Baha*, Paris Talks, p. 67

*The Pen of the Most High hath decreed and imposed upon every one the obligation to teach this Cause.... God will, no doubt, inspire whosoever detacheth himself from all else but Him, and will cause the pure waters of wisdom and utterance to gush out and flow copiously from his heart. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 314

*By the righteousness of God! Whoso openeth his lips in this Day and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. ~Baha'u'llah*, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 280

This dramatic activity was created for our week long day camp on teaching the Baha'i Faith. Students were shown a list of virtues, behaviors, and attitudes highly relevant to teaching the Baha'i Faith written on 4 posters. The posters were hung on the wall. I chose a youth assistant to be a person I wanted to teach. They had to be older b/c this involved improvisational acting. Just for fun, and to vividly demonstrate why the virtues/behaviors/attitudes are so necessary and to show contrast, I did several mini-skits illustrating the lack of a virtue/behavior/attitude. (I deliberately did not choose a student to play the role of the "bad" teacher for 2 reasons: They tend to get carried away and get overly silly and obnoxious, and children don't need practice in what *not* to do.) Students were to raise their hand if they think they could identify the virtues/behaviors/attitudes that were obviously missing. The students seemed to really enjoy watching my bad behavior.

I illustrated the *absence* of the following:

- A *Kindly tongue* (I mentioned how big the youth's feet were)
- *Detachment* and *patience* (I obnoxiously pressed him to become a Baha'i),
- *Humility and not considering oneself learned and the seeker ignorant* (I boasted about my level of education and grilled the youth on his level of education. When he said he had only completed high school, I snootily said that he could perhaps be a gardener for the Baha'i center)
- *Wisdom* (I very quickly started talking about all the laws in the Faith and how desperate we are for help with all the plans)
- *Happiness, Cheerfulness* (I was extremely gloomy and depressed looking and sounding while I tried to teach)
- *Confidence, relying on Divine Assistance, and not focusing on one's own shortcomings* (Before I approached the youth I very nervously lamented over my speech impediment and how he would never listen to me or take me seriously, that God would abandon me, etc. I ended up fleeing before even talking to the youth.)
- *Determination and perseverance* (I got distracted by a pretend outdoor concert and just started dancing to the music and when I finally remembered that I had intended to teach the youth, I was hungry and hot, so I went off to get relief instead.)
- *Respect & Divine Tolerance* (I rolled my eyes and made condescending remarks when the youth talked about how he was taught that Christ was the only true way to God)

Then I assigned pairs to privately choose a virtue/behavior/attitude from the list and develop a 3 minute mini-skit to illustrate the expression of that virtue/behavior/attitude in teaching. I decided to not assign virtues etc. through choosing blindly from a basket, b/c there were lots of 7-8 year olds in this group of 7-12 year olds and I wanted the kids to be comfortable with the behavior they were to act out. Pairs were sent off to various separate rooms to work on their performance. My youth assistants and I made rounds to facilitate their production and make sure they were staying on task. This took about 20 minutes for some, 5 minutes for others. To promote the secrecy of their selection and expedite the process, each pair was given their own smaller 2 page copy of the list on bright yellow paper.

The audience was to try and guess which virtues/behaviors/attitudes were the dominant ones in the teaching exchange. The audience students were asked not to blurt out their guesses, but to raise their

hands at the end of the skit, and a performer would call on them. B/c the kids could choose from the same list, there were bound to be skits utilizing the same virtue/behavior/attitude. This was okay b/c kids then can see how a virtue/behavior/attitude is expressed in different ways. I explained that many of the skits would display multiple items from the list, and they should try and guess as many as possible. It often happened that qualities were illustrated w/o even being intended by the performers. I pointed out that this meant that expressing the attributes of a good teacher was not that difficult. I reminded the kids that in real life, we normally do not bring up the faith so quickly with seekers. But for dramatic purposes and due to time constraints, we needed to do so for this activity. The list was on display during the skits for reference, but some chose to look at their personal copies instead.

The kids had great fun acting out the following:

- Ignoring one's weaknesses and shortcomings
- Determination and perseverance in overcoming obstacles
- Courage
- Teaching one's own self first
- Prayer and trusting in God
- Daily prayer
- Reads and studies the Holy Word, and continually strives for a deeper understanding of the Divine teachings
- Compassion and understanding
- Willingness to be helpful
- Asks for the bestowals of the Holy Spirit
- Divine tolerance and patience
- Longs to share the Message
- Turns to Baha'u'llah and asks for help
- Friendliness
- Resolute will

The students that were more confident and older tended to incorporate humor a lot—and it made the whole experience quite entertaining. For example, one child put on Groucho Marx glasses with a gigantic nose, bushy eyebrows, and mustache. This was his birth defect, and even though he was quite self-conscious about it, it did not stop him from approaching other kids to teach them. Before going up to a child to teach, the child-teacher would ask for Baha'u'llah's help. (Courage, not focusing on one's shortcomings, longs to share the Message, turns to Baha'u'llah and asks for help, then says what is suggested to heart.)

Another child acted as if she was cursed by clumsiness and kept having accidents such as falling in a pond, tripping over a log, etc.—but she never quit in her quest to get to a new friend's house to teach her. And while there, even though she kept having accidents, (like spilling her tea) she continued to try and talk about the Baha'i Faith. (Determination and perseverance, resolute will, longs to share the Message).
*More examples:*

A child is crying. The teacher child approaches and asks what's wrong. The crying child says she has lost her puppy. The teacher child offers to help search. A sign is held up that shows an hour has passed. When hopelessness is expressed, the teacher child asks if he can say a Baha'i prayer. The pet owner child is willing to try anything at this point. The prayer is said, and I scoot a stuffed dog onto the stage. The owner is overjoyed. She then inquires: "What is Baha'i anyway?" And then the teacher child begins to give a brief summary. (Compassion and understanding, willingness to be helpful, asks for the bestowals of the Holy Spirit)

The scene opens with a child studying Ruhi Book 6, Teaching the Cause. She then carries a bust of a man's head and neck (with a wig, hat, and glasses on for humor) onto the stage and practices starting a conversation and teaching about the Faith. Then she says a prayer for assistance. She then goes off to school and walks up to another child on a pretend playground. He is clearly the nervous type and very suspicious of why she is interacting with him. She lets him ask questions about her, and talk about

himself first. He then begins to remove his various disguises (sunglasses, hat, wig, etc.) He explains that he likes to be “undercover”. When he is more relaxed she brings up the Faith, and eventually invites him to a devotional. (Daily prayer, continually strives for a deeper understanding of the Divine teachings, teaches one’s own self first, longs to share the Message, friendliness, patience, removes fear of seeker, teaches gradually, etc)

The teacher child begins a conversation with another child. The teacher child keeps trying to bring up the faith, but the other child keeps talking about her nails, hair, shopping, etc. The teacher child goes along with the conversation and eventually gets an opportunity. The materially-focused child shows interest and even though she is still rather obsessed with her looks, accepts an offer to attend a fireside. (Divine tolerance, patience, respect, resolute will).

Here is the summary list of virtues/behaviors/attitudes of an effective teacher, gleaned from Baha’i quotations:

Kindly manner, kindly tongue
Converses in a spirit of extreme kindliness and goodwill
Detachment from all but God
Upright, praiseworthy, goodly character
Humility and lowliness
Friendliness and fellowship, friendly tongue
Love
Affection
Respect
Compassion and understanding
Love of God
Wisdom
Divine tolerance
Patience
Resolute will
Perseverance and determination
Confidence
Courage
Dignity
Conviction
Pure
Selfless
Happy and cheerful
Thankful
Willingness to be helpful
Hospitality
Teaches one’s own self first
Leaves alone those who don’t want to hear and beseeches God to guide them
Removes fears of seeker
Teaches someone gradually
Concentrates thoughts on teaching
Teaches fully, vigorously, wholeheartedly
Shows forth holy deeds
Does not consider himself as learned and others ignorant
Does not see in oneself any superiority
Daily prayer, communes intimately with God’s Spirit
Reads and studies the Holy Word
Continually strives for a deeper understanding of the Divine teachings
Observance of the Baha’i laws and principles
Inner life and own private character mirror forth Baha’u’llah’s principles
Lives the Baha’i life, teaches by example

Longs to share the Message
Truly believes in the teachings
Trusts in and relies on God
Turns to Baha'u'llah and asks for help, then says what is suggested to heart
Asks for the bestowals of the Holy Spirit
Has spiritual understanding and profound knowledge of the Faith
Full faith and confidence in Divine aid
Stays firm
Never focuses on one's own limitations, weaknesses, frailties, shortcomings
Forgets self
Strives with all his/her powers to teach and serve
Heart burns with desire to serve

The Quotes that were used to formulate the list above are below. The words and phrases that are **bolded** were used to make the list of virtues, behaviors and attitudes of a successful Baha'i teacher. They are not necessarily in the same order as the list, as some phrases were almost identical and some were combined or paraphrased in the list. The first half of the list is essentially virtues, the second half, more descriptive of attitudes and behaviors. Of course virtues are expressed in behaviors, and the attitudes and behaviors reflect virtues.

*He hath....ordained that His Cause be taught through the power of men's utterance, and not through resort to violence.....Beware lest ye contend with any one, nay, strive to make him aware of the truth with **kindly manner** and most convincing exhortation. If your hearer respond, he will have responded to his own behoof, and if not, **turn ye away from him**, and set your faces towards God's sacred Court, the seat of resplendent holiness. ~Baha'u'llah,* Gleanings, pages 278-9

*Whoever ariseth to discharge this duty, must needs, ere he proclaimeth His Message, adorn himself with the ornament of an **upright and praiseworthy character**, so that his words may attract the hearts of such as are receptive to his call. Without it, he can never hope to influence his hearers. ~Baha'u'llah,* Gleanings, p. 335

*Whoso ariseth among you to teach the Cause of his Lord, let him, before all else, **teach his own self**, that his speech may attract the hearts of them that hear him. Unless he teacheth his own self, the words of his mouth will not influence the heart of the seeker. Take heed, O people, lest ye be of them that give good counsel to others but forget to follow it themselves. ~Baha'u'llah,* Gleanings, p. 277

*Whoso ariseth, in this Day, to aid Our Cause, and summoneth to his assistance the hosts of a **praiseworthy character and upright conduct,** the influence flowing from such an action will, most certainly, be diffused throughout the whole world. ~Baha'u'llah,* Gleanings, p. 287

*Should any one among you be incapable of grasping a certain truth, or be striving to comprehend it, show forth, when conversing with him, a **spirit of extreme kindliness and good-will**. Help him to see and recognize the truth, **without esteeming yourself to be, in the least, superior to him**, or to be possessed of greater endowments. ~Baha'u'llah,* Gleanings, p. 8

*Consort with all men, O people of Baha, in a spirit of **friendliness** and **fellowship**. If ye be aware of a certain truth, if ye possess a jewel, of which others are deprived, share it*

*with them in a language of utmost kindliness and goodwill. If it be accepted, if it fulfill its purpose, your object is attained. If anyone should refuse it,* ***leave him unto himself****, and* ***beseech God to guide him****. Beware lest ye deal unkindly with him. A* ***kindly tongue*** *is the lodestone of the hearts of men. It is the bread of the spirit, it clotheth the words with meaning, it is the fountain of the light of wisdom and understanding.*
*~Baha'u'llah,* Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 15

*The path to guidance is one of* ***love and compassion****, not of force and coercion. This hath been God's method in the past, and shall continue to be in the future! ~The Bab:* Selections from the Writings of The Bab, page 77

*O Friends! You must all be so ablaze in this day with the fire of the* ***love of God*** *that the heat thereof may be manifest in all your veins, your limbs and members of your body, and the peoples of the world may be ignited by this heat and turn to the horizon of the Beloved. ~Baha'u'llah:* Guidelines for Teaching, page 293

*.....kindle in thy heart the fire of the* ***love of God*** *to such an extent that any one who approaches thee will feel its warmth.... ~Abdu'l-Baha,* Tablets of Abdu'l-Baha v1, p. 113

*Let your actions cry aloud to the world that you are indeed Bahá'ís, for it is* ***actions that speak*** *to the world and are the cause of the progress of humanity. ~Abdu'l-Baha,* Paris Talks, p. 80

*The friends of God should weave bonds of* ***fellowship*** *with others and show absolute* ***love and affection*** *towards them. These links have a deep influence on people and they will listen. When the friends sense receptivity to the Word of God, they should deliver the Message with* ***wisdom****. They must first try and* ***remove any apprehensions*** *in the people they teach. In fact, every one of the believers should choose one person every year and try to establish ties of* ***friendship*** *with him, so that all his fear would disappear. Only then, and* ***gradually****, must he teach that person. This is the best method. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Guidelines for Teaching, page 300

*In this day every believer must* ***concentrate his thoughts*** *on teaching the Faith...O loved ones of God! Each one of the friends must teach at least one soul each year. This is everlasting glory. This is eternal grace." ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Compilations, The Individual and Teaching - Raising the Divine Call, p. 13

*The teaching work should under all conditions be actively pursued by the believers.....* ***fully, vigorously*** *and* ***wholeheartedly*****.....** *Even so, this activity should be tempered with* ***wisdom*** *-- not that wisdom which requireth one to be silent and forgetful of such an obligation, but rather that which requireth one to display* ***divine tolerance, love, kindness, patience, a goodly character, and holy deeds.*** *~Abdu'l-Baha,* Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 268

*In accordance with the divine teachings in this glorious dispensation we should not belittle anyone and call him ignorant, saying: 'You know not, but I know'. Rather, we should look upon others with* ***respect,*** *and when attempting to explain and demonstrate, we should speak as if we are investigating the truth, saying: 'Here these things are before us. Let us investigate to determine where and in what form the truth*

*can be found.' The teacher should* ***not consider himself as learned and others ignorant****. Such a thought breedeth pride, and pride is not conducive to influence. The teacher should* ***not see in himself any superiority;*** *he should speak with the utmost* ***kindliness, lowliness and humility****, for such speech exerteth influence and educateth the souls. ~Abdu'l-Baha,* Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 30

Every individual believer -- man, woman, youth and child -- is summoned to this field of action; for it is on the initiative, the **resolute will** of the individual to teach and to serve, that the success of the entire community depends. Well-grounded in the mighty Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, sustained by **daily prayer** and **reading of the Holy Word,** strengthened by a **continual striving to obtain a deeper understanding of the divine Teachings**, illumined by a constant endeavour to relate these Teachings to current issues, nourished by **observance of the laws and principles** of His wondrous World Order, every individual can attain increasing measures of success in teaching. In sum, the ultimate triumph of the Cause is assured by that "one thing and only one thing" so poignantly emphasized by Shoghi Effendi, namely, "the extent to which our own **inner life and private character mirror forth in their manifold aspects the splendour of those eternal principles proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh".** (The Universal House of Justice, Ridvan 145, 1988, p. 3)

"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)

"Not all of us are capable of serving in the same way, but the one way every Bahá'í can spread the Faith is **by example**. This moves the hearts of people far more deeply than words ever can." "The **love** we show others, the **hospitality** and **understanding,** the **willingness to help** them, these are the very best advertisements of the Faith. They will want to hear about it when they see these things in our lives." (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 14, Compilations, Lights of Guidance, p. 112)

*Be not grieved if thou performest it thyself alone. Let God be all-sufficient for thee.* ***Commune intimately with His Spirit,*** *and be thou of the* ***thankful.*** *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.*** *And should any one reject thine offer, turn thou away from him, and* ***put thy trust and confidence in the Lord,*** *thy God, the Lord of all worlds.*
*By the righteousness of God! Whoso openeth his lips in this Day and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. On him shall also descend the Concourse on high, each bearing aloft a chalice of pure light. ~Baha'u'llah,* Gleanings, page 280

*Rest assured that the breathings of the Holy Spirit will loosen thy tongue. Speak, therefore; speak out with great* ***courage*** *at every meeting. When thou art about to begin thine address,* ***turn first to Bahá'u'lláh****, and* ***ask for the confirmations of the Holy Spirit****, then open thy lips and* ***say whatever is suggested to thy heart****; this, however, with the utmost* ***courage, dignity and conviction****. It is my hope that from day to day your gatherings will grow and flourish, and that those who are seeking after truth will*

*hearken therein to reasoned arguments and conclusive proofs. I am with you heart and soul at every meeting; be sure of this.*
*~Abdu'l-Baha,* Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 269

*Turn thy face toward the Kingdom of God,* ***ask for the bestowals of the Holy Spirit,*** *speak, and the confirmations of the Spirit will come. ~Abdu'l-Baha,* Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 179

*Arise to further My Cause, and to exalt My Word amongst men. We are with you at all times, and shall strengthen you through the power of truth. We are truly almighty. Whoso hath recognized Me, will arise and serve Me with such* ***determination*** *that the powers of earth and heaven shall be unable to defeat his purpose. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 137

*The Pen of the Most High hath decreed and imposed upon every one the obligation to teach this Cause.... God will, no doubt, inspire whosoever* ***detacheth himself from all else but Him,*** *and will cause the pure waters of wisdom and utterance to gush out and flow copiously from his heart. Verily, thy Lord, the All-Merciful, is powerful to do as He willeth, and ordaineth whatsoever He pleaseth. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 314

*Beware, O people of Baha, lest the strong ones of the earth rob you of your strength, or they who rule the world fill you with fear. Put your* ***trust in God,*** *and commit your affairs to His keeping. He, verily, will, through the power of truth, render you victorious, and He, verily, is powerful to do what He willeth, and in His grasp are the reins of omnipotent might. Baha'u'llah,* (Cited in Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice p. 82)

Just one mature soul, with **spiritual understanding and a profound knowledge of the Faith**, can set a whole country ablaze - -so great is the power of the Cause to work through a **pure and selfless** channel. (From a letter dated 6 November 1949 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer) Compilations, The Individual and Teaching - Raising the Divine Call, p. 29)

The invisible hosts of the Kingdom are ready to extend to you all the assistance you need, and through them you will no doubt succeed in removing every obstacle in your way, and in fulfilling this most cherished desire of your heart. Bahá'u'lláh has given us a promise that should we **persevere in our efforts** and **repose all our confidence in Him** the doors of success will be widely open before us.... ~Shoghi Effendi (Dated 22 September 1936 to an individual believer, The Compilation of Compilations vol II, p. 220)

Though single-handed, and no matter how great the apathy of the people around you may be, you should have faith that the hosts of the Kingdom are on your side, and that through their help you are bound to overcome the forces of darkness that are facing the Cause of God. **Persevere, be happy and confident**, therefore." (From a letter dated June 30, 1937, written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, published in The Individual and Teaching, pp. 23-24)

The harder you strive to attain your goal, the greater will be the confirmations of Bahá'u'lláh, and the more certain you can feel to attain success. Be **cheerful,** therefore, and **exert yourself with full faith and confidence**. For Bahá'u'lláh has promised His Divine assistance to everyone who arises with a pure and detached heart to spread His holy Word, even though he may be bereft of every human knowledge and capacity, and notwithstanding the forces of darkness and of opposition which may be arrayed against him.

The goal is clear, the path safe and certain, and the assurances of Bahá'u'lláh as to the eventual success of our efforts quite emphatic. Let us **keep firm**, and whole-heartedly carry on the great work which He has entrusted into our hands. ~Shoghi Effendi, (Dated 3 February 1937 to an individual believer, The Compilation of Compilations vol II, p. 220)

You should **never look at your own limitations**, much less allow them to deter you from promoting the Message. For the believers, whether capable or not, whether poor or rich, and whether influential or obscure, are after all but mere channels through which God carries His message to mankind. They are instruments, whereby He communicates His will to His people. The friends, therefore, must cease looking at their own deficiencies in a way that would kill in them the spirit of initiative and of service. They should have **confidence in the divine assistance** promised to them by Bahá'u'lláh, and strengthened and revived by such an assurance they should continue to toil till the very end of their life. ~Shoghi Effendi, (Dated 18 March 1934 to an individual believer, The Compilation of Compilations vol II, p. 219)

The Master assured us that when we **forget ourselves**, and **strive with all our powers** to serve and teach the Faith, we receive divine assistance. It is not we who do the work, but we are the instruments used at that time for the purpose of teaching His Cause. (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, in The Individual and Teaching: Raising the Divine Call, p. 38)

Perhaps the reason why you have not accomplished so much in the field of teaching is the extent you have looked upon your own weaknesses and inabilities to spread the Message. Bahá'u'lláh and the Master have both urged us repeatedly to **disregard our own handicaps** and **lay our whole reliance upon God**. He will come to our aid if we only arise and become an active channel for God's Grace.
Do you think it is the teachers who make converts and change human hearts? No, surely not. They are only pure souls who take the first steps and then let the spirit of Bahá'u'lláh move and make use of them. If any one of them should even for a second think or consider his achievements as due to his own capacities, his work is ended and his fall starts. This is the fact why so many competent souls have, after wonderful services, suddenly found themselves utterly impotent and perhaps thrown aside by the spirit of the Cause as useless souls. The criterion is the extent to which we are ready to have the will of God work through us. ~Shoghi Effendi, Principles of Bahai Administration, p. 25

Stop being conscious of your frailties, therefore; have a **perfect reliance upon God**; let your **heart burn with the desire to serve** His mission and proclaim His call; and you will observe how eloquence and the power to change human hearts will come as a matter of course..... In fact the mere act of arising will win for you God's help and blessings. (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, dated 31 March 1932 to an individual believer, The Compilation of Compilations vol II, p. 219)

## Beauty is What You Do (M)

Pantomime-dance about virtues.

This one is great for mixed ages, b/c its easy to learn, repetitive, but has a beat even most 12 year olds can enjoy. It is a perfect audience participation pantomime for an Ayyam-i-Ha party with the theme of "Inner Beauty." The song is from a CD by the same title. Its available from www.fullcirclelearning.org . Just click on the FCL Music Catalog link on the right side.

Here are the lyrics and simple motions that one can use with them. Ask the audience to stand for this and encourage them to move their bodies to the rhythm in addition to performing the actions. Since the actions focus a lot on hand movements, one can also explain that what we do with our hands is often how we express beauty. They are the tools of the spirit, they help us do good deeds, and they reflect what is in our heart and mind.

VERSE 1
Some people say,
some people say

beauty is what you wear. *(One hand on hip, the other placed against the back of the head, then bring that hand down in front, traversing the front of the body, with palm facing body, from head to knee, ending with flipping the wrist so fingers are all pointing away from the body, parallel to the floor, as if presenting an outfit for modeling.)*

Some people say,
some people say

beauty's about your hair. *(Grasp hair on both sides with fingers or place fingers on top of head if hair is too short or one is bald).*

Some people say,
some people say something

I know is true. *(Shake head meaning yes).*

Those people say that

beauty is what you do. *(Present open palms facing outward, elbows bent, and bend and extend elbows several times, like pushing something up high.)*

CHORUS
Beauty is sharing. *(Make scooping motion with both hands to the right, open palms, elbows bent then unbent).*

Beauty is helping. *(Make scooping motion with both hands to the left, open palms, elbows bent then unbent).*

Beauty is loving. *(Place both hands over heart, then extend arms up and out--- or if kids are comfortable w/ each other, give hugs).*

Beauty is what you do. *(Present open palms facing outward, elbows bent, and bend and extend elbows several times, like pushing something up high.)*

VERSE 2
Some people say,
some people say

beauty's about your clothes. *(Grasp clothing with index finger and thumb on both sides of the body).*

Some people say,
some people say

beauty's about your nose. *(Place index finger on nose).*

Some people say,
some people say something

I know is true. *(Shake head meaning yes).*

Those people say that

beauty is what you do. *(Present open palms facing outward, elbows bent, and bend and extend elbows several times, like pushing something up high.)*

CHORUS *(Repeat same actions as in chorus above).*

VERSE 3
Some people say,
some people say

beauty is fat or thin. *(Hold hands far out from sides of body, palms facing towards each other, as if hugging giant tree trunk, bring together about 12 inches apart for thin part).*

Some people say,
some people say

beauty's about your skin. *(Place hands on both cheeks).*

Some people say,
some people say something

I know is true. *(Shake head meaning yes).*

Those people say that

beauty is what you do. *(Present open palms facing outward, elbows bent, and bend and extend elbows several times, like pushing something up high.)*

CHORUS *(Repeat same actions as in chorus above).*

## Loyalty Lessons

First, we discussed the many ways to show loyalty, which I explained is really another word for faithfulness: To family, friends, to one's faith/religion, to pets, spouse, child, to one's principles and values. I gave examples of some of these—such as when one's friend is rejected by the popular crowd you want to be a part of—loyalty is not dumping your friend to be a part of the clique, etc.

We talked about how loyalty means to be true to someone or something, to protect from harm, to be committed, devoted, and dedicated to. When the going gets tough, being loyal means sticking by your friend or principles. It means not being fair weather (most needed this concept explained). Being loyal will mean people trust you to keep your promises, and to not to stab them in the back or reveal their secrets. But we also talked about the importance of being loyal to good people and good causes—and if one finds out that someone or something is not worthy of your loyalty or is harmful or bad, its a virtue to let go of your loyalty. Blind loyalty is not a virtue. Issues came up such as when friends wanted us to betray our principles by asking us to do something that is wrong such as lying to protect them, etc. I also reminded them of the Baha'i youth Badi as an amazing example of loyalty.

I assigned the students into groups. They were to develop a skit or puppet show which illustrated the virtue of "loyalty." I asked them to not use examples already discussed in class so they could expand their awareness more. (We had shared several examples of loyalty to our religion and to our principles). They could use props and dress ups—which they did with relish.

One example was that one child invited another to his birthday party, and he was the only guest. It was clearly not going to be a very exciting event. But then a 3rd child came along and invited the only guest child to an amusement park and sleep over. Though tempted, he remained loyal to his friend by declining the more thrilling invitation.

Another example was that one child played a very hip grandma that could not drive. (This one was a boy who dressed up in a hilarious costume with a wig, high heels, glasses and a large nose.) "She" asked her granddaughter to pick up her prescription at the drugstore. The granddaughter, a very hip punk rocker type, got a call on her cell on the way to the store. A friend was inviting her to a rock concert b/c she just happened to have an extra ticket. But she needed her to meet her immediately as the concert gates were about to open. The granddaughter was sorely tempted but declined and got her grandmother the medicine instead. (The "medicine" was a large purple rubber ball with spikes, and it was pretty funny to see her try to eat it!) When the grandma heard about the missed concert, she exclaimed how much she loved that band and offered to get her tickets and go with her.

Yet another skit was that one girl was a queen of a far away planet, another student was her loyal and trusted body guard, and I was an evil intruder whose species wanted to invade and conquer their planet b/c we had polluted ours so badly. My mission was to bribe the body guard using all sorts of temptations. After the queen was seated on her "throne", with the body guard standing dutifully beside her, I made a "psssst" sound. They both heard the noise and the guard said he would go investigate. When he got near me, I explained that our secret service had sent me to him. I wanted him to guide the queen into a trap on my space ship since she possessed magical powers and could completely overpower any invasion. On this spaceship was a chamber that would deactivate the queen's powers. I offered him super powered space ships, adoring females, money, power, (he could be named king) etc., but he remained loyal. When the trustworthy bodyguard could not be corrupted, I dashed for the queen with my "spaceship" but when she screamed, the body guard froze me with his weapon. She praised him for rescuing her and being so loyal. She rewarded him with a amulet that could be used to become invisible. It was really funny. I was dressed up in an ugly evil looking mask, skeleton gloves, huge chicken feet slippers, and had a Beamo (gigantic frizbee type toy) for a space ship. The body guard had a futuristic gun, sunglasses, a black hat and suit—like from the movie "Men in Black." The queen had a crown and was royally dressed with silver gloves, a long cape that the body guard carried in, a metallic gown, and a beautiful "throne", (a chair covered with a shimmering metallic cloth).

*Earth and heaven cannot contain Me; what can alone contain Me is the heart of him that believeth in Me, and is faithful to My Cause. ~Baha'u'llah*: Gleanings, page 186

*.....you must become distinguished in all the virtues of the human world - for faithfulness and sincerity, for justice and fidelity, for firmness and steadfastness, for..... service to the human world, for love toward every human being.....*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 190

If we profess loyalty to Baha'u'llah, to our Beloved Master and our dear Guardian, then we must show our love by obedience to these explicit teachings. Deeds not words are what they demand..... (From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, May 12, 1925: Living the Life, p.3)

## God is One (M)

Pantomime to classic Baha'i song by Margaret Jane King, from *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing* Vol.1.

*God is one* (point up, then lower hand and show 1 with index finger)
*Man is one* (point to others in sweeping motion, show 1 with index finger)
*And all the religions are one* (make sweeping motion with 1 or both arms to indicate "all", show 1 with index finger)
*Land* (hold hands parallel to floor in front of and next to torso, move outward away from torso, keeping them parallel to floor)
*and Sea* (make wave motions with wrist and bent elbow, dipping & rising, etc.)
*hill* (form a hump or arch over head with fingers laying on top of each other)
*and valley* (lower hands, make triangle with finger tips connected pointing to floor)

*under the beautiful sun* (make circle by holding hands over head, as if grasping imaginary ball)
*God is one* (point up, then lower hand and show 1 with index finger)
*Man is one* (point to others in sweeping motion, show 1 with index finger)
*And all the religions agree* (make sweeping motion with 1 or both arms to indicate "all", interlace fingers of both hands to show unity, connectedness, while shaking head yes)
*When everyone learns the 3 onenesses* (start with hands overlapping or touching at center of torso, flair outward away from body to indicate "everyone", show 3 fingers, show 1 with index finger 3 times, as if shaking finger at someone, but not being mad)
*We'll have world unity.* (Kids can put arms around each other, hold hands in a circle, or individuals can make a large circle with arms and hands in front of them, then each hand clasp the wrist of the other to show unification).

# LEVEL TWO

## Unity House (M)

Drama-dance about unity.

This song is by Jack Lenz and Doug Cameroon. There are 2 versions of it. The one I like best is on Lenz's *Encore* recording. The other version, which is not quite as lively or Calypso sounding, is on his *We are Baha'is Too* CD. Kids and I performed this at a Feast and at a Unit Convention. Both CDs are distributed by www.bahaibooksonline.com. This is easily a level 1 activity in terms of rehearsal, but the props may take a little time to collect if you don't have anything like them.

Here are the materials I used:

*A large giant golden sun on a stick*
*A 10 foot long narrow blue cloth for the sea*
*A large sheer gray, white, or light blue cloth for the wind, which is not too heavy to flutter--- or streamers, ribbons, or a thin, long, lightweight scarf on a stick*

I start by asking the kids what storms does unity protect us from? (war, terrorism, violence, alienation, prejudice, ethnic hatred, etc.)

Then I explain that this song is a metaphor about how unity protects us. As Baha'is, our job is to invite others into this house of unity Baha'u'llah has created—which is His Revelation, His teachings. Truly, Baha'u'llah's teachings are the source of unity for our world. Baha'u'llah has written:

*"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

*If you attain to such a capacity of love and unity, the Blessed Perfection will shower infinite graces of the spiritual Kingdom upon you, guide, protect and preserve you under the shadow of His Word, increase your happiness in this world and uphold you through all difficulties. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 24

Praise be to God that through the gracious assistance of the Abha Kingdom those devoted friends have been enabled to achieve that which befits the glory of the Cause of God and the protection of the community of the followers of Baha'u'llah. This is none other than to foster unity and

fellowship under all conditions, to strengthen the bonds of harmony and concord in all things, and to avoid political matters. ~Shoghi Effendi: Bahiyyih Khanum, page 196

There is a nice long instrumental introduction before the words begin. Kids are lined up and come on stage in a stylized choreographed walk-movement to the music. Just listen to it and you will be inspired—I can't describe how we did it, except that involved start/stop to the beat with bending of the knees. When words begin, kids face audience, as opposed to having audience to their side, as when they entered. Encourage kids to sing as they perform.

CHORUS 2X:

Come into my unity house *(Children make beckoning movement with both hands by rocking fingers back and forth, palms facing child. On the word "house" they form triangular roof over their heads with the fingertips touching as the peak.)*

The rain falls down *(make raindrops by wiggling fingers as move hands downward from above head)*

The wind is strong *(blow with lips and rock on hips as if strong wind is moving them. Additional option: 2 kids who are positioned at each end of the line, pick up a giant long cloth that was laid there before kids entered, and make it billow in front of the line, but not so high it covers the kids in the line. They should hold it so the cloth is vertical to the floor, one hand up holding one corner, the other down holding the other corner, each positioned at both ends—otherwise it may look like the sea. It should look more like a sail. Another option is to have a child quickly run pass the front of line of children holding/waving a long thin scarf or streamer on stick .)*

But I'm warm inside *(cross arms over chest, smile as if comfortable)*

Come into my unity house *(Children make beckoning movement with both hands by rocking fingers back and forth, palms facing child. On the word "house" they form triangular roof over their heads, the fingertips touching at peak.)*

The day is long *(Have child arch sun on stick from left to right, indicating rising and setting. The child can be behind and center of the group and raise the sun behind them. This is a good role for the shy kid b/c they aren't seen. However, most want to be seen, so at this point the line is told to open at the center for this child, who steps forward and does her movement, then steps back behind the group to deposit her prop on the floor and rejoins, or just waits back there for next time sun is mentioned—if prefers the shy route.)*

We're singing a song *(cup mouths, bring hands outward and away from face in angle, to form a triangle, with mouth at point, audience at base of triangle.)*

In the Unity house (*form triangular roof over their heads, the fingertips touching at peak.)*

(end of chorus)

Here comes one, coming on the run *(all hold up finger to indicate #1, and then child chosen ahead of time comes from either end and runs past line in the front, all heads turn and follow his movement with their heads, eyes, and pointed fingers. Runner then joins other end of line. It looks great if all can use same arm to point, but little kids aren't good at remembering their lefts and rights under pressure, so I did not insist.)*

Here comes two, coming after you (*all hold up fingers to indicate #2, and then child chosen ahead of time comes from same end as #1 and runs past line in the front, all heads turn and follow his movement with their heads, eyes, and pointed fingers. Runner then joins other end of line.)*

Three is me out on the deep blue sea *(all hold up 3 fingers to indicate #3, and then point to themselves with both thumbs, fingers curled, then make swimming-breast-stroke or rowing movements. It looks better if all do the same—just see what movement looks best with your group. Additional option: as in the wind, have a big light blue, white, or gray long sheer cloth laid in front, and 2 kids at the end lift it so its parallel to the floor and shake it to make waves—keeping it low so it does not cover torsos and faces of kids in line, who are making swimming or rowing motions.)*

Number four is knocking at the door *(all hold up fingers to indicate #4, and then child chosen ahead of time who is not in line at this point, knocks loudly on a piece of wood or door and comes and joins the group—where in line will depend on where he/she is coming from. All heads turn and follow his movement with their heads, eyes, and pointed fingers. Or, any child in the line can step forward and make knocking on door movements in the air, while someone off stage does the actual sound. Child then steps back in line when done. If its done this way, instead of pointing with outstretched arms, the rest of the kids in line point just with thumb and fingers curled, elbow bent. Which hand they use will depend on which side the knocker is on in relation to themselves.)*

CHORUS

At the end, the singers repeat the words "unity house" over and over. The performers invite audience members to join their "house", and they can hold hands with everybody while grooving to the music, or face another person and form a bigger peaked roof by connecting fingertips of both hands of partner in the air. You will need to inform the crowd at the beginning that they should come up for the last extra-long chorus, and show them how to make the roof with a partner, or tell them we all want to end holding hands. A nice touch, but not necessary is to have 5 giant poles with a cloth tied at the corners to each pole, the middle 5th pole holds up the center to make the roof—you may need 6 poles. This can be raised at the end while all are being invited in. And a really nice touch is to have a picture of the Greatest name dangling from the center and front of this makeshift cloth roof—or it can be affixed to the center pole.

## Happy Naw-Ruz to You (M)

This piece is a hoot—very silly and playful. I had to beg my husband Roi to do it with me. Bless his heart, he was able to detach from his normally dignified self, and ham it up with me. It took only about an hour of rehearsal, but several hours extra for begging my husband and gathering props. We did it for Naw Ruz. Or it could be done for the social portion of the Feast which ends the Fast. The song comes from a recording called *Feast at My House*, by Marie & Roger Gervais, distributed by the Canadian Baha'i Distribution Service at 800-465-3287. It is not listed on their web site, but they still have copies of the tape. Marie told me they have plans to turn it into a CD and market it here in the US.

The music is very fast and calypso—too fast for kids to do the part Roi and I did alone. --- But it is audience participation and the kids and adults really enjoyed it.

*Materials used:*

Giant cooked turkey leg, (real or fake)
bunch of silk or real spring flowers
2 bowls of party blow outs, (preferably ones that make noise--ours also had flowers and butterflies on the tubes which was perfect! # depends on your size crowd)
earth globe
basket of scarves, (# depends on your size crowd)
two giant red smiling lips on a stick
if you can handle it, 2 giant paper tissue flowers affixed to firm headbands, worn on performer's heads

In addition to the giant flowers on our heads, we wore very colorful outfits—costumes we would not be caught dead in under normal circumstances.

Prior placement of props is critical to being able to do the actions on time and smoothly. Also, make sure that an area is cleared for dancing in the center of the room, and that no chairs or tables are blocking your access to the audience. Folks get to keep their blow outs. However, we had to make a rule after awhile that the kids stop using them during the event! After the activity, we put initials on them so they could figure out which ones were their own. Otherwise you have an efficient virus spreading apparatus to begin the New Year with!

We first explain that this becomes an audience participation song. We show them a blow out, and instruct members of the audience, *that after they get their blow out they are to turn toward someone and blow on it when the lyrics say "Happy Naw Ruz to You."* We remind children to not get so close that their uncurling blow out hits someone in the face. *Before they get the blow out, they can turn towards someone and point to them. I demonstrated a dramatic way to do this with both fingers pointing, with wrists rocked back, then flipped forward, elbows bent*. It's more fun than just a mere point. Further instructions for the audience are as follows:

*For "Happy Naw Ruz to me," with flair, we are to point to ourselves with both hands, using thumbs, with the rest of our fingers curled*. I demonstrate what it means to do this with flair for the dramatically challenged.

*For "Happy Naw Ruz to the whole wide world" we all should blow our blow outs toward the globe, or gesture towards it if we don't have one yet.*

*For the line "We're one big family", we should hug someone--- or if that's too intimate, hold hands or link elbows.*

The *scarves* are for utilizing in whatever way a person wants—I am continually amazed how often, when you give a reserved person a prop, it gives them permission to let go of inhibitions. Just in case, we tell people if they don't want to participate they can give their prop away. But even reserved people who remain seated will at least wave their scarf in the air or blow on a party blow out.

*It is important to inform the group that the audience participation part comes <u>after</u> the line about prayers and "we're gonna party awhile".*

Roi and I start with our backs <u>turned away</u> from the audience. Our props are on a bench in front of us, hidden somewhat by our bodies.

Well the fast is over *(I abruptly turn and face the audience with a big turkey leg in my hand and pretend to take a huge bite out of it. During Roi's line, I slip it behind me onto the plate, and remain facing the audience)*

And the spring is here *(Roi abruptly turns and whips out a bunch of flowers. He drops them behind him for next line).*

Were gonna get together *(We held hands then rotated our shoulders, swung our free arms towards our holding hands to pick up a party blow out strategically placed on the bench.)*

To celebrate the New Year *(We face audience and blow on our party blow outs, then place down)*

All around the world *(There is a spin-able globe between us on the bench. I hold its top, while Roi spins it)*

Up and down the street *(We do a stylized goofy march in opposite directions, then return to center in a hurry)*

We're gonna kick up our heels *(we face opposite directions and kick up our heels.)*

To the Naw Ruz beat *(wiggle/shake our hips in exaggerated fashion, with elbows bent and hands in fists)*

CHORUS:

Happy Naw Ruz to you *(We blow on our blow outs as we bend towards the audience)*

Happy Naw Ruz to me *(dramatically, using shoulders and whole body, point to ourselves with both hands, using thumbs, other fingers curled)*

Happy Naw Ruz to the whole wide world *(Our outside arms bend at elbows, palms up, bent across our chests, inside arms stretched out, palms up, towards globe, as if dramatically presenting it to the crowd, like in a 1960's game show, how the lady presents a prize she is not holding.)*

We're one big family *(we hug and press cheeks together, facing audience)*

(end of chorus)

Well, your mama is happy, *(I grab lips on stick and place in front of nearby mother's mouth in audience, I smile real big)*

And your daddy too. *(Roi grabs lips on stick and places in front of nearby father's mouth in audience, and Roi smiles real big)*

Even brother and sister, *(Using lips on stick, Roi does same to any boy who is a brother, I do it to any girl who is a sister)*

Yeah, their smilin' too

We're gonna greet the New Year *(We each bend down to retrieve a scarf from a tall basket which has all along been positioned in between us in the center, right below the globe. We place on shoulders.)*

We'll bring it in style *(We grab ends of scarves on our own shoulders and slide up and down over shoulders, by alternately pulling on different ends--looking like a model who is showing off)*

We're gonna say some prayers *(We place our own palms together, as in praying hands, close eyes)*

And then we'll party awhile *(We blow on party blow outs towards audience)*

(Now comes the audience participation. *We went through these actions with the audience ahead of time.*

The chorus is repeated over and over at the end, so there is time for everybody to be given a prop of some sort. By the end of the song, we aren't too fussy about matching words with actions, we are all just having a wild time.)

CHORUS:

Happy Naw Ruz to you *(Each time the singers sing this, until everybody has a prop, we dash/dance into the audience and each distribute 1 blow out and one scarf—both objects to the same person or to 2 different people. This depends on the size of crowd, number of scarves and blowouts you have, and how fast you can get into the audience. Also, there are 3 lengthy instrumentals, and all during those times we are delivering props while dancing. If you have lots of folks, you can try to deliver multiple sets of objects each time. The chorus also repeats so much, that unless you have a huge crowd, everybody should be able to get a scarf and/or blowout well before the song ends. If its a giant crowd, have pre-selected helpers.)*

Happy Naw Ruz to me *(dramatically, using shoulders and whole body, point to ourselves with both hands, using thumbs, and with other fingers curled)*

Happy Naw Ruz to the whole wide world *(We gesture towards the globe as if presenting it to the crowd. Audience is encouraged to gesture or blow their blow out towards the globe also.)*

We're one big family *(we hug and press cheeks together, facing audience, audience is encouraged to hug or connect with others in some fashion. By the 3rd time Roi and I are also hugging others instead of just husband and wife.)*

## The Fox's Tale

A story about the perils of partaking in backbiting and gossip.

This story from Scotland is taken from The Sunshine Tree and Other Tales from Around the World retold by Wendy Heller. When I wrote this, this book was no longer in print. I emailed the publishers (George Ronald) and asked if they planned to reprint it and they said they did not have the funds to do so and have no plans for the future. However, I did find some very expensive copies at the Louhelen bookstore years later. Apparently, a very few were reprinted, and it is now listed at George Ronald Books at www.grbooks.com. But I will retype it here, with actions in italics, hoping this does not get me in trouble..

You need 3 participants for this performance, dramatic folks to play the duck, the fox, and an equally expressive narrator. (Or you can pre-record the dialogue then have it played instead of a narrator). If the costuming you have available does not fit a fox or duck, you can use a chicken or a wolf or any other mammal that eats chickens or ducks. The duck in the original is male, but b/c of costuming and actors available, we turned Mr. duck into a Mrs. However, you may want to turn the neighbor goose into a Mr. so it does not seem sexist that both gossip loving birds are female.

Anyway, **these are the supplies** we used, but of course it can be simplified and/or altered.

*For the Fox:* a dapper black fedora hat, or something akin to a business man's hat, a reddish brown blazer or sports coat, reddish brown knickers (or just roll up pants to below the knee), black knee highs, black dress boots (optional) black, brown or white turtleneck, (some foxes have a white chest), black or dark brown gloves or mittens (but you can be more expressive with gloves), a fox tail—I made mine out of reddish cardstock, complete with white tip. The tail can be pinned to one's pants. One can use face paint and possibly a canine vinyl nose, or a full fox mask. I have a very realistic fox mask but this does eliminate facial expressions. Also, a large red cloth—to simulate blood. Our fox was classy, suave, sly and dapper. Sunglasses may also be used to suggest hidden motives, but they don't work with a mask.

*For the Duck:* Colors can vary, but we dressed our duck mostly in white. She had a scarf over her head, a vinyl duck beak, a white frilly blouse and skirt (white dress would be fine also), a string of pearls, yellow or orange tights, orange diving flippers for feet. (For a chicken, yellow rubber gloves for dish washing put on the feet look hilarious and appropriate). I made giant white wings out of poster board which had 2 handles on the inside of each wing---one for slipping the arm through that ended up near the shoulder, and one to hold onto near the tip of the wing. The tail was also made from white poster board and had white ribbon run through 2 slits then tied around the waist, or one could use pins. Snorkeling goggles may also look funny, but we did not have any. Blue painter's tape can create the boundaries of a pond.

*For the Narrator*: a copy of the script, with the **bolded** speaking or thinking parts of the duck and fox highlighted in different colors to remind the narrator to change his/her voice accordingly. To make it much easier to do with little rehearsal time, the fox and duck do not have speaking parts. *Thus, they have to be very expressive to maintain visual interest.* The fox and duck must rehearse with the narrator so they can learn when actions are to be performed with their dialogue. The narrator has to speak dramatically and learn to pace him/herself to allow time for the actions. If you have actors that wish to memorize speaking parts, and the time to do it in, then great! The narration part could then be eliminated.

I have found that jr. youth are the youngest that can do this skit well—and only if they have some experience in acting. With older youth or adults, it only takes an hour of rehearsal to pull this off if you have all the props ready. Kids of all ages love to watch it.

Skit begins with fox "trotting" along in a limited range and the duck making swimming motions a fair distance away, as yet not aware of the fox. The person playing the duck can either be kneeling or crouching to simulate a duck on the water. The fox stands.

Here is the dialogue and accompanying actions for The Fox's Tale:

One summer morning, a fox was trotting

*(fox person prances on both feet, holding arms as a begging dog would his front legs)*

through the woods beside the green waters of the loch. He looked this way and that,

*(While trotting, Fox places hand above eyes, as if searching horizon, turning head both to left and right, leaning in each direction as he does.)*

hoping to find a juicy bite of breakfast. Out on the water, among the reeds, a duck was swimming.

*(Duck is wiggling rear end back and forth, as if swimming. Arms down at sides, wings pointed toward tail end)*

**There's as fine a breakfast as I could hope for**, thought the fox,

*(Fox stops trotting, points to the duck, eagerly, with lust, rubs hands together, licks lips if not wearing mask)*

**but alas, beyond my reach.**

*(Fox holds both paws up, palms facing his face then hands move away from face for "alas" motion, then strains body towards duck, and reaches one arm out towards it, fingers grasping at air)*

**Good morning to you Mrs. Duck!** The fox called out.

*(He waves cheerfully, duck turns to face fox, and stops swimming, obviously jolted by the presence of the fox)*

**You go away Fox!** quacked the duck in alarm.

*(The duck looks upset and waves her wing as if to shoo him away.)*

**I ONLY said good morning**, said the fox. **There's no reason to be RUDE.**

*(Fox hunches up his shoulders and holds out his palms/paws as if to say "who me?" and waves his paws about, by bringing them towards his body then out again, etc.)*

**I know your kind!** scoffed Mrs. Duck,

*(She shakes her head and a wing at him)*

**and I NEVER speak to fellows like YOU**.

*(She shakes her wing and head and points to him with one wing)*

**I've seen you chasing us ducks. And you gobble us up when you can catch us! No! I've no interest in talking to you. Good day!**

*(During this dialogue, she is wiggling nervously and shaking her head as she talks, looking like she is scolding him, sticking her beak up in the air as if to snub him on "I've no interest in talking to you", then forcefully waves once on "good day".)*

**Forgive me for startling you.**

*(Fox leans forward, bends at the knees a little, brings hands towards heart then out again, in a gesture as if to be acting truly sorry.)*

**I meant you no harm**, said the fox.

*(Shakes his head and waves his paws)*

**I ONLY wished to tell you**

*(Fox hunches up his shoulders and holds out his palms/paws as if to say "who me?")*

**of the shocking**

*(jiggles his paws with palms facing out)*

**scandal about your neighbor, Mrs. Goose.**

*(points one thumb and waves one hand with fingers closed, as in a hitch hiking motion)*

**I know you dearly love a juicy bit of gossip.**

*(places hand over heart, then rubs fingers of both hands together for "juicy")*

**But I'm sure you have already heard of it**

*(one hand on heart, the other with the elbow bent, as if in making pledge, thrusts forearm forward, while flicking hand back and forward with wrist, in dismissive way, shaking head)*

**and that is why you are so upset.**

*(palms facing upward and out away from body, elbows bent, moving up and down slightly, head cocked to one side)*

**Good day to you Mrs. Duck.**

*(Fox waves one paw in a casual way)*

And the fox turned as if to leave.

*(turns partly away)*

**Wait a moment**, said Mrs. Duck.

*(she swims a tiny bit closer, wags a wing)*

**I haven't heard. Tell me about it.**

*(she shakes her head back and forth, and both wings up and down)*

The fox looked around.

*(He turns back around, glancing around to see if anyone is looking, smiling slyly, if no mask.)*

**I'm afraid the story is too shocking to tell in a loud voice.**

*(jiggles both hands/paws, cups mouth)*

**I don't want her to overhear you see.**

*(points one thumb and waves that hand with fingers closed, as in a hitch hiking motion, cups one ear)*

**I'm surprised you haven't heard it yet.**

*(bent elbows, palms facing up, shaking head)*

**EVERYONE around here knows.**

*(Makes sweeping gesture with arm from torso outward to indicate "everyone", shaking head as in disbelief)*

Mrs. Duck shook her head. **Please tell me,** she said eagerly.

*(She shakes her head back and forth, and strains her neck forward, then shakes head up and down, brings wings together as in a pleading motion)*

**Very well,** said the fox. **Come closer and I'll tell you.**

*(He shakes his head up and down, as if to say, "oh, all right" then beckons her with a paw or finger.)*

Mrs. Duck swam closer. **You say its VERY shocking?** She said.

*(She swims fairly close, but still out of reach, eagerly shaking her head up and down, eyes all big, wings shaking in excitement.)*

**Why it's the juiciest piece of gossip I've heard all week. I'm afraid you'll have to come closer so that I can whisper it in your ear.**

*(Fox leans forward, palms open facing toward each other, then holds fingers of one hand up to lips with tips of fingers all together to signify "juiciest", then arcs hands outward to signify "all week". Shakes head, and beckons her closer, puts finger up to lips to signify "shhh" sound, and then cups ear)*

**Mrs. Duck swam quickly toward the fox, but as soon as she was within reach, the fox seized her and ate her up in a few quick bites.**

*(She swims right up to the fox, and he lunges over her, and acts as if gobbling her up. Then he whips out a large red cloth that was hiding in his jacket or pants. He opens it up in one movement and completely covers her with it.)*

After he had finished his breakfast, the fox trotted happily into the woods, brushing the feathers from his red coat.

*(Fox turns away from the dead duck, and begins to trot away, brushing his sides and rear as he does.)*

**Yes, it was a juicy tale indeed, Mrs. Duck**, he sighed, patting his full belly.

*(Fox stops, shakes his head up and down, looking very pleased, sighs, flips wrist back and forth with index finger pointing, then pats belly)*

**Mrs. Goose loved gossip as much as you did –She was my breakfast yesterday.**

*(places hands over heart to signify "love", shaking head back and forth, bends fingers of one hand, except thumb, yanks hand backwards, to signify "yesterday" )*

**Here is the narrators' script w/o the actions, to make it easier for the actual reading by the narrator:**

# The Fox's Tale

One summer morning, a fox was trotting through the woods beside the green waters of the loch. He looked this way and that, hoping to find a juicy bite of breakfast. Out on the water, among the reeds, a duck was swimming.

**There's as fine a breakfast as I could hope for**, thought the fox, **but alas, beyond my reach.**

**Good morning to you Mrs. Duck!** The fox called out.

**You go away Fox!** quacked the duck in alarm.

**I ONLY said good morning**, said the fox. **There's no reason to be RUDE.**

**I know your kind!** scoffed Mrs. Duck, **and I NEVER speak to fellows like YOU. I've seen you chasing us ducks.**

**And you gobble us up when you can catch us! No! I've no interest in talking to you. Good day!**

**Forgive me for startling you. I meant you no harm**, said the fox**. I ONLY wished to tell you of the shocking scandal about your neighbor, Mrs. Goose.**

**I know you dearly love a juicy bit of gossip. But I'm sure you have already heard of it and that is why you are so upset. Good day to you Mrs. Duck.**

And the fox turned as if to leave.

**Wait a moment**, said Mrs. Duck. **I haven't heard. Tell me about it.**

The fox looked around. **I'm afraid the story is too shocking to tell in a loud voice. I don't want her to overhear you see. I'm surprised you haven't heard it yet. Everyone around here knows.**

Mrs. Duck shook her head. **Please tell me,** she said eagerly.

**Very well,** said the fox. **Come closer and I'll tell you.**

Mrs. Duck swam closer. **You say its VERY shocking?** She said.

**Why it's the juiciest piece of gossip I've heard all week. I'm afraid you'll have to come closer so that I can whisper it in your ear.**

Mrs. Duck swam quickly toward the fox, but as soon as she was within reach, the fox seized her and ate her up in a few quick bites.

After he had finished his breakfast, the fox trotted happily into the woods, brushing the feathers from his red coat.

**Yes, it was a juicy tale indeed, Mrs. Duck**, he sighed, patting his full belly. **Mrs. Goose loved gossip as much as you did –She was my breakfast yesterday.**

THE END

RELAVENT QUOTES:

*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

*.....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

*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

## Ye are the Stars (M)

This one is about the station of believers in Baha'u'llah, and their role in awakening the rest of humanity and transforming souls with Baha'u'llah's Revelation. Beautifully and ethereally sung by Susan Lewis Wright on her *Bird* CD.

I guess it could be summed up as a musical drama on teaching. It has been done at a unit convention and on stage at a summer school. The first one ever was done at a feast with about an hour of rehearsal. I placed it in level 2 b/c despite the lengthy description below, its really not that complicated to do. This piece needs a minimum of 7 participants, plus the narrator to read the quotes in the beginning.

Materials needed:

Beautifully framed photo of Baha'u'llah's Shrine or the Greatest Name
a tall bar stool or equivalent to place the picture on
a lovely cloth to put over the stool
a light blue or gray or white cloth that is sheer and has the ability to flutter like a breeze, (about 6-9 feet long)
large metallic gold or silver stars made of cardboard or firm enough to attach handles to, (quantity depends on number of actors playing stars)
goblets or elegant glasses
crystal vase or pitcher or bowl water
long silky cloths (approx. 3 feet by 9 feet)--# depends on quantity of performers

About the stars: Handles on the backs of the stars look better than holding the stars by their tips. It also is necessary for there to be a star for each hand. You can make your own or Stumps party catalog has a huge variety of stars, including 3D cardboard ones, which are the ones I use. The 16 inch gold ones are item number STR-D16-GOL. They are about $4.00 apiece. They also come in silver and 8 inch size, which are $2.00. I use a combination of sizes and colors. Stumps phone number is 800-348-5084, web site: www.StumpsProm.com .

Actors are placed in one of 3 groups: The Stars, the Breeze, or the Water. With the exception of one child as the robe distributor, all participants are to be in one of these 3 groups, which should have approximately the same number of kids in each. Then divide each of those groups again, so there are 2 sets of each of the stars, breeze, and water. The older or more mature will be in set 1, and the younger in set 2 since that role is a bit easier. (If all are somewhat equally suitable, you can make the corresponding number of cards, with symbols for stars, wind, water, and have them choose blind). Teach all actors how to stand and walk with dignity, i.e. no gum, slouching, hands in pockets, fidgeting, leaning on one leg, etc.

Line up set one. Set 1 actors will walk on stage first, with those being the water first, breeze second, stars last. (The order is reversed, depending on what side of the stage they will come from. If actors emerge from the audience's right side, the stars would come out first. This way actions are done left to right, as in reading). They have the cloths draped over their shoulders, not like capes, but around their necks with the majority of the cloth in front, equal lengths on both sides. They gracefully walk across the stage in a line with poise then turn and face away from the audience in unison. Or you can have them come out in their individual groups, and after each group (i.e. the stars) turn and face away, the next group enters on stage. They are holding their props, or their props can be previously placed on the floor where the actors will stand and they can gracefully bend down and retrieve them as they arrive at their locations. In the center of this line, quite a bit more in front and closer to the audience, is the stool with a pretty cloth and the photograph upon it.

Then the narrator reads the following quotes, and as she/he does, set 2 comes out *without* robes on in the same order, i.e. water first, etc. You can arrange it so that each group or person comes out for a specific quote or that they just follow each other slowly as all the quotes are being read. They come out slowly, as if in a trance (but not comical), and lower themselves to the floor, facing the backs of their corresponding set. So, for ex., the water actors will sleepily walk across the stage until they arrive behind the first set of water actors, who are standing with their backs to the audience. When each set arrives at

their corresponding set, they yawn, etc. and lower themselves on their stomachs and pretend to go to sleep. Their feet are facing the audience, their heads are pointed toward the first set, and their arms are out on the floor in front of them. The breeze set 2 actors are actually lying down between the stool and the set 1 breeze actors.

*"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)

*O SON OF MAN! 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

*"Great is the blessedness that awaiteth him who hath been awakened from his sleep by the breath of God which, from the source of His mercy, hath blown over all such of His creatures as have set themselves towards Him!" ~Baha'u'llah:* Prayers and Meditations, p. 52

*Speed out of your sepulchers. How long will ye sleep? The second blast hath been blown on the trumpet. On whom are ye gazing? This is your Lord, the God of Mercy. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 44

Then while the following quote is being read, a child carrying one cloth for each sleeper appears. She has her arms bent in front of her (as if carrying a tray) and the cloths are draped over them, almost touching the ground. She walks up to the line of sleeping children and gracefully bends down in front of each one, placing the center of each cloth over the arms of each child. So the sleepers are lying on their stomachs, with their arms in front of them, covered by a long length of silky cloth, which is centered on their arms.

*And now concerning thy question regarding the nature of religion. Know thou that they who are truly wise have likened the world unto the human temple. As the body of man needeth a garment to clothe it, so the body of mankind must needs be adorned with the mantle of justice and wisdom. Its robe is the Revelation vouchsafed unto it by God. Whenever this robe hath fulfilled its purpose, the Almighty will assuredly renew it. For every age requireth a fresh measure of the light of God. Every Divine Revelation hath been sent down in a manner that befitted the circumstances of the age in which it hath appeared. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 81

If you need more time, you can add the following quote:

*O ye respected souls! From the continual imitation of ancient and worn-out ways, the world had grown dark as darksome night. The fundamentals of the divine Teachings had passed from memory; their pith and heart had been totally forgotten, and the people were holding on to husks. The nations had, like tattered garments long outworn, fallen into a pitiful condition.*

*Out of this pitch blackness there dawned the morning splendour of the Teachings of Baha'u'llah. He hath dressed the world with a garment new and fair, and that new garment is the principles which have come down from God.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, page 252

Then the music begins. Here are the words, and the actions that accompany them:

(The words below come from Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, page 196)

*Ye are the stars of the heaven of understanding: The group (or individual) holding the stars gracefully turns around and arcs their stars up. As they do this, set 2 star sleepers, start stirring and awakening. They begin to sit up on their knees facing the actors holding the stars. As they raise up on their knees, they gracefully lift the cloths that are on top of their arms and place them around their shoulders, so that they are like the ones already being worn by those standing with the props. They remain seated on their knees facing those holding the stars, with their backs to the audience. This star group becomes still as the next group's line begins.*

*the breeze that stirreth at the break of day: The group (or individual) holding the cloth representing the breeze turns and begins gracefully to flutter it, indicating a breeze. As they do this, set 2 breeze sleepers star stirring and awakening and perform the same action as the star sleepers above. The breeze becomes still as the next group's line begins.*

*the soft-flowing waters upon which must depend the very life of all men..... This group turns around and pours water into a beautiful goblet or glass from a crystal pitcher. One (or more) person is holding a goblet, one person, a pitcher of water. If there are several sleepers and several water bearers, more than one goblet can be used. Timing is limited, though the singer does sing the lines very slowly. Performers should not look hurried. If you only have 2 water people in set 1, it may work to only have one goblet poured, with one person doing the pouring, the other proffering to the sleepers. If you have several in the water group, perhaps time wise it would work best to have one person holding a large crystal bowl filled with water, and each water person in set 1 dips a goblet or glass in to proffer to a sleeper. Or, it may work best for your group to dispense with the pitcher/vase/bowl altogether and just use the goblets or glasses. (This is necessary if there is only one person who is in the water set 1).They bend down and tenderly lift the chin of the sleepers and pour water into their mouths—or pretend to anyway. As they do the sleepers rise up and repeat the actions of the stars and breeze set 2 people.*

*Now all the sleepers are sitting on their knees in wrapt attention facing their Baha'i "teachers" with their new "robes of Revelation" around their shoulders. All in set 1 gracefully lay their props down in front of them.*

(The words below come from Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, page 317)

*.....ye are the first among men to be re-created by His Spirit: All of set 1 raise their arms up and look heavenwards, as if praising God.*

*the first to adore and bow the knee before Him: All of set 1 bow down on one knee still raising their eyes and arms heavenwards*

*the first to circle round His throne of glory: All those in set 1 rise up off their knees and half go left, half go right, and in synchrony with dignity and gazing at the photo of Bahji or the Greatest Name, encircle the stool going in opposite directions. The stool must be placed so that set 1 actors have room to encircle it without stumbling into the ex-sleepers set 2, still on their knees, but now watching the group encircle the stool. The director may also decide it is easier or more graceful for all of set 1 to encircle in the same direction, but again, time is limited, and it takes less time if the circle is less long b/c they are going in 2 directions at once. So, all the stars of set 1 go one way, ½ of the breeze set 1 follow them, and*

*simultaneously, ½ of breeze set 1 go the other way, followed by all of the water set 1 actors. As each group finishes one circumambulation, the corresponding set 2 rises up and joins them and they all return to set 1's original positions. So now, the newly awakened souls of set 2 have joined set 1. They gracefully retrieve their props, and set 2 people also participate. The star set 1&2 actors each take one star, the breeze set 1 & 2 actors place their hands on the breeze cloth, and the water set 1 & 2 people share a goblet, a pitcher, a bowl---or you can have extra goblets that were waiting behind the set 1 water actors. Director can decide whether performers begin actions facing audience, or turn around as they did in the first set of these words.*

*Ye are the stars of the heaven of understanding: now all Star people have one star, and they all arc their stars up.*

*the breeze that stirreth at the break of day: All the Breeze actors begin to stir the breeze together.*

*.....the soft-flowing waters upon which must depend the very life of all men.....All the Water actors raise up high a goblet, a bowl, or a pitcher. 2 kids can hold up a goblet or other object together.*

Actors all place objects on floor, take a bow in unison.

## Five Goals for Children

5 skits to illustrate ways children can achieve the 5 goals of the 5 year plan. But these goals will be relevant well past the 5 year plan also!

This was done at a Unit Convention and was a big hit. First I made large attractive cards, one for each goal. I used fancy paper from Kinkos and glued that to cardboard, and wrote one children's goal in the center of each in bright metallic marker. I put a number on the back of the cards.

The goals were:

1. Pray every day
2. Learn about Baha'u'llah, The Bab, Abdu'l-Baha, and Their Teaching
3. Contribute to the Baha'i Funds and the Kingdom Project
4. Share the Baha'i Teachings with Others
5. Be a Friend to All People and Help Them

Then I designed simple, child appropriate skits to illustrate each goal and collected the props. At the convention, after ascertaining the number of kids I would be teaching, I made number tabs and put them in a bowl. I had 14 kids, ages 5-12, so I had to figure out how many I wanted in each skit then make that many tabs with a number for each skit. For example there were 3 number 1's, 4 number 2's, etc., but only 2 number 5's. After everybody chose a number to determine what skit they would be doing, we had to do some trading b/c number 5 needed at least one older kid due to dialogue. If you don't think it will be a problem, you can skip the choosing by numbers and just assign kids to be in skits you think they can handle---but this invites complaints b/c there is usually a favorite. We spent about 1 ½ hours rehearsing the skits then performed them in front of all the adults in the afternoon. **(Props needed are in bold.)**

Kids lined up outside the main hall. 2 kids then walked in and held up a **huge cloth** like a curtain, then another walked slowly by in front of the cloth holding the **card with the goal written on it** for all to see. Actors got in position behind the cloth, then when I gave the signal the cloth-bearers lowered it and stood by to raise it again for the preparation of the next skit. Here then are the skits and the props used:

1. *Pray every day:* A **blue cloth** is held up behind 2 children pretending to sleep on a **small carpet**. Another child is standing behind the cloth holding a large **golden sun on a stick** and has it arc slowly up to indicate the rising of the sun. The 2 sleepers wake up and yawn. They sit up, and pick

up their **prayer books** and each recite a prayer with reverence. They get up and walk behind the blue cloth, and as they do so the sun is traveling down and disappears behind the cloth to indicate setting. The children return, seat themselves, or kneel, **light** a **candle**, and say prayers again, then blow out the candle, and lay down to sleep.

2. *Learn about Baha'u'llah, The Bab, Abdu'l-Baha, and Their Teachings*: A mother or a father, (a real adult) is sitting on a **carpet** reading. A child approaches her with a **book about Baha'u'llah** and says: "Mommy, will you read me a story about Baha'u'llah?" The mother looks delighted and puts her **own book** down and invites her child to sit on her lap and says "Of course! I would love to read you about Baha'u'llah!" But before she can start, another child approaches with the same request, only with **a book about The Bab.** The mother responds the same, but very quickly another son or daughter arrives with a **book about Abdu'l-Baha.** And finally the last child comes with a **Brilliant Star Magazine** and asks mom to read to him about Baha'u'llah's teachings. The skit ends with 4 kids on her lap or seated around the mother as she opens the first book, with the kids all very attentive looking. The mother is beaming and exclaims: "Thank you God for giving me 4 wonderful children who love to read and learn about our beloved Faith!"

3. *Contribute to the Baha'i Funds and the Kingdom Project:* For this skit, my husband sat in a **chair,** reading a **newspaper.** A child approaches and politely asks for money for the fund b/c feast is that night. The dad pauses and looks thoughtful then explains very briefly about how it is the sacrifice one makes when they give to the fund that makes one grow spiritually and releases more spiritual power into the world. Then he asks the child if he just gives him the money, is it a sacrifice for the child and does he grow from it? The child understands, and asks how he can earn the money. The father looks very pleased and whips out a **rake** from behind the chair and directs the child to rake leaves. The child thanks the dad, takes the rake, then rakes **real leaves** that a child playing a tree drops onto the floor. After all the leaves are in a pile, the child goes to the father to announce he is done and the father inspects the job and thanks the child for an excellent and thorough job. Then the child presents **a large envelope that has written on it in big letters: "For the Baha'i Fund"** and the father takes out his wallet and deposits **money** into it. The child thanks the daddy and they hug.

   The next scene the father is still reading, and another child approaches and says she would like some money to give to the Kingdom Project. Once again, the dad explains simply how it would be better if she earned it. She agrees, and asks how. The father whips **a feather duster** out of his back pocket, and suggests she dusts the statue(s) in the solarium. She gleefully leaves and pretends to open a door. There is another child standing there, holding an **earth ball** over his head like Hercules. She dusts his toes, legs, arm pits, etc, but can't reach the ball, so she presses an imaginary button on his belly button and he bends over slowly, as if his waist is on a hinge. She then dusts the ball, presses his button and he slowly returns to his original position. (You can incorporate other children as other statues, in various moveable positions if you have the numbers). The girl returns to her father, announces she is done. He then puts on a **white glove** and goes to test the quality of the job. When he is satisfied, he commends her on her excellent work. She then presents him with **a large envelope with the words "For the Kingdom Project**" written on it, and he deposits some **money** in it. She thanks him and skips off.

   (One may prefer to have a mother dispensing the money and the girl do the raking and the boy do the dusting to avoid stereotypical job casting.)

4. *Share the Baha'i Teachings with Others*: A child is looking at a **calendar** and counting the days. She goes up to her mom and asks what the community is doing for Ridvan. The mom says there will be a public celebration on the first day. The girl then goes to a table, or the floor, folds a **blank piece of paper** in half, quickly decorates the front with **markers**, writes something on the inside. She then gets up and asks her mom if she can go over to Ashley's (or whoever) to play. Mom says yes, then the girl says thanks and goodbye. She then goes up to a real or pretend door and knocks. Another child appears and the Baha'i girl greets her warmly, asks how her family is, etc., then gingerly hands her the invitation and asks: "Would you be interested in coming to a Ridvan holy day celebration with me?" The other child asks what Ridvan is, and the first child explains very briefly it is when the

Founder of her religion, the Baha'i Faith, told people He was a new Messenger from God, and He brought teachings to bring about world peace. The other child says it sounds weird but interesting, and she will ask her parents if she can come. The Baha'i girl then says her parents are welcome also.

5. *Be a Friend to All People and Help Them*: A small child is struggling with a **lunch box,** a **pile of textbooks** in her arms and **a huge knapsack also loaded with stuff.** She puts the sack down and tries in vain to stuff more books in. An older child approaches and offers to help lighten the load: He says: Hey, aren't you the new kid? She nods yes, and he says: "My name is Jamal, what's yours?" She tells him and he then asks: "Can I help carry some of your books?" She agrees gratefully. He picks up the knapsack, and is totally shocked at how heavy it is, and exclaims "What on earth do you have in here, rocks?!" She looks sheepish, and says yes, b/c she loves to collect them in addition to her other hobby. He asks if he can see some of the rocks, and she agrees and so he puts the knapsack down and pulls out **some very large rocks** and examines them. He also pulls out **3 text books with titles such as**: Computer Networks, Management-Oriented Management Information Systems, and An Introduction to Operating Systems, Including Case Studies in UNIX, VAX, CP/M, MVS, & VM. He reads them out loud with a tone of disbelief. She explains that her other hobby is computer programming. The older boy looks stunned and impressed. He then invites her to eat lunch with him in the lunch room. He also is carrying a **lunch box**. They sit down together, and as he peers into his lunch box, he groans and is embarrassed and explains, "I just have to warn you that my mom is a health nut (inside joke—that's me) and only believes in eating healthy foods, so my lunch may seem a little weird to you". He pulls out a **giant leaf, and a baggie full of seeds**. The girl smiles and opens her lunch box, and says, "Mine too!" She also whips out a **large leaf and a bag of granola.** They both laugh as they begin eating.

## The Promise of World Peace

Skits to demonstrate the barriers to, and the principles for, world peace, taken from the Universal House of Justice's 1985 document by the same name.

This dramatic exercise can be much fun, but children need adult assistance to do it. It is ideal for Jr. youth, older youth and adult students. To familiarize students with the Promise of World Peace, I got out the dry erase board and we generated a list of the obstacles or barriers to world peace as mentioned in the document. Then we created a list of principles the statement reveals are necessary to implement to unite the world. Then I divided the class into teams of 2 or 3. All the barriers and principles were previously written on tabs of paper, and each team chose blindly from a basket. Their task was to act out, w/o speaking, their principle or obstacle. Using the list, the rest of us had to guess what barrier or principle was being demonstrated. Props were used and quite necessary. To extend the lesson, students can then generate a list of virtues which counteract the barriers, for ex., materialism is addressed by detachment, sacrifice, contentment, and spirituality in general. This dramatic exercise can also be done with speaking. Performers should be careful not to give away too much with their words so that the audience is challenged to interpret which barrier or principle is being enacted.

The list of barriers/obstacles is as follows:

Racism/prejudice
Disparity between the rich and poor
Unbridled nationalism
Inequality of the sexes
Corruption of religion, religious strife and fanaticism
Materialism
Clinging to old patterns
Narrow self-interest
Anarchy and terrorism
Belief that aggression and conflict are innate, as opposed to a distortion of the human spirit
Apathy, extinction of hope, paralysis of will

Disharmony between religion and science
Conflicting laws and beliefs of national governments
Misconceptions, doubts and suspicions between peoples and groups

The list of principles which must be implemented to achieve world peace:

Golden rule
Universal education
International auxiliary language
Oneness of humanity
Emancipation of women
Collective security
World convocation
Set of clearly defined laws and principles which are universally accepted and enforceable
More equal distribution of wealth
Unity of religion and science

Some examples:

*For apathy, extinction of hope and paralysis of will:* a person watches a child dying, a drum is beating fast, the person quickly approaches and comforts the child, then another injured or dying person appears, the first person turns towards them, the drum begins to slow, the person approaches but only places a hand on the victim, then another suffering soul appears, the person turns to look, gets up, the drum is beating really slow now, the person begins to move towards the 3rd victim almost in slow motion, then before making contact, turns away, the drum stops beating, the person kneels down and stares hopelessly at the ground, refusing to even look at the 3rd sufferer. Perhaps he/she begins to play with a palm held video game, listen to music with headphones, or pretends to put makeup on.

*For disparity between the rich and poor*: 2 people appear with empty bowls. The bowls can be of different quality also, or the rich person can have a serving bowl, the poor person a cereal bowl. One is wearing a raggedy headscarf, the other something expensive looking. The poor person kneels on the ground holding their bowl. The rich person sits in a chair with their bowl, or even has their own little table in front of them. Another official-looking type person walks by with a container of money. He deposits a few coins into the bowl of the poor person, who hold up the bowl with a pleading, desperate face. As he nears the wealthier person, that person points in a demanding way to his bowl, with a sense of entitlement. The official (who represents a corporation, treasurer, or bank) dumps all the rest, a large quantity, into the bowl of the rich person.

*Emancipation of women:* a female is curled up on the ground on her knees with her head down, a male has his foot on her back with a triumphant look, another male or group, walks in and shoves his leg off the woman, and stands in front of her to protect her with their arms spread out as a shield. The oppressor man backs off and the person who liberated her turns to her and lovingly takes her hand and lifts her up.

## Soldiers in God's Army (M)

This is a boisterous, fun, and upbeat dramatic piece to a Baha'i song. It comes from *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, Vol. 1*. Adapted from traditional gospel spiritual. Lead Vocal by Van Gilmer

*Admonish men to fear God. By God! This fear is the chief commander of the army of thy Lord. Its hosts are a praiseworthy character and goodly deeds. Through it have the cities of men's hearts been opened throughout the ages and centuries.....*
*~Baha'u'llah:* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 121

*.....all who work for the Supreme Design are soldiers in the army of the Spirit.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Paris Talks, page 85

*The principles of the Teachings of Baha'u'llah should be carefully studied, one by one, until they are.....understood by mind and heart -so will you become strong followers of the light, truly spiritual, heavenly soldiers of God.....~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Paris Talks, page 22

*Let them raise up the banner of guidance, and as soldiers of the Company on high, let them exalt God's Word, spread abroad His sweet savours, educate the souls of men, and promote the Most Great Peace.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of`Abdu'l-Baha, page 77

*I supplicate God that ye may become the army of that kingdom, in order that by the power of the Most Great Name, the friends of God may conquer this world through love, friendship and the strength of the Kingdom of peace; the human race become compassionate, and bloodshed and carnage be completely effaced from the universe.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Baha'i World Faith, page 409

*Whensoever holy souls, drawing on the powers of heaven, shall arise with such qualities of the spirit, and march in unison, rank on rank, every one of those souls will be even as one thousand, and the surging waves of that mighty ocean will be even as the battalions of the Concourse on high. What a blessing that will be -- when all shall come together.....~Abdu'l-Baha*, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 260

*O army of God! Through the protection and help vouchsafed by the Blessed Beauty..... - ye must conduct yourselves in such a manner that ye may stand out distinguished and brilliant as the sun among other souls.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of`Abdu'l-Baha, pages 70-71

*O army of God! Beware lest ye harm any soul, or make any heart to sorrow; lest ye wound any man with your words, be he known to you or a stranger, be he friend or foe.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of`Abdu'l-Baha, page 73

*O ye servants of the Sacred Threshold! The triumphant hosts of the Celestial Concourse, arrayed and marshalled in the Realms above, stand ready and expectant to assist and assure victory to that valiant horseman who with confidence spurs on his charger into the arena of service. Well is it with that fearless warrior, who armed with the power of true Knowledge, hastens unto the field, disperses the armies of ignorance, and scatters the hosts of error, who holds aloft the Standard of Divine Guidance, and sounds the Clarion of Victory. By the righteousness of the Lord! He hath achieved a glorious triumph and obtained the true victory. ~Abdu'l-Baha*, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 264

*O Thou Incomparable God! O Thou Lord of the Kingdom! These souls are Thy heavenly army. Assist them and, with the cohorts of the Supreme Concourse, make them victorious, so that each one of them may become like unto a regiment and conquer these countries through the love of God and the illumination of divine teachings.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Tablets of the Divine Plan, page 35

*.....be a celestial army, and you shall indeed conquer the city of hearts.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Paris Talks, page 172

**WMD's (Weapons for Mass Declaration) for Spiritual Soldiers:**

*The sword of wisdom is hotter than summer heat, and sharper than blades of steel, if ye do but understand. Draw it forth in My name and through the power of My might, and conquer, then, with it the cities of the hearts of them that have secluded themselves in the stronghold of their corrupt desires.*
*~Baha'u'llah:* Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 55

*The sword of a virtuous character and upright conduct is sharper than blades of steel.*
*~Baha'u'llah:* Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 29

*Centre your attention unceasingly upon that which will cause the Word of God to be exalted. In this Most Great Revelation goodly deeds and a praiseworthy character are regarded as the hosts of God, likewise is His blessed and holy Word. These hosts are the lodestone of the hearts of men and the effective means for unlocking doors. Of all the weapons in the world this is the keenest. ~Baha'u'llah:* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 256

*To do battle, ...doth not in this greatest of all dispensations, mean to go forth with sword and spear, with lance and piercing arrow -- but rather weaponed with pure intent, with righteous motives, with counsels helpful and effective, with godly attributes, with deeds pleasing to the Almighty, with the qualities of heaven. It signifieth education for all mankind, guidance for all men, the spreading far and wide of the sweet savours of the spirit, the promulgation of God's proofs, the setting forth of arguments conclusive and divine, the doing of charitable deeds. ~Abdu'l-Baha,* Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 260

We originally did this performance at a feast, but then again later in a class, then at 2 different Unit Conventions. I would never do this for an audience who are not Baha'is. It may also be too playful or considered undignified for some settings or groups. Use your best judgment.

For the feast and Unit Conventions the presentation was more formal—in that it involved me giving the following mini-introduction speech which began with each child/soldier entering or stepping forward and as they did so, naming a virtue which a spiritual soldier needs. In class there was no formal entrance.

However, in both settings, there was discussion along with rehearsal so kids understood the significance of being a spiritual soldier and what virtues were relevant and how they might be expressed. I usually started each discussion with asking the students what virtues do good soldiers possess and why—then added more or elaborated with them and shared quotes. Kids really enjoyed trying to fill in the blanks I left for key words in the quotes. I chose ahead of time with a highlighter the words I wanted to have the students guess—I tried to choose ones that could be pantomimed or logically deduced by the phrase. For example: I would ask, what do you think is the chief commander of the army of God? After a lot of guessing, I would read this quote, and ask them to fill in the blanks (the words left blank are underlined).

*Admonish men to fear God. By God! This fear is the chief commander of the army of thy Lord. Its hosts are a praiseworthy character and goodly deeds. Through it have the cities of men's hearts been opened throughout the ages and centuries.....*
*~Baha'u'llah:* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 121

*O army of God! Beware lest ye harm any soul, or make any heart to sorrow; lest ye wound any man with your words, be he known to you or a stranger, be he friend or foe.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of`Abdu'l-Baha, page 73

Next, each child blindly chose a little card with a virtue written on it from a basket. If they were too young to understand it or say it, they put it back and chose another. They also were able to trade with each other if they wanted to represent a particular virtue. This is of course highly optional and should only be allowed if there is plenty of time. I wanted each child to understand the meaning of their virtue as well as be able to pronounce it. It was very helpful to have a clipboard with the virtues to be used written on it. I would write the child's name next to the virtue(s) they had, b/c someone always forgot during rehearsal. With small groups, soldier/students would say 2-3 virtues in the introduction.

For both class and audience settings, as uniforms, children wore long silk cloths draped over the back of their necks & shoulders and hanging down in front. The kids also adorned themselves with silk scarves on their heads if they chose.

*Materials Needed:*

Song
boom box for rehearsal
preferably a good sound system for the actual performance—(this song should be done loud and enthusiastically!)
cloths for uniforms
small booklets on the Baha'i Faith, (# depends on size of soldier group)
red hearts on craft sticks with notary seals in center of heart to indicate the light of unity, (# depends on size of soldier group)
picture of the Shrine of The Bab, the Greatest Name, Abdu'l-Baha, and Shoghi Effendi
introduction script
notes and quotes for lesson part
list of virtues used in introduction, pencil with eraser
little cards with one of the virtues from the list written in gold on each one.

*Introduction:* To be effective teachers in Baha'u'llah's Faith, we must be:

*(Children are lined up across stage area, facing the audience, each child is holding a little booklet on the Baha'i Faith in one hand, a heart on a craft stick in the other, both placed over their heart. One at a time each steps forward, and as they do, say confidently, firmly, and loudly one of these virtues, below, then stands at attention as in the military, i.e. lower, straighten, and press their arms to their sides, chin up, straight posture, feet together, still, and serious expression, gazing upward, b/c God is their commander.* ***If using a microphone****, the kids need to have their hands down at their sides to begin with, with both objects in the hand that will not grasp the microphone. So, for example, the last time we did it, all children held their 2 objects in their left hand b/c I was positioned at the right end of the line. After the words "we must be", I handed the microphone to the first child, who then took one confident step forward and said his virtue. He then took one step back to re-align himself with the rest of the group, and handed the microphone to the right hand of the next child in line. After they stepped back, kids were to put the heart in their right hands, and the booklet in their left. Without a microphone, there would be no need to step back in line, and all would be re-aligned at the end b/c all would have stepped forward. I had to remind them to not speak until the step was taken, and to wait until finished speaking to step back.)*

God-fearing, well trained, obedient, sacrificing, systematic, unified, courageous, organized, disciplined, trustworthy, just, detached, excellent, flexible, loyal, persevering, responsible, steadfast, wise, self-controlled, loving, and kind.

(Loving and Kind are virtues not normally associated with active duty soldiers, but are certainly applicable to spiritual soldiers).

*(If you have more kids than virtues, they can repeat or come up with more. For a small regiment, each soldier can say 2-3 virtues).*

*(After the last one, I say:)*

These are also the virtues of good soldiers. These children are soldiers of the spiritual kingdom—and because they are spiritual soldiers who are to spread love and unity, they certainly do not want to be uniformed in camouflage. They want to stand out and attract others by their beauty. And of course instead of using swords and guns as their weapons they will use the Word of God, wisdom, goodly deeds and a praiseworthy character. These are the WMD's of the army of God, weapons of mass declarations!

Please sing and clap along. For the last stanza and the last chorus the children will go into the audience to recruit. Even though this is a volunteer army we would appreciate you supporting our troops by joining in! By the final chorus, you will know the actions. The only new one will be pretending to hurt your feet on a rough road when the going gets tough, and the act of dying (at this point many people are wondering "what the heck is this lady doing teaching our kids?!") If you like, you can also hold up the booklets and hearts as we all die, and pretend to expire with the rest of us.

*(I gave quickie demos of the actions described above for the dramatically challenged. For more detail—see the last stanza. I did not hand out song sheets b/c I wanted the audience to watch the kids—not read—and the chorus is so simple and repetitive, it is easy to learn. As you have probably ascertained, this activity is a strange mixture of playful humor and the serious business of sacrifice and service. You may want to share some quotes as part of the introduction to support the idea that we are a spiritual army and we use spiritual weapons. See quotes under* ***WMD*** *above and the following two:)*

*.....We have decreed that war shall be waged in the path of God with the armies of wisdom and utterance, and of a goodly character and praiseworthy deeds. Thus hath it been decided by Him Who is the All-Powerful, the Almighty. There is no glory for him that committeth disorder on the earth after it hath been made so good. Fear God, O people, and be not of them that act unjustly. Baha'u'llah*: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf p. 24

*O Thou Incomparable God! O Thou Lord of the Kingdom! These souls are Thy heavenly army. Assist them and, with the cohorts of the Supreme Concourse, make them victorious, so that each one of them may become like unto a regiment and conquer these countries through the love of God and the illumination of divine teachings. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Tablets of the Divine Plan, page 35

*(Children are standing at attention during the song—except during the chorus, the instrumental section, and the final stanza. Another option that can work well is to have them jive to the music —i.e. sway hips, clap, snap fingers etc., during all the stanzas instead—but keep them in line. If they do clap and snap, they all will have to tuck their booklets and heart sticks in an easy to retrieve place on their bodies. The music is incredibly inspiring and danceable. On the other hand, it can also be a good demonstration of the self-discipline and reverence of spiritual soldiers to remain at attention during the stanzas on the Central Figures, and then at the end, they all get to break loose! )*

*(For the stanzas about the Central Figures,*
*myself-- or a designated person--is animatedly singing and dancing along to the music.*
*I do not want to block the students,*
*so I am to one side of the line of kids, closer to the audience than they.*
*I move/dance across the stage to the opposite side and dramatically present/point to*
*someone pre-designated who is stoically holding the picture of the Shrine of The Bab*
*for the audience to see, as if they are an easel.*
*They should be off to the side somewhat, near the supply of photographs.*
*The supply of pictures/photos are on side of stage*
*neatly arranged on a cloth covered chair or small table.*
*By the end of the stanza, I have returned to the opposite side,*
*either by going behind or in front of the line of soldier-kids.)*

Now The Bab blew His Trumpet
Announcing to the world the time had come
And like a thief in the night He came by the gate
And said He was the Promised One

*(At the end of each stanza about a Central Figure,*
*I join the line of the students and do actions with them.*
*The picture holder places the Shrine picture on the chair or table*
*and gets ready for the next stanza after the chorus about Baha'u'llah.)*

CHORUS:

*(All performers should be singing the chorus).*

Oh....we are soldiers in God's army

*(We all vigorously march in place)*

We gotta stop and teach the Word for now

*(We abruptly stop marching on the word "stop" and on the word "teach",*
*hold up high and wave little booklets on the Baha'i Faith.*
*Every soldier is holding the booklet in the same hand, i.e. all left or all right. I get my booklet from a pocket or other location, kids already have theirs. Kids should be reminded to hold the booklets right side up, front facing audience.)*

We gotta hold up love and unity

*(On the word "hold", we hold up and wave hearts on sticks with other hand,*
*while still holding up booklets.*
*Kids need to be reminded to present the front of the heart stick to the audience,*
*-- or make the prop double sided.)*

We gotta hold it up until we die

*(We continue to hold up and wave both objects until next stanza,*
*at the beginning of which kids stand back at attention as in the military).*

*(end of chorus)*

*(As in the first stanza, myself or designated person*
*comes forward, singing and dancing along to the music, and moves across the stage to where the Greatest Name is being reverently held by another.*
*I draw the audience's attention to the Greatest Name with gestures.)*

Baha'u'llah was the Prophet
He had the Word that is right for now
And when the road got rough and the going got tough
He just stood there and taught anyhow

CHORUS
*(Repeat as before)*

*(Same as first stanza, except this time, a picture of Abdu'l-Baha is displayed)*

Abdu'l-Baha was the Servant
He had the Word that is right for now
And when the road got rough and the going got tough
He just stood there and taught anyhow

CHORUS
*(Repeat as before)*

*(Same as first stanza, except this time, a picture of Shoghi Effendi is displayed)*

Shoghi Effendi was the Guardian
He had the Word that is right for now
And when the road got rough and the going got tough
He just stood there and taught anyhow

CHORUS

*(Repeat as before, except this time another picture is not readied for display.*
*There is an ample instrumental after the above chorus.*
*During the instrumental, we are dancing as we*
*go into the audience and recruit new soldiers.*
*The picture holder is standing ready to give these students more booklets*
*and heart sticks to give to the new recruits.*
*This has to be done rapidly*
*You can also have only half of all performers go recruiting ---*
*or whatever number you like, or none at all if that's impractical.*
*For our performance on a stage, there was just barely enough time*
*for each soldier to bring in one new recruit.*
*So each soldier was given one extra booklet and one extra heart by the picture holder.)*

I'm glad I'm a soldier

*(All of us, including new recruits, sing and dance to this stanza with enthusiasm,*
*and point to our chests with pride using both thumbs, other fingers curled, feet stomping.*
*Don't worry about line formation, though it would be nice if people were not blocking each other.*
*All should face the remaining audience. )*

I've got the Word that is right for now

*(We all hold up booklets, still marching)*

And when the road gets rough and the going gets tough

*(We all act as if we've stepped on something sharp,*
*hop on one foot, grimace, limp in place, etc. while holding booklets up.)*

I'll just stand there and teach anyhow

*(We stop acting hurt, stand erect, hold booklets higher.)*

CHORUS

*(Repeat as before, except this time, during the final line of "We gotta hold it up until we die",*
*performers will melodramatically pretend to die. The singer repeats this line in various ways throughout*
*the final chorus, so teach kids to follow your cue about when to start to die.*
*Otherwise, they will find themselves dead prematurely!*

*The new recruits will follow your lead and begin to go down to the floor when you do.*
*As we die we are still holding up booklet and heart,*
*either separately in both hands or combined in one hand,*
*so that until we are flat on our backs or stomachs,*
*we are demonstrating steadfastness and determination.*
*When music ends, arms are finally lowered.)*

## Zymic Zelda

A somewhat elaborate audience participation play designed to teach many Baha'i concepts relating to world stability such as a more fair distribution of wealth.

This one requires the memorization of lines, and the creation of a really far-out, futuristic costume. I have a terrible memory, but I can do this one, though it requires more memorization than any other piece in this document. It is perfect for groups of school children and can even be used with kids at a party, Baha'i or non-Baha'i. Its ideal to have 10 or more kids. This drama teaches the following:

- Greed, selfishness, and vastly unequal distribution of resources are a source of conflict and suffering.
- The goodness and power of detachment, caring, fairness, generosity and cooperation—and the actual practice of these virtues.
- In order to have peace and unity, there must be fairness, caring, and equal distribution of wealth---and that in the long run these states and virtues ultimately lead to more benefits and resources for all. It is evident in the world today that where there is no peace and unity, natural and human resources are destroyed, and everyone suffers loss.
- It's important to pay attention to and read body language.

In sum, the drama directly relates to Baha'u'llah's principle concerning the need for a more balanced distribution of wealth through the elimination of the extremes of wealth and poverty. We can never have peace and unity until all people share more evenly in God's bounties. "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, 1985.

The costume I use is designed to look futuristic. I have on a bright blue hair wig, long silver metallic gloves, holographic boots, a metallic shimmering teal colored shirt, very unusual and space-age looking jewelry, shimmering purple stretchy cloth for a cape, cloth covered with flat shiny sequin type circles and a second cloth with metallic sparkles—both which form the skirt, a very unusual colorful belt, a purple scarf with metallic thread draped over my head tied at the side, a silver and gold eye mask, etc. I carry a very unique looking silver colored receptacle which I decorated to look futuristic. In the container, there is large glob of a rainbow colored iridescent gooey substance that is totally cool. It's called Rainbow Putty Balls, (though its only ball-shaped b/c the container is) Item # 12/2130, priced $5-8.00 per dozen at varying times. (Also at Amazon, $6-12.00 per dozen.) Give it a fun name, like *Gooze or Glome.* Whatever you use, try to make it unusual and/or other-worldly looking. It can be really edible or not. Just make sure kids know if it is pretend or real food.

If working with a school group, its great if the teacher can read ahead of time a book called THE PEARL by Helme Heine. It teaches that unity is more important than possessions & the effect that greed, jealousy, and attachment to material goods have on a community. The Zymic Zelda play has some pretty heavy and depressing ideas—like starvation---so choose your venue carefully. It ends positively, however. I did it at a public Ayyam-i-Ha celebration and it did not seem like too much of downer b/c of the costume and joyful atmosphere of the event. Kids love make-believe fantasy stuff so it went over well even though the message was serious.—use your best judgment. A classroom environment is ideal. There is quite a bit of talking on my part, so in order to keep the kids' attention (the costume really helps!),

I am very dramatic and expressive. The students should be clearly informed that they must stay in character and they may not under any circumstances say or do things that are not a part of the drama, like tug at the costume or act provocative or silly. Remember that once a teacher gets in costume, she usually forfeits authority. It is really important to have another adult or youth helper observing the drama, who is fully informed of the contents and expectations.

This is how Zymic Zelda is done:

(First meet the children with no costume on. Ask all children to gather around you. Ask them to sit down. Then say something like the following:)

*Pretend you are living in the distant future, like 300 years from now, and that you are beings from a far away planet, in a far away galaxy.*

*What do you want the name of your planet to be? What do you call yourselves?* (Allow some discussion, or if in a school setting, the teacher can already have worked this out before you come. If time is an issue, assign a ready name of a planet and its inhabitants. Let's say they call themselves, as one group actually did, Zorkians.)

*OK, Zorkians, you are very peculiar beings in 2 ways. First, you only eat this* (show them a small glob of Rainbow Putty or whatever you use). *It is called "Gooze".* (or whatever you want to call it). *You can eat nothing else. Your bodies cannot tolerate any other food source.* (If you use a substance that can not really be eaten, make sure you state that!)

*2nd, You Zorkians do not write or speak. You are totally silent communicators. You use body language only*. (Ask for or give examples of body language.)

*This Gooze is a very precious and scarce natural resource and right now your kingdom, your planet, is experiencing a VERY SERIOUS shortage.* (You may need to explain some of these words and this concept of shortage to kids under 8 or 9.)

*In fact, its SO serious that you all are on the verge of starving to death. Actually, you—this group—are the only survivors on your planet left. So, you have consulted and agreed to go on an expedition, a hunt, to try to discover more Gooze.*

*On your journey you encounter a very strange but extraordinarily wise woman creature you have never seen before. You must do whatever she tells you. Listen to her closely, pay careful attention to whatever she says. She will not hurt you, but she can help you. You may not leave this room, you must move slowly for your bodies are weak from hunger. Remember you are silent.* (This requirement really helps prevent the class from going crazy dashing for all probable hiding places, and the silence is good self-discipline and welcomed by teachers.) *There will be no Gooze inside any drawers, cabinets, or closets, or inside or behind anything.* (This helps prevent them from tearing the room apart.) *You can lie down and rest if you get tired of searching since you are dying of hunger anyway. Now you can begin your searching.* (To give myself more time to get into costume when I did this in my home, and to allow the kids to have more physical activity, I told the students they could search in 3 different areas of the house, while 2 youth assistants monitored the activity.)

(In reality, you have not hidden any of the Gooze, but the children do not know that there is none to be found. While the kids are futilely searching, change into costume. One can also have the teacher say all of the above, and alert you to enter after the kids have searched for a few minutes. When entering, say something like the following:)

*Are you looking for this?* (Pull the Gooze out of your receptacle). *Come gather round, Zorkian beings. My name is Zymic Zelda and I come from a far away planet, in a far away galaxy. I come from the Milky Way galaxy and the planet that was my home was called Earth. Perhaps you have heard of it. This is*

*how earthling people from some locations and parts of earth greeted other earthling people.* (Shake hands with several of them and say nice to meet you, etc.)

*I love all beings of all species, of all colors, yellow, green, pink, brown, blue, red, white, purple, and black. And because I love you too, Zorkians, I don't want you to make the same mistake that many of the foolish earthling people made. Oh, there were so many tears, so much sadness, crying, suffering, hurting, war and fighting because SO FEW people had SO MUCH and SO MANY people had SO LITTLE—and most of those that had SO MUCH did not care AT ALL about the many people with WAY TOO LITTLE.*

*So, I want to teach you the language of the heart—a language that too many earthling people failed to learn. It is a silent language, so it is well suited to your species. But it is a very powerful, very special language. When you know this language, then all beings on your planet will have enough, and all will be cared for. There will be no more starvation or suffering.*

*And when this happens, when all have enough and all are cared for, when your kingdom is in this state of being, in this condition,* ***a mysterious power*** *will be released*. *Enough said! Let the training begin. One learns this language only through experience.*

(If using individual items of food, is helpful to know ahead of time how many kids will be participating so that you have the exact number as children, but the important thing is to make sure that there are at least enough for everyone to have one). So this is what you do: Ask them to hold out their cupped hands. Proceed to distribute the Gooze, but some get only a speck, some get a small gob, some get a handful, and some get none. If they listened at all to your lamenting about earth, they immediately know what to do—distribute equally the Gooze. I have never had kids who did not immediately share their surplus. But very young kids may balk at giving anything away, so I would say pre-schoolers as a target group are too young for this activity and they certainly can't grasp the deeper message—except they do very well understand fairness and sharing. I have done this in mixed aged groups and it went over fine with the little ones—I am just careful not to give them the surplus amounts so that there won't be a scene.

If there are more individual food items than kids, the ones with the surplus usually approach me or the teacher to give them away—most feel self-conscious about having more than others and this is a good sign, I think. Also, usually some are inclined to sacrifice all of what they have, so others have even more than one, and I then remind them that the mysterious power is only released when ALL have enough and ALL are cared for, and that the language of the heart speaks of fairness and justice. I remind them that a Divine Messenger from Earth a long time ago said *that "The best beloved all things in my sight is justice....*" and "*Be fair to yourselves and to others*" (both by Baha'u'llah). If its a public school, you can say that a very wise man from the planet Earth once said.....)

If I am not sure how everybody is feeling about their quantity of Gooze, I ask the Zorkians to indicate to each other if they feel cared for and if they have enough. I ask them to use earthling body language of head shaking to express yes or no. If there are individual items, it is obvious that the activity is done when all have one piece of food.

(**Once the distribution is complete,** this is what to say:)

*Well done! It is now time for you to learn the ancient secret of your planet: When all Zorkians have enough, when all feel cared for, the* ***mysterious power of peace and unity is released. And when there is peace and unity in the atmosphere, all your trees produce this Gooze in abundance, in huge amounts****. If this is true, then what do you think caused the shortage?* (I invite them to break their silence rule and speak. ---Or I bestow upon them the power of earthling speech by touching each one's head or something like that.)

Insightful kids have always been quick to see the connection—that there was a shortage of Gooze b/c there was no peace and unity,---- b/c not all Zorkians had enough or felt cared for. Some must have been greedy and selfish, which caused some Zorkians to not have enough or feel cared for, and thus the peace

and unity to disappear, and consequently the trees did not bear their fruit of Gooze. We discussed this a bit, and I reiterated the connection between peace and unity, all being cared for and having enough, and the trees producing the Gooze.

The children love the "Gooze" and I want them to remember the activity, so I let them keep their portion. After the activity, I present a silver box with holographic stars on it that holds the round plastic containers that the Rainbow Putty came in. Each child chooses one and puts their putty into it. One can also use film vials. If real food was used, the kids can of course eat it instead of taking it home.

Instead of giving the Gooze away right after the drama, a nice touch is that when the students come back in the morning to school, the potted trees in the classroom have little balls of Gooze all over them. The teachers said it was so uplifting to witness how the early birds either took only one, or gathered them up and joyfully distributed them to other students as they entered the classroom. If a classroom is bereft of foliage, I usually request that at least one tree or large plant be borrowed several days before I come in and placed in the classroom—with the kids of course unsuspecting the role it will play after Zymic Zelda has left.

I always try to stimulate as many senses as possible in a lesson. However, I don't have a favorite sense—and what the Rainbow Putty does not offer in taste it makes up for in tactile thrills. There is another wonderful substance that is slimey, spreads out when warm, and glows in the dark. For the ZZ activity I call it "Glome" (Glowing + Slime). It is generally called "Slime" in stores. The disadvantage is, that unless you have little containers, it will drip off plants so you can't treat the kids to it being on the trees.

At one camp at my house, I could not resist treating the students to both the putty and the slime. So.....I explained that since they were so successful with the Gooze in the first training, they were ready for an advanced training session. I showed them a glob of "Glome" and explained that most Zorkians thought that this substance was a legend only. But actually it was real, only extremely rare due to it needing a very high degree of peace and unity to grow. Only when there is great love and harmony, will the Glome grow, and only on a few rare trees. Glome gives those who eat it perfect health.

An assistant placed a large glob of Glow in the Dark Glome from 3 containers on a plate, and charged it under a 150 watt light. Then I made the classroom very dark. (I have a very thick and dark window covering that is sealed by magnets on the edges.) I asked the Zorkians to resume their silent form of communication. Then I distributed the Glome 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 Glome, but I hushed them, and they managed. It's helpful to some children who may not know to explain how to "re-charge" the glome at home by holding it under incandescent light for at least 5 minutes.

A source for slime is Physlink.com Science eStore. They can be contacted at 888-438-9867, www.physlink.com. Their glow in the dark slime is item # PL192. 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 # JE-12/2100. Rainbow Putty and a product called Mars Mud are 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.

A good book to go with Zymic Zelda is called The Pearl by Helme Heine. Its about a Beaver that has a dream about a pearl that might be in a mussel he has found. He learns through the dream that such a rare possession could create jealousy, greed, & selfishness, and lead to disunity and violence among his friends of the forest. Upon waking, he throws the mussel back into the water w/o ever opening it,

preferring unity and friendship over a material possession. I tied the basic message of the book to Zymic Zelda's lesson: That greed and selfishness destroy peace and unity. In the Beaver's dream, greed and selfishness and jealousy cause peace and unity to disappear, and the ensuing conflict destroys Beaver's whole pond and a fire set by the animals destroys the forest, thereby hurting the well being of all and ruining the source of life for all. In Zymic Zelda, b/c some Zorkians were greedy and selfish, peace and unity disappeared, so the trees stopped producing Glome food, thereby ruining the source of life for all. In real life, when governments, leaders, groups, nations, and individuals are greedy and selfish, peace and unity disappears, wars and violence break out, natural resources are ravaged, crops burned, wells blown up, etc, thereby ruining the source of life for all.

*.....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

*..... 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

*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

## The Dar

An interactive fanciful jungle drama about using our talents in service of humanity as opposed for selfish purposes. The making of the costume and magical powers makes this a level 2.

This skit involved a story. One can use the drama w/o the story if the book is not available,--- just set the scene so that the costume and context makes sense. The title of the book was The Invisible Hunters by Harriet Rohmer, Octavio Chow, and Morris Vidaure. The text is in both Spanish and English. It is based on a legend from Nicaragua: Three hunters discover a magic vine in the jungle which is the physical form of a sort of god named The Dar. The Dar gives them a piece of its vine which when held makes them invisible. Now they can hunt the wild wari (pig) with ease. But The Dar makes them promise 2 things: They never can sell the meat or hunt with guns. They have never even considered this so they all eagerly agree. As can be expected they become very famous and successful hunters, and feed the people of their village well. The elders of the village have heard of The Dar and are pleased with this

great gift. But one day some traders come and convince the hunters they are foolish not to sell the meat, and tempt them with fancy material goods. The hunter's egos are bruised and their passions stimulated, so they decide to sell the meat to those not in their village to be able to afford the luxuries. Soon there is not enough meat to give away to their own villagers. The elders warn them not to break their promises to The Dar, but the hunters have become so swollen with pride that they no longer respect their elders or the other villagers. The villagers have no money to buy the meat,-- so after the Traders make fun of the hunters for hunting with sticks instead of guns,-- the hunters decide that if they hunt with guns, then they can kill enough wari to give some to the villagers and also sell to outsiders. So they begin to hunt with guns, but they become so greedy and attached to material things that they do not want to give any of the meat away and give the villagers only spoiled meat. So one day while in the jungle they encounter The Dar. Naturally, he is very displeased and punishes them by making them invisible permanently. When they return to their village as invisible voices, the elders kick them out telling them never to return. So to this day they wander the river corridor calling out to The Dar to forgive them.

We then discussed how God gives everybody special "powers" or gifts, such as musical abilities, artistic talent, a beautiful singing voice, an extremely athletic body, or a brilliant mind and that these gifts are supposed to be used to glorify God and to serve humanity, not just for our own self-glorification and self-exaltation. We also discussed how the trader used some of the same techniques on the egos of the hunters as *Cool Colleen* did—belittling, tempting, etc.

So I dress up as The Dar (this costume is my favorite and most elaborate). I had painted a white mask green and glued silk plant leaves in a pattern on the cheeks and chin. The eyes and mouth are outlined in a darker green. A large green rhinestone was glued on the mask's forehead. On the *inside* of the forehead, using duct tape, a marker cap is securely fastened. After the wig (described below) is put on, a palm frond's stem is stuck inside the cap. The palm frond arches back over my head. (A cluster of fern leaves also works). I am dressed in all green with a green cape, green silk scarf to cover my neck, green socks, (no shoes), and my gloves are green with silk leaves glued to both sides of all fingers and palm and back of hands. Instead of a cape, one can also just wrap a large green cloth around the body like a Greek toga—just try to cover as much skin as possible in green. I affixed gobs of silk green vines to a sturdy green hair net, so I have a wig of leaves that goes down well past my rear end. (The costume would be too scary for kids under 6). The Dar is holding a leaf shaped wooden bowl which contains iridescent green sparkles and 9 magic powers which are each written in silver sparkly ink on a silk green leaf, rolled around a small stick and tied with a strip of zebra grass.

The children have been assigned a partner (optional) and the group, in a line of pairs, is led to me in the woods in our backyard. When I see them coming, I start saying "Dar", "Dar", "Dar", over and over, as the hunters heard in the story. In an authoritative, deep, royal sounding voice, I summon each pair of human children to stand before me and ask them if they wish to possess one of my supernatural powers. They of course say "yes," then I demand that they promise me 2 things: they must use the power to serve the human world, and return within one year (20 minutes) to recount to The Dar how they have used their power to uplift humanity and make the world a better place. The Dar then commands one of them to choose a power from the leaf-shaped wooden bowl, which I am holding. Then I touch each child in the pair with a palm frond, (or giant Hosta leaf) and state that they now possess the new power, and dismiss them, so the next pair can be summoned. (Kids should be cued ahead of time to thank the Dar). When all teams have received their power, they depart. (I had arranged to hang out at a neighbor's while they consulted inside my house-- the costume is way too cumbersome to take off and put back on in 20 minutes. It is also very hot and I get very thirsty.)

Once the students are inside, they open up the leaf wrapped around the stick to discover what their power is and to consult on how to use it to improve the condition of humanity. This proved to be a challenge for them, but all the teams came up with at least one way to use their power for the well being of others. The powers were: The ability to make anything beautiful, the ability to fly, the ability to be microscopic in size, having superhuman strength, x-ray vision, moving objects with the mind, to turn anything you touch into gold, to read minds, and to become invisible at will. When they were ready, my able assistants, called my neighbors and I returned to my position in the woods, intoning "Dar, Dar, Dar" as the pairs approach me again. Then I summon them to come forth to testify to their good works (by

explaining what power they obtained and how they have used their power). I proclaim that I am well pleased with their efforts, touch their heads with my “wand” again, and declare that they now possess the power for all their earthly lives. (Kids should be cued ahead of time to thank the Dar again).

(B/c it takes so long to make the powers, the students have been cued to place the sticks and leaves back in the bowl, which is now at my feet.)

It would be great if the assistant could guide the students to come up with a creative way to use their power, not just spoon feed the idea to them. The helper should help them be creative and not simplistic.

For example, if they have the power to fly, not to just use it to bring food to the hungry (b/c they don't have the power of unlimited food or extra physical strength), but to use it in a way that would really be doable if they actually had that power. For example, they could use it for search and rescue missions, or combine forces with others who have different powers to increase their usefulness.

Every time I have done this, the assistants appreciate an outline of their duties that describe the sequence of events and expectations of the students. So this is included below.

*Dear Dar Helpers: Thanks so much for agreeing to assist!*

*I will need you to supervise the students while I get into costume. I will phone when I am ready, then you should wait about 5 minutes for me to get into position in the woods. Then please lead the students into the woods to meet the Dar jungle god (me in costume). They should line up in pairs several yards away and respectfully await the Dar to summon each pair to "Him". He will allow them to choose a magical power from a leaf shaped wooden bowl. (If doing this in pairs, one child can point to the power, the other gets to retrieve it from the bowl). The powers are written on silk leaves that are wrapped around a small stick and tied with a piece of zebra grass. Insist that children act in character as if they are in a real theatrical piece. Otherwise they can undermine the experience for others. If any children start to behave obnoxiously or disrespectfully, tell them that if they continue behaving discourteously, they will have to go inside and not be a part of the drama. Follow through if necessary. Kids should be cued ahead of time to thank the Dar after both receiving their power temporarily & then permanently after the second encounter.*

*After the students receive their power, they wait with their unopened leaf until all pairs have received their powers. Then, as a group they go back inside to the classroom. Students do not open and learn what their powers are until they get back in the classroom. (However, if there are 2 adult helpers, when 1/2 of the students have their powers, that adult can take them inside to begin the process of thinking of ways to use their powers).*

*Once back in the classroom, you will need to help them come up with a way they can use that power to serve humanity, and then to also make sure they will be able to articulate how they use their power when they return to the woods to report to the Dar (me still in costume).*

*It would be ideal if you could guide them to come up with a creative way to use their power, not just spoon feed the idea to them. But if you can, help them be creative and not simplistic. For example, if they have the power to fly, not to just use it to bring food to the hungry (b/c they don't have the power of unlimited food or extra physical strength), but to use it in a way that would really be doable if they actually had that power. For example, they could use it for search and rescue missions, or combine forces with others who have different powers to increase their usefulness.*

*It would be great if each child in the pair used their power differently, but if they want to consult and come up with one way, that is okay too. That way, its less work for you also.*

*The powers will be: The ability to make anything beautiful, the ability to fly, the ability to be microscopic in size, having superhuman strength, x-ray vision, moving objects with the mind, to turn anything you touch into gold, to read minds, and to become invisible at will.*

*Pairs that have developed their report on their power usage can play downstairs or look at the class memory albums while the others work on theirs. However, they should not play outside--I don't want them to see me at the neighbor's. Just explain to them that you can't have kids unsupervised outside.*

*In the mean time, I hang out at the neighbor's in costume (its too elaborate and time consuming to get into and out of for the interval) and you call over there when the kids are ready and give me a few minutes head start to go back out to the woods to my original position. The kids then line up in the woods to be summoned by The Dar to explain how they are using their magic powers.*

*The leaves and sticks should be brought back out when the kids report to the Dar, and put back into the Dar's wooden bowl. The kids do not keep these to take home--its one less material I have to make in the future!*

*The whole activity, including the Dar story, should take about 1 ½ hours at most.*

RELATED QUOTES:

*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

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

*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

*It behooveth man to show forth that which will benefit mankind. He that bringeth forth no fruit is fit for the fire. ~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

*..... 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

*O MY SERVANTS! Ye are the trees of My garden; ye must give forth goodly and wondrous fruits, that ye yourselves and others may profit therefrom.*
*~Baha'u'llah:* Persian Hidden Words, #80

*Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. ~Baha'u'llah:* Arabic Hidden Words, #68

*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

*Be kind to all peoples; care for every person;.... strive ye to gladden every soul.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, pages 244-245

*Service to humanity is service to God. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 8

*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

*The truth is that God has endowed man with virtues, powers and ideal faculties….. We must thank God for these bestowals, for these powers He has given us, for this crown He has placed upon our heads.*
*How shall we utilize these gifts and expend these bounties? By directing our efforts toward the unification of the human race. We must use these powers in establishing the oneness of the world of humanity; appreciate these virtues by accomplishing the unity of the white and colored races; devote this divine intelligence to the perfecting of amity and accord among all branches of the human family, so that under the protection and providence of God, the East and West may hold each other's hands and become as lovers. ~Abdu'l-Baha,* Foundations of World Unity, p. 61

*.....if a judicious and resourceful individual should initiate measures which would universally enrich the masses of the people, there could be no undertaking greater than this, and it would rank in the sight of God as the supreme achievement, for such a benefactor would supply the needs and insure the comfort and well-being of a great multitude. Wealth is most commendable, provided the entire population is wealthy. If, however, a few have inordinate riches while the rest are impoverished, and no fruit or benefit accrues from that wealth, then it is only a liability to its possessor. If, on the other hand, it is expended for the promotion of knowledge, the founding of elementary and other schools, the encouragement of art and industry, the training of orphans and the poor -- in brief, if it is dedicated to the welfare of society -- its possessor will stand out before God and man as the most excellent of all who live on earth and will be accounted as one of the people of paradise. ~Abdu'l-Baha,* The Secret of Divine Civilization, p. 24

## The Beautiful Bab

A candle-lighting metaphorical demonstration using music, fragrance, and beauty to touch hearts. (Based on a presentation by Keith Boehme.)

*I am the Lamp which the Finger of God hath lit within its niche and caused to shine with deathless splendour. I am the Flame of that supernal Light that glowed upon Sinai in the gladsome Spot, and lay concealed in the midst of the Burning Bush.*
*~The Bab:* Selections from the Writings of The Bab, page 74

We began our evening program with a home-made pre-recorded, multi-sensorial program in the darkness about The Bab in a lovely plant filled room with a fountain in my sister's house. (Darkness always adds ambiance, reverence and a touch of suspense and mysticism,--- and promotes stillness!) I captured the kids' attention by opening a beautiful green felt covered box, with brass jewelry accenting parts of it. I gently removed an even more ornately decorated square of felt with satin green ribbon borders and brass jewelry affixed in various places. I laid that on a coffee table and put an ornate oil lamp with green oil in it on a brass dish made for pillar candles in the center. Then at each corner, I placed an upside down green glass votive candle holder, and on top of each of those, I put a gold heart shaped candle holder filled with red wax. The bottom tip of each holder was turned inward, facing the oil lamp. The lamp of course symbolizes The Bab, and the heart shaped candles, the souls of His followers. I also had a long wooden lighter with a sparkling glow in the dark fabric star perfumed with rose oil affixed near the tip of the lighter (but far enough away to not get burned.) I explained that the star represented the light and fragrance of The Bab's teachings. Also, Siyyid Kazim, who had many students and knew that The Promised One was already in the world, wrote the qualities and characteristics of The Bab in the shape of a 5 pointed star and gave this description to his students to help them recognize The Bab. The first Letter of the Living to find The Bab, Mulla Husayn, used this description to verify The Bab's claims. Since the text of the story talks about the fragrance of The Bab's teachings lighting hearts, and technically fragrance does not enkindle, I decided to put the source of the fragrance (the cloth star) on the tip of the lighter. One could skip the fragrance idea altogether, and say something like "the power of His Teachings", or the beauty of His Teachings" lit hearts. But I wanted to stimulate as many of the senses as I could for this activity.

*....enable me to draw nigh unto Thee through the fragrance of Thy holiness.*
*~The Bab:* Selections from the Writings of The Bab, page 197

Before beginning the taped program I explained that Baha'u'llah says that God chose Persia for the location of the coming of the Messenger b/c a light shines more brightly in the darkness, and Persia was in a very corrupt and degraded condition spiritually at that time. We talked a bit how much easier it is to find or notice a light in the dark of night than in the day.

Then, in the darkness I began the prerecorded program with mystical sounding music in the background. In the taped program, I talked about how spiritually dark Persia was and how many believed a new Messenger was coming soon. And then I lit the oil lamp to symbolize how He did come--- and brought spiritual light to the world. Then I talked about how the fragrance of His teachings lit one heart, then another, and another until thousands were lit (I lit the four candles and the room filled with the rose scent). Then I talked about how the religious leaders were threatened by this and why they hated The Bab, and so they killed His followers (20,000 of them—and I blew out the 4 candles.) And then they killed The Bab Himself (I blew out the oil lamp). It got very dark again, and I talked about the dust storm that immediately descended upon the city where The Bab was killed and blocked out the light of the sun for the rest of the day.

But then the story continues....no human can put out the light of God's Cause, the light of His chosen Messenger, and the fragrance of The Bab's teachings lived on and continued to light new hearts (I re-lit the heart-shaped candles, but not the oil lamp.) I ended with how The Bab's teachings guided souls to Baha'u'llah and then a song from a very old Baha'i album called *Flight*. ("The Bab" by Claire Segue.) It is a beautiful song about The Bab's life, so at the beginning of the song, I blew out the smaller candles, and

relit the oil lamp. Near the end of the song the lyrics described how people feared the changes The Bab was bringing, so they killed Him "and drew themselves into the dark". At that exact moment, I blow out the oil lamp, and we finish listening to the end of the song in darkness. The use of light and darkness and fragrance is very powerful for children and they were very captivated.

*In the early part of the nineteenth century the horizon of Persia was shrouded in great darkness and ignorance. The people of that country were in a condition of barbarism. Hatred and bigotry prevailed among the various religions; bloodshed and hostility were frequent among sects and denominations of belief. There were no evidences of affiliation and unity; violent prejudice and antagonism ruled the hearts of men.* ~`Abdu'l-Baha: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 341

.....the light of the Faith proclaimed by the Bab had risen above the horizon of Shiraz and flashed across the firmament of Persia, dispelling the age-long gloom which had enveloped its people. ~Shoghi Effendi: God Passes By, page 323

*Lift up your voices and sing out the song of the Kingdom. Spread far and wide the precepts and counsels of the loving Lord, so that this world will change into another world, and this darksome earth will be flooded with light..... ~Abdu'l-Baha*, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 2

Here is the dialogue I set to ethereal, tender, slow, and mystical background music using harp and flute. Music sets tone for about 10-15 seconds, then volume lowers, and voice comes in. Room is in total darkness.

"See how dark it is? This darkness reminds me of a time in Persia, a long time ago, when it was very dark. The sun did shine, but it reminds me of darkness b/c the people could not see the light of God's teachings anymore. This is b/c there was so much hatred and greediness, too many people cared only about money, and they were mean, selfish and dishonest.

But some were not. And some knew their spiritual and holy books *very* well. So they knew that a Messenger, the Promised One from God, was about to come. And He *did* come." *(Light center oil lamp.)*

"See how much lighter it is now? And you know what this Messenger said? He said *I am the Lamp which the Finger of God hath lit....* His name was..... The Bab. He brought God's light, God's teachings to the world. He taught love, kindness, honesty, and courtesy. Can you smell the sweet fragrance of His teachings?" *(Hold up perfumed star on the end of the lighter for others to smell.)*

"The sweet, sweet fragrance of His Message, His teachings, lit one heart, *(light a candle),* and then another, *(light a candle),* and another, *(light candle)* and still another, *(light last one)* until *thousands* of hearts were lit."

"These people, whose hearts were aglow with The Bab's Teachings, became His followers. They were called Babis. They were also called The Dawnbreakers. And what happens at dawn? That's right, the light breaks the darkness—just like the Babis broke the darkness with the light of their faith. "

"But many people didn't want to accept The Bab's teachings, b/c they didn't want to change their beliefs, their ways, and behaviors. And the religious leaders, called mullahs, became jealous of The Bab's power and attraction, and didn't want the Persian people believing in Him. So they killed His followers, the Babis *(blow out each of the 4 candles)* and then they killed The Bab Himself, that Holy and beautiful youth. *(Blow out center oil lamp).* And do you know what happened when they killed Him? A huge dust storm came and it blocked out the light of the Sun. It made the whole day dark, just like it is now. It was a sign from God."

"But the beauty and fragrance of The Bab's teachings were still there. *(Point perfumed star towards each child, near their noses, while whispering:)* Can you smell it? Can you smell it? Can you smell it?"

"So The Bab's message, His religion, did *not* die out. The fragrance of His sweet teachings continued to light new hearts. *(Re-light all 4 candles, but not the lamp representing The Bab.)* And did you know that The Bab's most important teaching was that another, even *greater* Messenger, would soon come after Him? *Who....* was that? That's right. He had prepared the people to accept Baha'u'llah. The Babis became Baha'is just like us, which means follower of Baha'u'llah. The Bab's name means The Gate, and He was The Gate through which people could come to Baha'u'llah."

*(Music continues on for 10-15 seconds more, then fades off. Then I blow out all of the 4 smaller heart shaped candles, and re-light the lamp representing The Bab to prepare for the song on Flight. Near the end of the song the lyrics described how people feared the changes The Bab was bringing, so they killed Him "and drew themselves into the dark". At that exact moment, I blow out the lamp, and we finish listening to the end of the song in darkness.)*

## Baha'u'llah and the Tax Collector Puppet Show

This one took us only about 4 hours to put together, but that's b/c between the two of us, we have a vast supply of arts and crafts and dramatic materials. If you do not have access to a lot of the supplies described below, this may be a level 3 for you. Jackie Mulhall and I presented this puppet show (they were marionettes) which we created based on the chapter called *The Tax Collector* from The Love of Baha'u'llah retold by Jacqueline Mehrabi. This is the story of how, when Baha'u'llah was 7 years old, (not sure about the age—this book says 7) a corrupt and rude tax collector kept coming back to Baha'u'llah's father's house demanding more and more money. The third time, he was not satisfied with the amount given, so he barged in and took furniture and valuables. Baha'u'llah was very upset about this so He rode His horse on a 2 day journey in the winter through the mountains to visit the king to present His case. Not only did Baha'u'llah succeed in getting an audience with the shah, but so impressed the king, that he dismissed the tax collector from his job. I would knock loudly on the door of the classroom each time the tax collector came. As I read the story, Jackie acted it out with the props and puppets, filling in with related dialogue and commentary, (but not speaking for Baha'u'llah, just the tax man and Shah). After the show, we discussed the virtues Baha'u'llah displayed: courage, determination, justice, and wisdom in presenting His case to the king. Materials used are in italics.

In the Baha'i Faith, no one is permitted to represent, role play, or draw a Messenger of God, God Himself, or Abdu'l-Baha—out of respect. So we only used *two eastern looking puppets* to play the tax collector and the king. We used a *horse* to portray the journey. Jackie did a fabulous job transforming the classroom table and part of the floor into a beautiful scene: On the floor sat a *large basket covered with silk cloth* which stood for the area around Baha'u'llah's house. *A red cloth place mat* signified the floor or boundaries of the house. We had *a wooden container full of coins* which was emptied a little bit more each time the tax collector demanded more money. Jackie would pour the coins onto the place mat then remove them. *A few small props represented furnishings/valuables in the house, (a gold lacquered box, a tiny oriental looking cloth that could be a carpet, etc.)* which she placed in a *small wooden wheelbarrow to* be carted off by the puppet.

Upon the commencement of Baha'u'llah's journey, she unveiled a *gorgeous scene of nature:* The table had a *green silk cloth* over all of it, a *sheer blue cloth was a river* winding its way in front of mountains, the mountains were *paper bags covered with gold silk cloth and covered again with sheer iridescent white cloth to stand for snow, white silk cloths* were artistically spread over the green cloth to simulate snow on the ground, sections of various types of *pine branches* leaning against the mountains looked like trees, and *pine cones, mushrooms, and walnuts* laid upon the snow covered ground. To the far edge of the nature scene, (covered with a silk cloth until Baha'u'llah arrived at the palace), was a *box covered with a highly ornamental gold and green cloth*. On top of this was a *cloth covered flat box, upon which was placed an oriental looking thin pillow*. On this throne sat the king puppet—a very eastern looking, very richly dressed puppet from India. The kids were entranced.

## Clarifying Consultation

An interactive demonstration to teach the virtues involved in consultation, and to recognize when the consultative process is being degraded by the absence of virtues. (Its best if students are at least a mature 8 years and up to do this one, but the younger ones were included, though their understanding was stretched, I am sure).

To aid the process of understanding further, on a dry erase board I had listed all the virtues mentioned in the quotes below relating to consultation, and others that were implied, like self-control and respect for example. On the opposite side of the board I listed traits destructive to consultation. Some of these traits were directly mentioned in Abdu'l-Baha's quotes, others are implied or simply opposites of the virtues. We discussed the meaning of some of the words and I gave examples of their expression, for ex., sarcasm, purity of motives, and radiance of spirit. The list is as follows:

Virtues which aid true consultation: *Care, devotion, dignity, humility, patience, detachment, courtesy, radiance of spirit, self-control, sacrifice, calmness, moderation, respect, purity of motives, love, and harmony.*

Behaviors and attitudes which hurt true consultation: *ignoring, interrupting, yelling, put downs of ideas or person, stubbornness, over-attachment, bossing, dominating, gloating, boasting, rudeness, whining, forcing, insisting, impatience, anger, grabbing, irritation, uncaring, inattentiveness, self-centeredness, sarcasm, not listening, arrogance, taking offense, hatred.* (I did not put down disrespect or aggression since almost all of the above come under those behaviors.)

Then I told the class that we were going to consult on a service project together. I wanted them to recognize how unattractive and destructive the negative traits are and how helpful and relevant the virtues are. So, I told them that whenever someone noticed me expressing a negative trait, they were to say "Gotcha" and name the negative trait. Then they were to take a green marker and draw a line from the negative trait to the virtue or virtues that would counteract that trait. For example, when I started to interrupt someone, a child caught me and drew a line from interrupt to self-control, patience, and courtesy. When I started to push the idea that the best service project would be to clean my toilets, a child drew a line from self-centeredness to purity of motives and detachment. The students were excellent at catching me very quickly and also at accurately labeling my flaw and connecting it with the appropriate virtues.

These quotes from the Baha'i Writings (with many breaks in-between) were shared with the class. We also discussed their meaning:

*No welfare and no well-being can be attained except through consultation.*
*~Baha'u'llah:* Consultation, page 93

*Take ye counsel together in all matters, inasmuch as consultation is the lamp of guidance which leadeth the way, and is the bestower of understanding.*
*~Baha'u'llah:* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 168

*In this Cause consultation is of vital importance, but spiritual conference and not the mere voicing of personal views is intended.*
*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 72

*Settle all things, both great and small, by consultation. Without prior consultation, take no important step in your own personal affairs. ~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Consultation, p. 98

*The more perfect the love and agreement, the more the divine confirmations and assistance of the Blessed Perfection will descend...~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Lights of Guidance, p. 177

*The prime requisites for them that take counsel together are purity of motive, radiance of spirit, detachment from all else save God, attraction to His Divine Fragrances, humility and lowliness amongst His loved ones, patience..... Should they be graciously aided to acquire these attributes, victory from the unseen Kingdom of Baha shall be vouchsafed to them.*

*.....The members thereof must take counsel together in such wise that no occasion for ill-feeling or discord may arise. This can be attained when every member expresseth with absolute freedom his own opinion and setteth forth his argument. Should anyone oppose, he must on no account feel hurt for not until matters are fully discussed can the right way be revealed. The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions.....*

*The first condition is absolute love and harmony amongst the members of the assembly.... They must, when coming together, turn their faces to the Kingdom on high and ask aid from the Realm of Glory. They must then proceed with the utmost devotion, courtesy, dignity, care and moderation to express their views. They must in every matter search out the truth and not insist upon their own opinion, for stubbornness and persistence in one's views will lead ultimately to discord and wrangling and the truth will remain hidden. The honoured members must with all freedom express their own thoughts, and it is in no wise permissible for one to belittle the thought of another, nay, he must with moderation set forth the truth and should differences of opinion arise a majority of voices must prevail, and all must obey and submit to the majority.....*

*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha, pages 87-88

*If another contradicts him, he must not become excited....*

*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Baha'i World Faith, page 406

*The light of truth shineth from the faces of those who engage in consultation.*

*~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Consultation, page 97

*The purpose of consultation is to show that 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

*Parliamentary procedure should have for its object the attainment of the light of truth upon questions presented and not furnish a battleground for opposition and self-opinion. Antagonism and contradiction are unfortunate and always destructive to truth.....The purpose is to emphasize the statement that consultation must have for its object the investigation of truth. He who expresses an opinion should not voice it as correct and right but set it forth as a contribution to the consensus of opinion, for the light of reality becomes apparent when two opinions coincide. A spark is produced when flint and steel come together. Man should weigh his opinions with the utmost serenity, calmness and composure. Before expressing his own views he should carefully consider the views already advanced by others. If he finds that a previously expressed opinion is more true and worthy, he should accept it immediately and not willfully hold to an opinion of his own. By this excellent method he endeavors to arrive at unity and truth. Opposition and division are deplorable.....Therefore, true consultation is spiritual conference in the attitude and atmosphere of love. Members must love each other in*

*the spirit of fellowship in order that good results may be forthcoming. Love and fellowship are the foundation. ~`Abdu'l-Baha:* Promulgation of Universal Peace, pages 72-73

There are many, many big words in these quotes and sophisticated concepts. I tried to at least convey the essence of the quotes by defining some of the words and giving concrete examples of what I thought the text meant.

## Consultation with Real Consequences

Students consult on a gift for the whole class. (See *Clarifying Consultation* for relevant quotes.)

We reviewed the poster listing the virtues and negative behaviors that were elaborated on in the *Clarifying Consultation* activity. The students were encouraged to refer to it throughout this next challenging activity b/c they were going to be videotaped for later self analysis. (Each group had their own poster in their room).

The class was split into 2 groups, group A and B. After listening to the instructions for the activity and asking questions about it, they would be put in separate rooms. Each group got 2 different toy catalogs. Each group was to consult on the most popular products in each catalog and then vote on which ones they would like for the class, to be used at break times at future classes. I told them to consider age range, attractiveness to both sexes, cost, and # of kids that could use it at one time. They were also told that they should not choose a toy that required adult supervision, like an elaborate craft activity, and that I could veto a toy if I felt that it was not in harmony with Baha'i principles, such as game mimicking a Las Vegas casino game.

Group A and B both had a video camera taping them starting with the election process, (described below). (Or you can wait until they are at least most of the way through at least one catalog). ---We did not have time, nor did the students want to watch on video more than ½ hour of the consultation. So its best to choose a more challenging segment of the process, and the longer it has been going on, the harder it is for them to be consultative.

First each team had to elect 3 officers. The election of officers was to mimic Baha'i elections, that is, no campaigning, no talking about who you were going to vote for or who you did vote for, and using secret ballots. This definitely preserves unity and good will! Before beginning, a prayer for assistance was said. My assistant and myself collected and counted the votes for officers just to ensure confidentiality and protect feelings. We did not want any child to feel hurt by lack of votes.

The officers and their duties were as follows, and these duties were described to the students before the election:

A chairperson who would physically hold each catalog and circle the items that received 3 or more votes and call on those who wanted to make a case for or against an item. The chairperson should be a good reader so he/she can describe an item under consideration. They also encourage order in the group. And finally, he/she would also guide the voting in rounds 2 and 3.

A secretary who would, after the group was finished with the catalog, cut out the winners and tape them under the correct catalog name on a poster board. In the next 2 rounds, this person also removes items that don't get enough votes and writes the total # of votes each item gets, below that item on a poster, making sure to differentiate vote totals from rounds 2 & 3.

A teller who would keep track of how many times a person voted, since each kid was only allowed 5 votes per catalog. The teller did this by using cards I made up beforehand with the name of the catalog on each one and a column for group members' names and a column for # of votes. At the top of each card was the group name (A or B) and which round, since there were to be 3 rounds. The teller also informs each participant when they have used up their allotted number of votes. The teller needs to be someone who really pays attention.

Elections went relatively smoothly, and the officers were chosen wisely. Kids were discreet about who they voted for and they quietly placed their folded small rectangles of paper in a box that my assistant and I collected after each voting session.

I told them that each group should preview all the contents of a catalog first before going through it to vote. This would help them to avoid using up all of ones' votes in the very beginning, then discovering an item that was even more desirable, farther into the catalog. I told them they could try to convince others to vote or not to vote for a certain toy using consultative technique.

*Round one* consists of participants going through each catalog and voting 5 times per catalog. If an item got more than 3 votes, it was circled by the chairperson. Then after both sides of the page it was on had been surveyed by the group, that page was ripped out of the catalog, and the item cut out by the secretary and taped onto a poster. (The number of votes required for an item to be circled depends on how many kids you have in each group. 3 or more votes are about right for a group of 7 or more.) If a child is not liking hardly anything in a catalog (rare), he/she can use 1-5 of his/her votes on one item. You can even say that if somebody did not like anything, his/her unused votes can carry over to the second catalog, but that is getting more complicated.

So as to not overwhelm the students with instructions, I introduced each round only after both teams hand completed a round.

The first round was a little noisy and chaotic, but they eventually got into the groove of it. The officers, for the most part were fortunately very mature. The group often tried their patience. As I had anticipated, some kids could just not stay focused that long and either became a bit unengaged or disruptive. But the majority of the students persevered, and demonstrated many virtues. I deliberately chose 2 catalogs per group b/c I wanted them to get fatigued and tested so they would have to work harder at being consultative.

The *second round* each group voted only on the pictures taped on the posters to narrow the options even further. This time, each person could only vote on 2 items per catalog. There were 2 catalogs represented on each poster. If you did not like any of the options for a particular catalog, you could vote 4 times on items in one catalog. The secretary wrote the totals under each item on the poster. Using a card for each catalog for round 2, the teller kept track of how many votes each member in his/her group had, making sure that no one voted more than 4 times total. The items with less than 4 votes then were removed from the poster board by the secretary. (This number is dependent on how many are in the group—you need to judge the correct number needed.)

For *round three,* the 2 groups came together in the same room and held up their posters from round two for the final round of voting. The tellers each had 1 card for their group with the names of all their members. Again the tellers were to make sure that each member of their group only voted 3 times total. If you only liked 2 items you could hold up 2 fingers for one of them to count as 2 votes. If you only liked one, you could hold up 3 fingers. Before voting, each chairman held up their poster and described the items on it and also answered questions about the items. (In our situation, by this time there were only about 7 items total from both groups). Then each item was named again and kids used one to three of their 3 votes if they liked it. The secretaries wrote down how many votes each item received next to it on the poster. The item with the most votes, of course wins. (Note the item that got second place in case the winning item cannot be obtained for some reason.)

If the winning item is under the price limit, and there is another high ranking item whose cost would not exceed the price limit if added to the first place one, it can also be included in the final purchase. Any ties can be broken by another vote. A second place item may be too expensive to add to the winning item. So in that case, any item in 3$^{rd}$, 4$^{th}$, or 5$^{th}$ place can possibly be obtained if its price can be added to the winning item w/o going over budget.

For classes with 9 or less students, it is best to not use 2 groups. You don't want 2 groups of 4, where only one of the kids is not an officer. Use only one group, and then combine rounds 2 and 3. For this

combined round, allow students to vote 3 times each on the pictures on the poster. If there are ties, have a tie breaker. Record first and second, place winners, in case one can't obtain the first place toy.

*Number of votes for each round are not critical rules,--- you need to judge what works best for your size group and the number of items ending up on the poster*. You can even have several elimination rounds, in which each time, the secretary removes items that have less than a certain number of votes.

After a break, the kids each went into a separate room and watched themselves on video struggling through this process. I gave each student a large index card (with their name written on it in metallic marker to make it more personal), a book to write on, and a pencil. For each group, on display next to the TV screen, was the poster consisting of the list of the consultative virtues and the negative traits studied earlier in *Clarifying Consultation*. (See virtues and traits in italic in *Clarifying Consultation* activity immediately preceding this activity for the entire list used on the poster). The virtues were written on the left side in gold with rays coming off them to emphasize that they are spiritually luminous. Under some of the virtues I had written in different colored marker a brief description of how they may be expressed: Under "care", I wrote "gentleness, thoughtful of what about to say, for example, is it helpful and on topic?" Under "devotion" I wrote "involved, caring, trying hard, encouraging others." Under "humility" was written "not trying to boss or to get elected, not showing off, apologizing, and accepting different opinions." Under "detachment" was written "letting go, accepting outcomes, not being pushy, or getting offended." Under "courtesy" was written "showing tact, respect, manners, listening and encouraging others to share thoughts". Under "radiance of spirit" was written "cheerfulness, kindness, and enthusiasm." I did not list "respect" b/c it was included under courtesy. Even though they are explicitly named by Abdu'l-Baha in His description of consultation, I also did not include "love" or "purity of motive" b/c I felt those were too hard to rate for the age group involved, being rather abstract or better suited to different topics of consultation in different circumstances and settings. "Harmony" (also named by Abdu'l-Baha) was also not included b/c the kids were rating themselves individually, and harmony is a group trait—though by trying to express the virtues below, one can certainly consider themselves as behaving in a harmonious way. I briefly went over the entire poster again, before beginning the video watching. I also asked them to focus only on themselves citing this heavy-handed quote from Baha'u'llah:

*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

However, we are encouraged to always see the good in others, so it was permissible to point out a virtue in another.

I requested them to put a + or smiley face on the card whenever they observed themselves showing a virtue, and a – or frowning face whenever they saw themselves exhibiting a negative trait. They watched their videos for about ½ hour. I was quite impressed at how seriously many of the students observed themselves. At the end they were to add up all the plusses and then subtract all the negatives—hopefully coming up with a positive #! The score was their private business and nobody had to reveal it—though most announced their scores at the end without inhibition. I think some were harder on themselves than others. I told them they could all give themselves a plus or happy face for radiance of spirit and devotion, since they all expressed the virtues related to those qualities. I also reminded them to give themselves positive marks for showing courtesy, such as saying please and thank you. I suspect everybody learned something from observing themselves.

*Materials needed*: Scraps of paper for officer voting, receptacle to place officer voting paper in, poster board, markers, sharpened pencils, erasers, scissors, tape, vote tally cards for tellers for each round and each catalog, (described above), toy catalogs, video camera(s), poster of virtues and traits to avoid, paper or large index cards to evaluate self and surfaces to write on (such as a book or mat board).

# LEVEL THREE

## Be Generous in Prosperity

14 mini-skits based on segments of a verse by Baha'u'llah from Gleanings, page 285.

Students perform this one every 3 years at a huge public Ayyam-i-Ha party with the theme "Inner Beauty". As each line was read, the students came out from behind a screened area (where all their props were stored, along with a large play list posted on a wall which included the props after each child's name. I was also with them behind the screen to assist).

The final piece in full is under 10 minutes. Kids really need to work on facial expressions and body language, speaking clearly and loudly with proper intonation, and positioning themselves so they are not facing away from the audience. Children should use their own names when addressing each other in the skits—it cuts down on what they have to memorize.

You can either assign roles based on skill level, or take the risk of letting luck choose. I did this by writing every possible role on a little card and mixed them up and placed them face down on the floor or put them in a basket. (Include prop placement, sound making roles, etc. if necessary to get an even number of roles for each student). One year, I knew that some of my youngest students would not be able to handle some of the harder roles like the 2 in *be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor* and the guiding light in *be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness.* So I removed the roles which required the most dialogue and acting ability and distributed those to my oldest students, explaining that this would be their last year and last chance to do these. The other roles were chosen blindly and those worked out fine. (Sometimes I had to request trades b/c a child got 2 roles from the same skit or 2 prop roles with no acting role). Kids get to watch a video of the last class to perform the skits and are allowed to trade roles afterwards if they find someone to exchange with. Also, sometimes, during the course of rehearsal, kids just figure out on their own that they should switch with their partner in the skit and the feeling is mutual.

Below is the description of the skits. **Props are in bold.**

*Be generous in prosperity:* A child sits on the floor, legs spread apart and starts laying down and counting out his **money,** "one dollar, two dollars, etc." up to 6. Another child approaches and asks to borrow 25 cents. The first child says: "Here, have a dollar, keep it." The second child, surprised, expresses gratitude. The first child says: "you're welcome!"

*and thankful in adversity:* A child with her arm in a **sling,** wearing a **soccer uniform and athletic shoes**, comes out kicking a **soccer ball**, stops, puts one foot on the ball, looks up and says with enthusiasm and sincere gratitude: Thanks, God, for letting me not break my leg!!

*Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor:* A child holding a **long haired black and white dog** rings a pretend doorbell to her neighbor's house. The neighbor child says: "Come in". The neighbors greet each other and the dog owner neighbor politely asks him if he would take care of her dog Molly for 2 weeks while she is on vacation. The neighbor of the dog owner enthusiastically agrees, saying, "Sure, I'd love to!" The dog owner, who obviously loves her dog and is reluctant to leave her, places Molly in the arms of her neighbor and gives him a **list of care instructions,** thanks the neighbor, and tears herself away. The neighbor then turns and faces the audience and says with a smile: "Don't worry, I'll take *real* good care of Molly!" Another child then walks across the stage with a **"two weeks later" sign** and says that for those not yet reading, while another lays a **long haired black and white rug** on the floor. The dog owner then rings the doorbell again. The neighbor child again says "come in", with his back turned holding the dog--- or off stage. The owner walks in and steps on the carpet, looks down, startled. She is shocked and dismayed and throws herself down on the carpet stroking it in disbelief crying out "Molly?! Molly?!". At that point the neighbor turns around or enters holding the dog and says: "We had a great time together!" The owner is visibly highly relieved and takes the dog into her arms and thanks the neighbor profusely.

*and look upon him with a bright and friendly face:* A child stomps across the stage carrying a **snow shovel** scowling and loudly complaining about how much he hates shoveling snow. He then turns around and begins shoveling across the stage in the opposite direction, with a very negative expression on his face. His neighbor suddenly appears with a **shovel**. Upon seeing her, his face transforms into a huge smile as they greet each other by name. She says: "Lets shovel together!" The first neighbor is delighted and says "Sure!" They then begin to shovel in unison, smiling at the audience, and as they do, the first neighbor says: "Its much more fun this way!" The neighbors can also be wearing **coats** for more realism.

*Be a treasure to the poor:* A depressed looking child walks across the stage and just as he is about to dump **textbooks** into a **trashcan,** a friend approaches and with a tone of concern, asks why he is throwing out his schoolbooks. The first child explains that his car broke down and he can't afford to fix it and so he can't get to his classes at night. The friend immediately offers his **keys** and says he can use his car b/c he does not work at night. The first child expresses delight and gratitude. (Make sure the car owner dangles the keys when handing them over so the audience can see what is in his hand).

*an admonisher to the rich:* A girl dressed in an **outrageously flashy dress, gold beads, high heels,** carrying a **gold purse** walks in a moping way towards a chair and plops her self down. She crosses her legs, loudly sighs, places her elbow on her knee and chin in her hand, and looks sad and bored. A friend approaches, greets her, and inquires what is wrong. She says: "Oh Matthew! I am the richest woman in Ohio, and I still feel depressed!" He suggests that she donate some of her money to build the new school playground. She immediately perks up and exclaims with a smile: "What a great idea, I'll make that call right now!"

*an answerer of the cry of the needy:* With a little child and an older child we played that the little one was lost and frantically pacing about crying for her mommy and exclaiming "Mommy! I can't find my mommy!" The older child lovingly takes her by the hand and says he will help her find her. But this year, no small enough child got the role. So, we decided to break some stereotypes and have a female rescue a male. The boy is running and screaming b/c he is being pursued by a wild animal (**tiger or lion or bear,** depending on the **costumes/masks** and sizes available). The girl throws a **net** over the animal, grabs the boys' hand and escapes by running a short distance. The boy then hugs her and with great gratitude, thanks her for saving his life. She hugs him back and tells him he is most welcome.

*a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge:* A child is sitting in a **chair** reading a **book** and another child walks up and greets her by name. Then he says "here" and hands her some **money.** Puzzled, she asks what's it for, and he reminds her that it is the money he borrowed that he promised to pay back. She thanks him.

*Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness:* A child in a **blind fold** is walking around with his arms stretched out in front of him as if in a zombie trance saying: "The mall, take me to the mall, I live to go to the mall!" After he says these lines twice, a child with a **lit lantern** appears and approaches and takes his hand and guides him to a **small table** with a **pretty cloth** on it and 3 holy books: **The Bible, The Quran, and the Kitab-i-Aqdas**. She says: "Let's see what these 3 holy books, the Bible, the Quran, and the Kitab-i-Aqdas have to say about the meaning and purpose of life." The child places the lantern on the table, puts her arm around the zombie-child, lifts his blindfold, and she opens the center book and they begin to study it together. (Decide what book will be the center one ahead of time. We chose the Quran as a way to honor Islam when so many Americans are prejudiced.)

(Note: Later on in this passage from Gleanings Baha'u'llah says: *Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring.* It could be used instead of *"be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness."* This verse goes even better with the actions above, but since its much later in the passage, and I was trying to keep to the original order as much as possible, we did not use it. However, it could be put last in the skits as it is after "*let integrity and uprightness....*" in the original passage, ---though not right after).

*a joy to the sorrowful:* A child is sitting on the ground crying with her face buried in her hands. Another child approaches, gives her a **flower**, and says "I love you child's name". The crying child stops sobbing and smiles and she gets up and they walk away together, hand in hand, or elbows linked, or arms around each other.

*a sea for the thirsty:* A child is crawling on all fours gasping, holding her throat, dying of thirst. Another child with a **flowing blue cloth** which she holds or has wrapped loosely about her approaches. She is making wave motions with the cloth. She is also holding a **watering can** which has the words "love, kindness, and affection" in metallic ink on it, and there are heart stickers all along the spout. She tenderly lifts the chin of the thirsty child and says: "Here, have some love, kindness and affection," and carefully pours water into the other's open mouth. (It is probably easiest to not use real water.) That child then looks much better and rises up and they walk off together with the once thirsty child enfolded in the blue cloth, both waving it together.

*a haven for the distressed:* Off stage, a child is shaking **sheet metal** to make a terrible racket. Another child is running in a chaotic pattern looking terrified. A third child comes on stage and stands with a pretty leaf patterned **cloth** over her head with her arms stretched so as to make like a shelter. She loudly beckons ("over here!") the distressed and terrified child who then notices and runs under and looks greatly consoled. (If you have a **rain stick,** that sound can precede the sheet metal thunder sound.)

*an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression:* A female and/or minority child is curled up on the ground on her knees with her face hidden. A male child has his foot on top of her with his arms crossed with a very triumphant and arrogant look. Another child runs over, pushes his leg off the girl, and shouts very loudly and emphatically "NO!" Then he stands in front of her with his arms outstretched as if to block and protect her. The other child backs away. Then the defender child tenderly takes the victim's hands and assists her to rise. They walk off together hand in hand.

*Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts:* A child accidentally unknowingly drops some **money** on the floor as she walks across the stage. A child following behind sees it, picks it up and says: "Wait, you dropped this money!" and runs up to the first child and hands her the money. Surprised, the first child thanks him. The second child says "you're welcome!"

*Be generous in prosperity,*

*and thankful in adversity.*

*Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor,*

*and look upon him with a bright and friendly face.*

*Be a treasure to the poor,*

*an admonisher to the rich,*

*an answerer of the cry of the needy,*

*a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge.....*

*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.*

*Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts.*

*~Baha'u'llah*

## The Water of Life

A parable about how pre-conceived notions can thwart us from achieving our most cherished desires.

This could easily be a level 2 if you have the right people and props in your community. We had 4 junior youth perform this. The female in the story was dark skinned, which helped make the point about prejudging the value of those different from us. For this skit to work, one needs a female-- and preferably of a different color than the 3 males. (Though girls can pretend to be males for those parts if necessary.) Sexism, tribalism, racism and religious prejudice are all addressed in this skit, along with people refusing what they desperately need b/c it does not fit their pre-conceived notions. It was presented at a public Ridvan celebration b/c as we all know, Baha'u'llah has brought us the Water of Life, yet so many refuse it due to prejudice and tradition.

### Materials needed:

- Linen or cotton tunics and pants and head coverings held on by headbands
- Animal skin-looking pouches. The pouches should have rope straps to free up the hands of the nomads. Ours were narrow at one end, and rounded at the other (kind of like a giant comma), with a rope strap affixed to each end.
- Sand colored sheet
- Green gown, simple and modest
- Shimmering green cloth for head, or at least silky
- Elegant vase or pitcher
- Water colored green with food coloring
- Small stool
- Green cloth to cover stool
- 3 golden or crystal goblets/ chalices
- ethereal and mystical background music
- Optional, to be played or sung after the skit: Joe Crone's "The Sweetest Water" from his *It Takes a Village CD,* available from Special Ideas. (www.BahaiResources.com). I just heard it for the first time in March 2004 and was delighted that it supported this skit so well—it even mentions a man dying of thirst in the desert!

Full script is next page.

# THE WATER OF LIFE

*(If children are present, before beginning, narrator describes a desert—how intense the heat, how scarce water is, no greenery etc. Describes a sandstorm, the erasing of footprints, how blinding it is, etc. and explains what a nomad is. Perhaps narrator should also reveal that the water of life is the revelation/teachings of God? Then, mystical sounding background flute music sets the tone that this is not a comedy, but a spiritual parable.)*

**Narrator:** 130 years ago, in a land far, far away, 3 desert nomads were caught in a huge blinding sandstorm. They struggled to protect themselves from the piercing wind and sand.

*(3 nomads appear, using their long head cloths to protect their faces as they are struggling against wind and sand. Narrator makes sounds of swirling wind).*

After the storm passed, much to their great dismay, they discovered that they had lost their way home.

*(Nomads anxiously search the horizon, clearly distraught)*.

With heavy hearts they trudged through the hot deep sand day after day as they searched for signs of human life—a caravan of camels, a few tents, even footprints would be a welcoming sight. In their hearts they ardently prayed for God to guide them.

*(Nomads trudge slowly forward, looking depressed. Sometimes they are scanning the horizon with squinting eyes, sometimes closing their eyes and clasping their hands, or raising them heavenwards, in silent prayer, as they walk.)*

Within 8 days their water supply was completely used up-- and they were in grave danger of dying from thirst.

*(Nomads turn their pouches upside down and shake them to attempt to get a last drop, but they are empty and so they shake their heads in despair. Before the narrator's next line, the nomads become progressively weaker, and weaker, slowing down, drooping, gradually crawling and then on their bellies dragging themselves.)*

On the 9th day, just as they had lost all hope and were on the verge of surrendering their lives to the desert sun, one of them spotted a human form on the horizon.

*(Nomads should talk as a dying person—raspy, struggling to get the words out, weak sounding, but loud enough for the audience to hear. As they are speaking, they are dragging themselves towards the figure, who has her back to the nomads.)*

**Nomad 1:** *(Pointing)* Look! Look, over there! Its a, *(squinting, straining to see through the sun's glare)* Its a.....**person**!!!!

**Nomad 2:** Water, we need water!

**Nomad 3:** God is Great! Praise be to God!

*(As they get within a few feet of the figure, she turns around. She is completely concealed by a sand-colored sheet, but after nomad 3 speaks above, she drops the covering. She is barefooted, wearing a green gown, her head & shoulders are draped in a beautiful shimmering green cloth. She is dignified and stoic looking. She is holding with both hands a very elegant vase, filled with green water. The color green was chosen b/c that is the color the water of life brings to the desert. At her feet is a small stool, covered with a silk green cloth, upon which rests 3 golden goblets.)*

**Figure:** *(In an authoritative, confident voice):* The Hand of Divine bounty proffereth unto you the Water of Life. Hasten and drink your fill.* *(She holds out the vase to them).*

**Nomad 1**: Its a woman! A woman thinks she can save us? God forbid such indignity!

**Nomad 2:** What is she holding? That can't be water. Desert water is only kept in animal skins!

**Nomad 1:** Its green—water is not green. It must be poison!

**Nomad 2:** Look at her! It is clear she is not of our tribe—this must be a trick! We will not die fools! Don't touch it.....

**Nomad 3:** Maybe God sent her to us. God's blessings sometimes come in forms we do not understand or expect. I am dying, so I will drink with my faith in God.

**Nomad 1**: *(gasping)* No, don't take it.....*(voice trails off)*

**Nomad 2**: *(gasping)* It can't be from God! No..... *(voice trails off)*

*(Both nomad 1 & 2 faint and lay their heads on the ground, appearing to be unconscious.)*

*(Figure bends down and pours the green liquid into one of the goblets. She places the vase on the stool , and proffers the goblet to nomad 3. He weakly takes it and drinks. He is immediately revitalized,--- amazed and joyous. He rises up on his knees and quickly observes his two nearly expired companions. He seizes the vase and pours the liquid into the remaining two goblets. While holding a goblet, with his free hand, he flips over nomad 1 on his back and tenderly lifts his head and pours the liquid into his mouth. He immediately begins to revive. He (nomad 3) does the same for nomad 2 with the other goblet. He also promptly revives. In an evident state of wonderment, all three, who by now have risen up onto their knees, pivot and face the Figure. She looks down at them compassionately and her arm movements should be classical & graceful and end with her hands over her heart as she proclaims with authority in her voice:)*

**Figure:** In order to find truth we must give up our prejudices, our own small trivial notions; an open receptive mind is essential. If our chalice is full of self, there is no room in it for the water of life.** **(THE END)**

(*Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, page 213, **`Abdu'l-Baha: Paris Talks, page 136)

QUOTES WHICH INSPIRED THE WATER OF LIFE PARABLE:

*Say: O ye who are as dead! The Hand of Divine bounty proffereth unto you the Water of Life. Hasten and drink your fill. Whoso hath been re-born in this Day, shall never die; whoso remaineth dead, shall never live. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 213

*In order to find truth we must give up our prejudices, our own small trivial notions; an open receptive mind is essential. If our chalice is full of self, there is no room in it for the water of life. Abdu'l-Baha:* Paris Talks, page 136

*On that Day ye will continue to rove distraught, even as camels, seeking a drop of the water of life. God will cause oceans of living water to stream forth from the presence of Him Whom God shall make manifest, while ye will refuse to quench your thirst therefrom, notwithstanding that ye regard yourselves as the God-fearing witnesses of your Faith. ~The Bab:* Selections from Writings of The Bab, page 141

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

*We beseech the peerless Lord to enable thee to assist His Cause and to lead those who are sore athirst in the wilderness of ignorance to the water of life. ~Baha'u'llah:*
The Tabernacle of Unity, page 57

*……the Primal Word of God, is at times called the Water of Life, inasmuch as it quickeneth with the waters of knowledge them that have perished in the wilderness of ignorance. ~Baha'u'llah:* The Tabernacle of Unity, page 4

*I was as one dead, Thou didst quicken me with the water of life. I was withered, Thou didst revive me with the heavenly stream of Thine utterance which hath flowed forth from the Pen of the All-Merciful. ~Baha'u'llah:* Prayers and Meditations, pages 264-265

*.....drink in the waters of everlasting life which flow through the words of the Lord of all mankind.....~Baha'u'llah,* Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 337

*The state in which one should be to seriously search for the truth is the condition of the thirsty, burning soul desiring the water of life....~ `Abdu'l-Baha:* Some Answered Questions, page 38

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

## Bertha the Butterfly Puppet Show

A puppet show we did to support our theme of spiritual transformation. We did it for a class about Naw Ruz, and we always use the butterfly as our metaphor for transformation during Naw Ruz.

After the show, we explained to the kids that they needed to grow spiritual wings through practicing virtues so they could "soar in the heaven of God's nearness" and that spiritual transformation is achieved through virtues. We combined the preschool class and 6-10 class for the audience. We were worried that the older kids would find it too corny, but they loved it. They even asked to see the video of it at the next class and laughed almost as much. After the performance the kids decorated plain black felt butterfly ½ face masks with glitter glue, fabric paints, rhinestones, sequins, and foam shapes. But since this is a document about drama, I will not go into detail on the craft project. (The masks are item #s 9713284 and 9713368, available through Nasco Arts and Crafts. Phone: 800-558-9595, web address: www.eNasco.com) Please email or call me if you want more details, and I can just email you the lesson plan which goes into all the detail.

Putting this together was a lot of work, but then Jackie (my Baha'i neighbor & dearest friend, who I had the blessing of teaching the Faith to when she was my daughters' teenage babysitter 19 years ago) and I are both perfectionists when it comes to art stuff (both our mothers are artists too). We will go to lengths most people would perceive as neurotic to create an activity that meets our standards. So what I am saying is that the following puppet show can probably be done w/ less effort than we originally put into it—especially since the script is complete.

One needs at least 3 people to do this—a narrator, and someone to play Bertha and then all her friends plus some props. These are the materials we used-but the animals can be changed if your puppet supply does not match ours. However, then some of the text may have to change also, b/c some of dialogue goes with that animal, such as a bat hanging in a tree. A caterpillar/butterfly puppet is essential however.

Suggested materials:

- Caterpillar puppet—big enough to fit over a hand and part way up the arm, with mouth that can move. Jackie made ours, and the mouth was operated by the thumb moving against the four other fingers. The puppet should be colorful, with obvious eyes.
- Small butterfly on long wire, so can wiggle like a fluttering butterfly
- Small bird on long wire
- Slide whistle
- 2 Bunches of flowers—one already on stage, one that pops up
- Dog puppet
- Plastic or light weight dog bone
- Battery, banana, un-inflated balloon, small whisk broom, bandaid box, small basket, bow, bear, bark from a tree, bottle—(plastic baby doll size) jingle bells , plastic or real uncooked broccoli, basket large enough for the narrator to put them all in after collecting them
- Bat puppet and baby bat which stays affixed hanging upside down on a leafy branch
- Stem of Snarkle leaves--- a brushing of fine green iridescent glitter pasted on them works great. I used some ground cover.
- 5 of the same decorated leaves, not attached to a stem, to have ready back stage

- Pot or pan, very small. The individual leaves should be placed in this. We used a miniature pot for kids' pretend play.

- Wood spoon for Bertha to stir soup with—should be small enough to fit easily into pot

- Bowl, smaller than pot

- Koala Bear puppet (This one can be almost any other animal w/o effecting dialogue/actions)

- Small piece of tissue taped on paw of Koala Bear

- Miniature apron for caterpillar—very optional

- Tiny sponge—optional

- Golden sun on stick

- Crescent moon on stick

- Long skinny sack tied to a branch with flowers on it—our flowers were felt, but real would be better. The sack has to be the right size for the caterpillar puppet on someone's hand and wrist to fit inside it. Our cocoon sack was made of shimmering cloth. It looked magical. (Technically, its called a chrysalis for butterflies, a cocoon for moths.)

- Wings with 3-5 rhinestones glued on each of them. The wings have to be able to be quickly attached to the caterpillar. We used velcro. The wings were able to be folded up inside the cocoon, but made of a sufficiently thick and springy material that when Bertha was removed, the wings did not droop at her sides. The wings were a luminescent blue and looked just gorgeous. The blue outer material was thin, but the material in-between that fabric was the sturdier stuff.

- 3 copies of the script, in large font. Each person had their own copy, with their relevant text highlighted so that they could quickly find their place.

- A small harp or chime, to be played by narrator whenever Bertha feels the tingle of a good deed. We hung our chime on a branch, and stuck in a vase on the floor next to the narrator's chair.

- Optional: Birds singing on tape or CD. This is nice for the opening scene, but should be faded out as narrator comes in or shortly thereafter—but definitely before the dog appears.

- A puppet theater: We used Jackie's 2 identical wooden play stands, which were easily converted into a large puppet theater. The main one was on a coffee table, and this was a big help in organizing space for the props. The other one was placed on the floor, and is thus lower. The one on the coffee table had curtains, a back drop cloth, and frocks or skirting at the top and bottom, the other was bare. For the bare one we found matching material and draped over the entire thing down to the floor and tacked it down on the wood. We also draped matching cloth over the coffee table, so the audience could not see our legs, etc. We used pillows to kneel on. One does not need such an elaborate get-up to do this show, but we like to look semi-professional. The first scene, with the flowers is done above the lower section that is one big cloth. One bunch of flowers was duct taped to the stand, the second one popped up at the sound of the whistle. This extra cloth covered stand was also very helpful for organizing props—it had a shelf like the theater, and enabled us to spread out a little more. It would have been very tight to squeeze us both behind just one the stands.

We needed about 6 hours of rehearsal time with the narrator to become smooth. Props had to always be laid out in order of use. It amazed us how hard it was to retrieve props w/o interfering with the flow of the show. It is also difficult to look good when one can't see their puppet. We practiced w/o the cloth

backdrop the first 4 hours so we could get a feel for spacing and angles, etc. We also wore black long sleeved shirts and black gloves to de-emphasize us.

To enhance the interest and humor, we used very distinctive voices for each of the characters. I played the friends of Bertha, and to intensify the nasal sound of a bad cold, I held my nose while speaking. I also really exaggerated the sickly sounds of the bear, making loud snorts between every few words. Also, very loud slurping sounds between several words while the bear was drinking the soup was fun. The kids thought it was hilarious—though not very good modeling of manners!

# BERTHA THE BUTTERFLY

## SCENE 1: Bertha the caterpillar longs for flight

*(Caterpiller appears on opening scene. Have tiny butterfly flying in the air.)*

BERTHA: Ahhh! It's a beautiful spring day, the birds are singing and the flowers are growing…

*(butterfly is lowered behind stage, sound of whistle and a bunch of flowers pop up at the same time as the whistle)*

BERTHA: Wow! The flowers must be taking their vitamins these days!

(*flying bird appears, Bertha looks up at it)*

NARRATOR: Bertha the striped caterpillar was crawling around one fine day. She saw the beautiful butterflies and birds and she wished that she could fly too. Hi Bertha!

(*Bird gradually descends behind stage*)

BERTHA: Hey where did that voice come from?

NARRATOR:  It's me, I'm the narrator of this puppet show.

BERTHA: This is a puppet show?

NARRATOR:  Yes, Bertha it is.  *(sound slightly irritated)*

BERTHA:  O.K. so who's the puppet?

NARRATOR:  Uhhh*, you* are Bertha.

BERTHA: I'm a puppet?

NARRATOR:  Yes! Now would you PLEASE get on with the story?

BERTHA:  O.K. sorry. I just wanted to be sure….Anyway, watching these birds and butterflies makes me wish I could fly too.  But I don't have any wings--I guess I'll just have to spend my life crawling around.

*(Bertha and flowers leave the stage.)*

NARRATOR:  Bertha could *not* fly.  But there was something else *very* special about her.  She loved to help others.  Let's see what happens in this story.....

**SCENE 2: Zippidy Dog and Bone** (Virtues: helpfulness and perseverance)

ZIPPIDY: *(Dog appears carrying bone. Lays it down, clears throat, then begins singing in low dopey voice)* Oh, give me a bone where the buffalo roam that ta-astes like beefy snack stick. *(Howls)* Owwwwwwwww. Oh I love my bone, mmmmmm. And its fun to play catch with too!

*(Dog picks up bone and throws it up in the air and it disappears behind stage—Zippidy acts confused and jerks his head around trying to spot it.)*

ZIPPIDY: Oh no!! My bone is gone! Where could it be?! *(looks at audience)* Do you have my bone?

*(Begins to whine and cry, Bertha then appears)*

BERTHA: Hey Zippidy Doo Dog, what's the matter? Why are you crying?!

ZIPPIDY: Oh woe is me! I lost my bone! I loved my bone!

BERTHA: Sorry to hear that. Well, I'm on my way to visit Stanley Koala Bear, but I can stop a minute and help you find it.

ZIPPIDY: Oh Thank you so much Bertha! That's just great. Now where do we look? *(Zippidy turns head about searching)*

BERTHA: Hmmm, let's see. Let's look back here first.

ZIPPIDY: OK.

*(They both disappear off stage, rummaging sounds)*

BERTHA: Wow, Zippidy, you've gotta clean up a little.....*(Throws out an object that begins with a "b", such as banana)*

NARRATOR: *(with hand cupping side of mouth)* Hey kids, just for fun, let's call out what they find, OK?!

BERTHA: *(As things are being thrown out)* it's gotta be here somewhere!

*(Throw into audience, except battery!: Banana, uninflated balloon, whisk broom*, battery, bandaids, basket, bow, bear, tree bark*, bottle, bells and broccoli last. Jiggle the bells before throwing, Ad lib here)*

*(Bertha makes various comments, like for the broom: “Gee, it doesn’t seem like **this** gets much use!” Zippidy barks when children name bark)*

*(Narrator removes battery, and collects objects and puts them in basket, puppets return to the stage)*

ZIPPIDY: *(Melodramatic, moaning and whining)* Its no use! Its no where to be found. Gone forever!

*(Narrator reaches over and comforts the pitiful dog by lovingly petting him on the head).*

BERTHA: We must not give up Zippidy! Persevere puppy, persevere! Now, think, where did you last see it?

ZIPPIDY: Uh, in the air.

BERTHA: *(Looking up)* Well, its not there anymore! Hey kids! Where do you look for stuff that’s lost?

*(Children give ideas, and one of them Bertha uses to find the bone, like under Zippidy’s bed, for example.)*

BERTHA: Good ideas! Let’s look there, Zippidy.

*(Puppets go off stage and Bertha finds bone)*

BERTHA: Here it is!

*(Puppets return to stage, Bertha has bone in her mouth)*

BERTHA: *(Spitting out bone, spitting noises)* Yuck!

ZIPPIDY: My bone! My wonderful bone! *(Zippidy kisses the bone all over)* Thank you so much for helping me, Bertha!

BERTHA: No problem! See ya around Zippidy! Don't lose your bone!

ZIPPIDY: Bye, Bertha!

*(Zippidy leaves stage, forgets bone. Bertha notices it)*

BERTHA: Hey Zippidy! You forgot your bone!!!

*(Zippidy returns briefly to retrieve bone)*

ZIPPIDY: Oh thanks again, Bertha! So long. *(leaves with bone)*

*(Get props ready for next scene)*

NARRATOR: After Bertha stopped to help Zippidy, she felt a strange tingling feeling up and down her sides.

*(Sound of harp or chime, Bertha wiggles)*

BERTHA: Oooh, what was that? (*commenting on tingle, then leaves stage)*

NARRATOR: She did not know what it was, but it sure made Bertha feel good! On her way, she ran into Momma and Baby Bat.

**SCENE 3: Momma and Baby Bat** (Virtues: Caring and Courage)

*(Momma Bat flying and Baby bat hanging upside down on branch appear on stage, Bertha also returns)*

MOMMA BAT: *(Looking down)* Hello down there!

BERTHA: *(Looking up)* Hello Momma Bat! What are you doing up at this hour?

MOMMA BAT: I was up all last night catching mosquitoes for my baby. He was so hungry that I did not get any for myself. I really want to hunt for more juicy Mosquitoes, but my baby has fallen asleep and I don't want to leave him. Another animal may come along and eat him! Do *you* like to eat baby bats?

BERTHA: Me?! Heaven's no! I just like juicy green leaves, especially dark green snarkel leaves. Do you like to eat caterpillars?

MOMMA BAT: Ugh! Don't you caterpillars goosh out a nasty tasting juice when something bites you?!

BERTHA: Why, yes, I do taste terrible! Hey you know, I've got an idea. I could watch your baby for you. Only thing is that another animal may want to eat ME! If I see danger coming, I'll wake up your baby and tell him to fly up high. Then I'll scurry away and hide.

MOMMA BAT: That sounds like a good plan! Thank you so much!

*(She flies off)*

NARRATOR: The wind blew quite hard and Bertha made sure that the baby bat did not fall out of the tree and was safe from other animals.

*(sway branch with baby bat on it a few moments, Bertha looks up to guard, then remove baby bat and branch )*

NARRATOR: After awhile, Momma Bat returned and thanked Bertha for her caring and courage. *(We chose not to depict this part)*

NARRATOR: Once again Bertha felt that odd tingling in her sides as she went on her way to Koala's house.

*(Sound of harp or chime, Bertha wiggles then moves along, making humming sounds, she disappears off stage, then returns)*

**SCENE 4: Snarkel Leaves and Stanley the Koala** (Virtues: generosity, cleanliness, sharing, caring, and sacrifice)

NARRATOR: Finally, Bertha nears her friend, Stanley the Koala Bear. On the way she makes an important discovery.....*Snarkel* leaves.

*(Place stick of sparkly snarkel leaves on stage)*

BERTHA: *(Panting)* I've got to hurry—Stanley must be wondering why I haven't arrived yet. Oh, but I am so hungry. I think I'll stop and chew on some leaves. Hey—what the heck?! Are these Snarkel leaves? Yes!!! Oh, I love these leaves; they're so hard to find. They are really good for you and can help a lot to cure a cold. I'm going to save these and take them home.

*(Puts the leaves in her mouth, moves along a bit, then drops them for her next line)*

BERTHA: Hello---Stanley! Are you home?

*(Stanley the Koala Bear appears, with tissue taped to paw)*

STANLEY: *(Coughing, snorting, obviously sick, nasal voice—hold nose)* Hello Bertha, I don't feel much like visiting today. I'm really sick. Maybe you should come over another day.

BERTHA: Yikes, you look terrible. You sound all snotty! You know it just so happens that I've got some great medicine for that. Snarkel leaves! I could make you some snarkel leaf soup. It kind of tastes a bit like stinky old shoes, but it really clears up a stuffy nose!

STANLEY: Stinky-old-shoe-soup! My Momma used to make that for me! It is a real nose cleaner! Come on, my kitchen is back here.

*(Bertha picks up stem of leaves in her mouth and both puppets disappear off stage. Apron is put on Bertha. Remove tissue from Stanley's paw. Have pan full of leaves ready. As narrator is talking, Bertha places pan with snarkel leaves and a bowl on stage. Sponge also? Bertha then returns with a spoon in her mouth, along with Stanley. She begins stirring the brew while humming.)*

NARRATOR: Bertha got to work right away. She put ALL her precious snarkel leaves in the soup and washed all of Stanley's dishes while the soup boiled and got extra stinky.

BERTHA: *(Stirring pan).* The soup's ready! Shooowee! My nose smarts up just smelling it! Here ya go.
*(She pours leaves into bowl for Stanley. Optional: Bertha then cleans pan with tiny sponge.)*

STANLEY: *(Slurping loudly between every few words, still nasal sounding)* Good thing I can't taste much!—this stuff is really slimey! *(non-nasal sounding)* Hey! It's working! Thank you Bertha, you're a true friend!

BERTHA: Oh, you're so welcome. That's what friends are for! I'll see you next week....So long, Stanley.

STANLEY: Goodbye!

*(Stanley & Bertha disappear, remove utensils—then Bertha reappears briefly, w/o apron on).*

NARRATOR: Bertha left Stanley's place feeling really happy and tingly all over.

(*Sound of harp or chime, Bertha wiggles, then leaves. Put wings on caterpillar and stuff into sack.* *USE RIGHT HAND FOR BERTHA SO CAN WAVE SUN AND MOON PUPPETS)*

NARRATOR: Bertha had given away all her special snarkel leaves but it was worth it to see Stanley feel better so fast. This time that tingly feeling was stronger than ever. Now that she thought about it, every time she had done something good for someone else, she had that feeling. Bertha had a strong urge to find a nice safe place in a tree. After all that work, she wanted to sleep, so she made a kind of bed for herself and closed it up so no one could disturb her.

*(Cocoon hanging from branch appears on stage.)*

NARRATOR: *(Slowly, wait for objects)* Many days passed, and many nights passed. Bertha slept and slept.

*(Loud snoring sounds. Sun arcs across sky, followed by moon. Then give sun to person holding stick with cocoon.* *Due to the way our theater was set up and the position of the puppeteers, the person playing Bertha had to do this arcing, but for the final scene, the person holding the branch with the cocoon holds the sun up over Bertha as she tests her wings.)*

*(Sun puppet rises above stage)*

NARRATOR: Until one bright warm day, Bertha woke up. She pushed and pushed on her cocoon bed until she was able to crawl out. *(Give time for Bertha to get out before continuing).*

BERTHA: *(Grunting sound, caterpillar emerges, after gradually waking up, flies)*

*(Move stick with cocoon to the side)*

NARRATOR: She felt so different! The sun shined on her and with great joy she realized that her dream had come true! She had wings!

BERTHA: *(Sounding amazed)* Wooooooow!

NARRATOR: The beauty that had been inside her had come out in the form of wings! Not only that, for every beautiful thing she had done for others, there was a sparkling gem upon her new wings. She was so overjoyed that she stretched her wings out in the sun and flew off into the sky. And from that day on, all her friends called her **Re-Birth-A.**

*(Bertha flies up high, then turns to the audience and says:)*

BERTHA: The End

## Children of the World

Creative dramatics to a poem called “Children of the World” by Duane Troxel taken from *Brilliant Star Baha’i Children’s Magazine, Nov./Dec. 1987 pages 6-7*.

We perform this one every 3 years as part of our “Unity in Diversity & The Oneness of Humanity” themed large public Ayyam-i-Ha party. I will do my best to convey the dramatics and props used in the poem for those of you who may want to use it:

For the poem, I determine ahead of time how many children/students will be participating--- and then doing my best to make it so each child has the same number of parts, create action cards with key words on them. Some actions require 2 children so there would be 2 cards for that one, with the specific action being described so kids don’t argue over who gets to do what. (For example “marvel at the perfect egg”—holds nest, and “marvel at the perfect egg”—marvels with facial expression.) The cards are scrambled and placed face down. Kids choose 2 or how many are appropriate given the size of the group. They may trade if they find someone who is willing. If they get 2 that won’t work together (for example the 2 roles of one action, or a boy gets the “skirt” card) then I insist someone trade with them.

All props using sticks use sticks that have at least one flat edge and all come off the bottom edge of the prop—except the construction paper faces, and the giant tear drops, which come off the side. *The tears and paper faces are held with one hand, but for all other props on sticks,* ***kids use both hands when presenting.*** If you need to know where to get any of the props, just email or call me at 937-767-7079.

After settling on who does what, the children who have cards that go together in the same action, need to stand next to each other. **The child who received the “Sun/World” card always stands in the center of the group**. It looks nicer if there is an uneven number of kids so that an even number can be on each side of the child who will be holding the sun and world. I prefer that the actions alternate from one side of the center child to the other. So, well before the kids arrive, I read through the poem and group the action cards so that actions happening consecutively in the poem are in 2 separate groups, one for the left and for the right sided action. Thus, for example, “sand” and “dirt”, or “good” and “sweet” are put in different piles. So when I present the role cards, the group is divided into two—those who will stand to the left of the sun/world child, and those to the right. Then they choose their cards. I also make sure that the “happy light” kids are positioned on each side of the sun/world child.

The poem begins with all students facing the audience in a line, side by side. Benches or tables are behind them with their props placed in the order they will be used, with careful attention to how they are positioned so they can be quickly utilized.

Students are coached on how to stand properly and where to place their hands, to not shift on legs, move arms, etc. When they turn they always turn in the same direction. Many kids have trouble turning in the proper direction each time. We put comfortably fitting rubber bands on their right wrists to remind them that they always turn in that direction. The whole things takes between 3 and 4 minutes. I used the instrumental song called “Crystal Streams” from Doa’s *Ornament of Hope* cassette as background music. Its perfect in length and spirit. Available at www.randyarmstrong.com.

I read the lines, but if you want the performers to recite it by memory, they can. But it will be a lot more work. Ok, here it goes:

*Close your eyes and come with me* (All students cover eyes with both hands, elbows out to the side, then lift left hand and motion to come, turning in the direction of the fingers, right, until their backs are facing the audience.)

*Beyond the land* (Students to the sun/world child’s right, turn together and with hands facing down make circular motions with their hands and arms parallel to the floor. The sun/world child also turns and “presents them” with his right hand and arm.)

*Beyond the sea* (Students to the sun/world child’s left, turn together and make wave motions starting with hands up by their face, elbows bent, moving hands down and up by bending wrists, gradually unfolding

elbows, with fingers together pointed towards the audience. The sun/world child "presents them" with his left hand and arm. When done with those motions, they do not turn, but do the actions for the next verse).

*Within my mind where you can see* (All students use their left arm--its best to keep it the same as the "come with me" arm-- and point to their heads and turn in the same direction so their backs are to the audience).

*The children of the world* (All students pick up a foot long card board festival figure from UNICEF—(these are no longer available, but you can improvise or utilize an artist)--which has a flat stick taped securely to the back leaving about 7 inches to hold onto. These figures are children in festival attire from all over the world. In a graceful arcing motion holding their sticks with both hands, the students turn around and hold the figures so they are below the chin. Or they can arc and hold the figures up over their heads, w/ 2 hands, straight up. Then the kids bring the figures down in front, then turn. Some say this is better b/c the audience can see the figures better. Students count to 2 or 3 slowly, then all turn together so they are again w/ backs facing the audience. Either way, remind kids to not have the figures crooked and wiggling).

*The sun that rises on their faces* (Center student turns around with a graceful arcing motion holding a giant golden sun on a stick with both hands and holds it above his head)

*And lights the high* (Students to the sun/world child's right turn around, bend knees and rise up with hands coming together and pushing upward and forming a peak with their hands connected over their heads. They do not turn until after the next line ends.)

*And hidden places* (Students to the sun/world child's left turn around and gracefully bring hands across each other, fingers together, palms facing their faces, so they end up hiding their faces with their arms crossed half way up the forearm. Then after a few seconds all students except the sun/world child turn so that their backs are facing the audience.)

*Colors all the human races* (All students except the sun/world child, pick up a face that is oval, adult size, with two eye holes and mouth and nose cut out, taped on stick—stick is affixed so that it comes off the side of the oval face. Faces were made from all different shades of skin color construction paper—available in school supply stores. Students need to be reminded to place the face down with the taped side on top so when they pick it up and turn with it, the taped side is not showing. They all turn and face the audience, covering their faces with these simple masks. All students wait a few seconds and turn back. The sun/world child can stay put or turn with the rest.)

*They are the children of the world*. (All students who just turned pick up their festival figures on sticks and gracefully arc them in front of their chests as they turn to face the audience. Then they return so their backs are again to the audience, allowing the following individual scenes to be in the spotlight. I add the "They are" to this line for the rest of the poem. It gives the kids more time and fits with the intent of the dramatized poem better.) .

**For the next several stanzas all children remain with their backs to the audience except the kids doing the actions. <u>After each individual action, those involved turn back so that they also are w/ their backs to the audience</u>. Only when it says "They are the children of the world" do all children turn to face the audience, then after a few seconds turn back again so their backs are to the audience.** If you have lots of kids, you can double all actions and have the same action happening on each side of the center child. You may also choose to have some actions turn away from the audience in pairs, for example, sand and dirt, or trousers and skirt. The children doing those actions turn when their object is mentioned, but wait until the other one is done to turn away.)

*They peer around their father's leg* (A father has just gone up and stood in front of his child, facing the audience, with his legs spread apart. A child bends down on one knee, holds the leg, and peers.)

*They marvel at the perfect egg* (One child turns holding a nest with eggs in it, tilted so the audience can see what's in it. The child next to her, turns with her and looks awed as she peers into the nest.)

*And for a sweet they're apt to beg* (One child turns holding a large colorful lollipop. Another one turns w/ him and gets on knees and begs with hands held together. The child holding the lollipop shakes his head "yes" holds out the lollipop so the audience can see, and the begging child pretends to lick it.)

*They are the children of the world.* (All students pick up their festival figures on sticks and gracefully arc them in front of their chests as they turn to face the audience. Then they return so their backs are again to the audience.)

*They build their dreams in sand....* (A large shallow wooden bowl filled with sand was placed in front of the sand child before the poem began, and now this child turns and kneels down and using 2 hands grasps as much sand as she can in them, raises her hands a bit and lets the sand flow out so the audience can see what she has in her hands. The sand child does not turn away until the dirt child is done, so they can turn together, since they are really a part of the same verse.)

*....and dirt* (Another child, on the other side of the line, does the same exact thing, only with nice dark soil.)

*And cry big tears when they get hurt* (A child turns holding a large --approximately six inches long and 4 inches wide---silver tear drop in each hand using a stick coming off the side of each drop. The child should look sad.) Sometimes, given the number of kids, each child has gotten to do 2 actions, so they all do the tears simultaneously.

*And wear bright trousers* (A child turns and holds up some really colorful pants to his waist.)

*Or a skirt* (A child turns and holds up a really colorful skirt to her waist. I used ethnic clothing for both of these.)

*They are the children of the world.* (All students pick up their festival figures on sticks and gracefully arc them in front of their chests as they turn to face the audience. Then they return so their backs are again to the audience.)

*They're good* (A child turns and holds a halo on a stick above her head).

*They're sweet* (A child turns and places her cheek on hands held together like a prayer and looks really cute and smiles.)

*They're strong* (A child turns with another, one offers the other a beer or cigarette—or you can have 4 kids, 2 on each side of the center, and use both props—and the other shakes his head vigorously, frowns, and waves his hand back and forth parallel to the floor as if to say "no way"!)

*They're bright* (A child turns and holds a light bulb over her head. I managed to find ones that if the bottom is pressed, the bulb lights up—but they are only 3 inches tall.)

*They fill our lives with happy light* (For this one, I have the child on each side of the sun/world child turn, holding a recently lit giant smiley face candle. They stay put and do not turn for the next phrase, framing the action of the sun/world child.)

*They'll change the world from wrong--- to right* (The sun/world child turns, this time holding a 9 inch earth on a stick, upside down, and then swings it upright when I say "to right") This child can stay put or turn back and turn with the rest of the group for the finale. The happy light children do turn though, so their backs are facing audience.)

*They are the children of the world* (All children turn around, **this time w/o the festival doll figures**—they become the children of the world. The kids on the end kneel on one leg with the other one extended towards the audience, all hold hands, and to make it more visually interesting some of the opposite pairs from the center raise their hands up while holding hands. Obviously, these pairs can't be the ones on heir knees holding standing partner hands b/c it would be too high. Then all take a bow while holding hands.)

# THE CHILDREN OF THE WORLD

By Duane Troxel

*Close your eyes and come with me*

*Beyond the land*

*Beyond the sea*

*Within my mind where you can see*

*The children of the world*

*The sun that rises on their faces*

*And lights the high*

*And hidden places*

*Colors all the human races*

*They are the children of the world*.

*They peer around their father's leg*

*They marvel at the perfect egg*

*And for a sweet they're apt to beg*

*They are the children of the world.*

*They build their dreams in sand and dirt*

*And cry big tears when they get hurt*

*And wear bright trousers*

*Or a skirt*

*They are the children of the world.*

*They're good*

*They're sweet*

*They're strong*

*They're bright*

*They fill our lives with happy light*

*They'll change the world from wrong*

*--- to right*

*They are.....*

*the children of the world*

## A World United (M)

Creative dramatics to a song about world unity.

This piece is performed every 3 years at our public Ayyam-i-Ha celebration with the theme of "World Unity". Here is a description of their performing arts piece, called "A World United" by Vitamin L, on their *Swinging in the Key of L* recording. The music sounds kind of country western to me, but I am not sure. If you can't get the music, it could be done as a poem, but the music is much more fun. I ask that the kids wear internationally flavored costumes for the public performance:

First, all the roles were written on tabs of card stock and spread out face down on the floor. I let them choose the roles first so they could get a sense of what they would be doing when they watched the training video. So, next we watched a video of a 2012 class performance of our performing arts piece, "World United." Afterwards, I told kids they could trade with each other if they wanted—but if they did not like the role they got, and no one would trade, to just detach and remember that the performance is not about glorifying themselves, but serving God and touching hearts with a message of hope. However, I warned them that if one keeps missing their cue b/c they are talking or goofing off, I reserve the right to give their role to someone more mature.

Students are divided on opposite sides of the room/stage, depending on their roles. They are taught to stand in 2 lines, still, until cued by the music to move. Each side is semi facing the audience, semi facing each other. I encourage the kids to sing as they perform. *Pairs that are doing actions together always come from opposite sides. After they perform their action, they always return to their original side, unless otherwise noted*. Throughout several sections of the song, all those not going into the center, have one hand on a hip and are bouncing to the beat. (Or they can have both hands on hips). Upon listening to the music, it will become clear when this action works. One can increase/decrease number of actors for each part depending on number of performers.

Several verses in the song involve the entire class, so even after they have performed their part, the students are involved. Also, each side of the group is symmetrical to the opposite side in their movements. So for example, the right side all use their right hand to point to their head, and their left hand on their hip. The left side use their left hand on their head, right on hip They seemed to grasp the choreography quickly (I keep it simple). With kids 6-10 years old, it takes about 4 hours total of rehearsal to look decent.

*If Earth was attacked by monsters from outer space*
(2 students, wearing monster masks, carrying futuristic guns, move with aggressive body language stomping towards the earth on an earth flag, each coming from opposite sides, converging near the flag in the center/back of the space, then turning to return to their respective sides. The flag was hanging down, attached to a rope tied between poles).

*would we pull together as the human race?*
(a child from each side comes towards the center, reaches out, grabs a hand of the other, and pulls towards each other, ending in an embrace. Each then twirls back to his/her original spot.)

*Oh tell me, is that what would have to take place, for us to be world united?*
(4 older students, who have practiced moving in synchrony, come to the center, each with ¼ of an earth puzzle, and gracefully bring the 4 sections together. The 2 kids holding the bottom sections kneel on one knee, swooping their quarter up in an arc to meet the upper sections. The knee not on the ground is bent, and their free hand is on that knee. The 2 kids holding the upper sections swoop in an arc downward to meet the lower sections. They are standing, with their legs in a large step apart when they do this. They also remove/separate the pieces in synchrony, reversing the same actions used to bring them together. On the back of the puzzle are arrows and words, so they know they are holding it correctly when they glide the pieces together. The diameter is about 18 inches, and I made sure that I drew a perspective that included as many continents as possible—I am tired of seeing the earth represented always by only the Americas. The continents are a bright green outlined in black, with blue ocean. The puzzle is on thick cardboard. I usually assign these 4 roles to older &/or mature kids b/c they demand more focus and coordination than the others.)

*And if the law of gravity changed today, so that things on earth began to float away*
(2 kids come out to the center, again from opposite sides, each with an object such as a doll or basket, acting as if their object is floating away and they are trying to pull it back down, looking dismayed)

*then maybe every country would start to say: We better think as a world united!*
(with one hand on one hip all raise the other to the side of their head, pointing to and touching their heads upon the word "think", and the 4 puzzle piece students do their coming together in the center).

CHORUS:

*We don't need catastrophe*
(student walks across with giant poster showing nuclear explosion, OR goes to the center and hands the poster to another who has walked over from the other side, so neither has to switch sides, ---which can cause confusion about which side of their body they put their hands for "think", etc.)

*for us to see that we're all family.*
(all kids hold hands except the two doing the actions below)

*Respect and understanding, that's what could bond us*
(2 come out and then shake hands, Western style and bow to each other Japanese style, then turn and face the audience, still holding their hands together from the bow, as in prayer, at chest level.)

*it's not beyond us, I believe it.....I believe it!*
(All students face the audience with their hands in prayer formation, and sing very passionately "I believe it, I believe it!, then the first two leave the center)

(end of chorus)

*And if one day the sun decided to leave*
(student walks across the stage, looking depressed, holding a large shiny golden sun on a stick. The sun has large eyes, (giant plastic doll eyes bought from a craft store) a big frown, one golden arm waving good bye, the other golden arm carrying a suitcase)

*and the whole world over people started to freeze.*
(2 students come to the center, get down on their knees facing the audience, each huddles under their own small blanket, shivering. They stay here until after the next line. Use small blankets so kids don't trip)

*Oh tell me, would every nation then say "Please"!*
(4-6 students thrust out signs, surrounding the freezing duo, but not in front of them. The signs each say "please", each in a different language. The words are written on very large un-ruled index cards in dark lettering, and the cards are glued on different brightly colored 8 ½ X 11 cardstock. Languages such as Arabic and Chinese, have arrows and wording on the back to inform the carrier which way to hold their card.) The next line happens so fast after the "Please" that its best if those holding the please signs don't try and scramble to get back in place for the "think" part. They can hold the please signs until the phrase "we've got to think as a world united" is over, then get up and join the others and raise their fingers to their heads for the second "think".

*We've got to think as a world united!*
(with one hand on one hip, all raise the other to the side of their head, pointing to and touching their heads upon the word "think", and the 4 puzzle piece students do their coming together in the center. Because the music goes into an instrumental, the world puzzle piece holders should hold them together until the next chorus begins. The other students should lower their think fingers, place both hands on hips, and bounce, until the lyrics say "think" again. Then they place their fingers back up to their heads).

CHORUS

(same as before)

*And if the nations feel the challenge to go to war,*

(2 students come out, looking mean and aggressive, each holding a modern gun or sub-machine gun, heading towards each other in a very stalking manner. They stay through the next line)

*let us see the day when they will say "NO MORE"!*
(the soldiers stop, alter their facial and body language, lower their guns, shake their heads no, while waving their free hands as if saying "no more!", drop their guns, and shake hands. They need to remember to pick their guns back up and take them off stage for the finale.)

*Oh let's accept the greater challenge and explore*
(the 4 puzzle piece students remove the earth flag, position it as it would be on a flag pole, i.e. not hanging down, and carry it together to the front of the stage, and the two kids in the center of the flag hold a giant peace symbol up over the earth, each grasping one side of the symbol)

*the ways to be a world united! Oh we could be a world united!*
(all students surround the flag bearing students, hold hands and raise them above their heads)

Before learning this performance piece, I explain to the performers why we believe world unity is possible: Because all of God's Messengers have promised it and Baha'u'llah recently gave us the instructions on how to do it--- b/c now humanity is capable enough to achieve it. It is up to us to share these brilliant and divine instructions as much as possible to the rest of humanity so that peace will come sooner.

*Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the 'Most Great Peace' shall come... ~Baha'u'llah, The Proclamation of Baha'u'llah, p. viii*

Thus, it is clear from the Baha'i teachings that world unity is possible and is coming---and the quotes below reveal that it is the Creative Word of God that has the power to do it. When it happens depends on how quickly these teachings penetrate the hearts and minds of a critical mass of humanity and are put into action. This is why every time we share God's teachings with others, we are performing a great service, and this is the most important aspect of the Ayyam-i-Ha party, not the food, games, gifts, etc.

*O ye discerning ones! 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 each and every one of the verses which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed, the doors of love and unity have been unlocked and flung open to the face of men. ~Baha'u'llah*: Gleanings, page 95

*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, page 286

*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. The progress of the world, the development of nations, the tranquillity of peoples, and the peace of all who dwell on earth are among the principles and ordinances of God.*
*~Baha'u'llah:* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, pages 129-130

*The Prophets of God should be regarded as physicians 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:* Gleanings, page 80

## Recipe for a New World Order

A dance-drama about the ingredients for world unity. This is a very humorous but also spiritually educational skit, using lots of children.

The subtitle is: As Revealed in A Polka in Dot's Diner—a Live Sneak Preview of the Only Fitness Video Exclusively for Baha'i Waitresses. This explains the dancing/aerobic movements of the waitress in the beginning of the performance. She is dancing with cutlery as one would with little weights. The music is a polka, and her outfit and restaurant props are full of polka dots. This eccentric subtitle can be dispensed with, though the polka in dot's diner part explains a lot of the visuals. Adding the dancing of the waitress and chefs just makes the whole thing more fun and visually interesting. W/o the music or dancing, its much more serious and low-key. One can also have the polka music and dancing w/o the reference to a fitness video, eliminating the "a Live Sneak Preview....." part of the subtitle.

The waitress **(w)** and the customer **(c)** need to be youth or adults, however. All the chefs can be kids. We performed it at a summer school and it was a huge hit.

A very detailed description of how it was prepared with the children and all the props is at the end of the script.

Full script is on next page.

# RECIPE FOR A NEW WORLD ORDER

As Revealed in A Polka in Dot's Diner--
A Live Sneak Preview of the Only Fitness Video Exclusively for Baha'i Waitresses

(Waitress comes out chomping on huge wad of gum and dancing/doing aerobic movements in a ridiculous way with a fuchsia colored knife and a lime green fork, (they match the colors in her outfit), one in each hand, to "Peanuts" taken from Herb Alperts' Tijuana Brass, *Whipped Cream and Other Delights*. It is polka music. There is a customer seated on stage, at a small table, at the opposite end where waitress enters. After a few moments of dancing/exercising, she stops in front of the customer and pulls out a pad of paper and pen from her apron pocket. The music fades off. She asks the customer in a funny loud voice:)

W: Can I please take your order?

**C: I'll have a new world.**

W: Oh, that's the **house** favorite! As a matter of fact, its cooking in God's oven right now. It's His special recipe. Its cooked in many different stages. (house is reference to UHJ)

**C: I'm sure its absolutely delicious! But could you tell me some of the ingredients?**

W: Well, I don't know all of them, but I know one of them is the *salt of the earth*. Would you like to meet our new generation of cooks who are working on it and they can tell you some of the ingredients for your new world order? (salt of the earth is reference from Bible)

**C: Oh Yes, I would like that very much!!!**

(Kids are located at opposite end of stage from customer. They are in line in the order they will appear. They come on one at a time. The music starts up for each child and stops when the child reaches the customer.

Each child dances or moves to the music the way they want—anything from twirling, skipping, to unusual goofy dancing movements. Each child will also be carrying/dancing with some different cooking/baking supplies. As the child dances across the stage, the waitress "presents" each chef-child, using hand movements. When the child reaches the customer, he/she will introduce him/herself to the customer and exclaim—hopefully in a dramatic way---for ex:

"HI, I AM ELI MA'M, AND ONE OF THE INGREDIENTS IS LOVE FOR ALL PEOPLES."
"NICE TO MEET YOU, I'M PATRICK, AND ANOTHER INGREDIENT IS CONSULTATION."
"HOW DO YOU DO? I AM ANISA AND THE INGREDIENT I AM ADDING IS THE ONENESS OF HUMANITY."

(Continue until all children have introduced themselves and their ingredients. The customer should react with visible facial expressions and hand movements to each ingredient.)

**C: It sounds fabulous! But when will my order be ready?**

W: It all depends on them. (Points to the chef-children).

**C:** (Looking at the children) **Please hurry, I'm starving!**

All the children together: "LETS GET TO WORK RIGHT NOW TO CREATE OUR NEW WORLD ORDER!!"

(Waitress and kids all take a bow, and music resumes, and waitress and children all dance off stage, leaving only the customer. Scene ends with customer looking at her watch.)

**COSTUMING AND PROPS, ETC.**

Waitress is wearing a white short-sleeved polyester dress with large lime green polka dots and lime green half apron, and fuchsia fringe on the sleeves and hemline, white knee highs and lime green ankle socks, fuchsia pink shoes and belt, a blonde wig, tied in a pony tail with a fuchsia tie, and is wearing fuchsia colored glasses. Her menu and the table cloth are decorated with large lime green and/or fuchsia polka-dots, and the salad and dinner plates, utensils, napkins, and cups, all go with the colors of the waitress' uniform—lime green and fuchsia. These particular colors and the color coordination of all the props, are not essential to the play, just loud and add to the wackiness of it all. The polka dots are also not necessary—but they are part of the pun—a Polka in Dot's Diner.)

Each child is wearing a custom made apron and chef's hat, which they designed and cut. The aprons and the hats are made from poster board. The hats used tissue paper at the top for the puff. Kids chose their own combination of colors and tissue paper. The chefs' hats were poster boards cut in half and then overlapped to fit the child's head and sealed with clear tape and/or staples. The aprons were a simple bib and waist cut. Hole punches were used at the waist and neck, and yarn affixed and tied. Some kids drew pockets on their aprons, made straps and a scooped neckline, scalloped apron, etc. But 2 rectangles, one smaller on the top, are just fine. We often had to trim the lower part so the apron length did not interfere with their dancing. It's best not to have it fall below the knees. The aprons were many different colors, and the wearer had drawn the name and symbols and pictures of their "ingredient" all over their own apron. Markers are more vibrant than crayons, and for dark aprons, Colorific Gel Markers are needed—they are designed to show up on dark colors.

Raid a kitchen and bring a wide variety of utensils, gadgets, bowls, pots, pans, spice containers, even a hand held mixer--the goofier looking the better. Just nothing sharp. Kids really enjoyed rummaging through 2 boxes of diverse supplies and choosing their special 2 props to dance with.

The ingredients include: love for all peoples, consultation, the oneness of humanity, elimination of racism, equality of men and women, the acquisition of praiseworthy virtues, unity in diversity, justice for all, universal auxiliary language, world government, fair distribution of wealth, independent investigation of truth, universal education, unity of religions, unity of religion and science, world court, universal system of currency and measurements, respect for parents, obedience to government, international police force, teaching the Cause of God.

We also spent time defining and giving examples of the ingredients/principles, why the world needed them, etc. Ingredients were written separately on pieces of paper which came from a tablet that had children of different nationalities holding hands around a globe. Its a nice touch to put the ingredients on

such a design, but not necessary. Some ingredients are much easier to conceptualize and draw in concrete form than others. Its a good idea to separate out the more abstract ones-—like world government, world court, etc. from the easier ones like unity in diversity. After introducing and explaining them, spread them on the floor and let children choose—if they can do so w/o bickering---placing the easier ones on one side and the harder ones on the other, and saying that kids 6-8 or 9 get the ones on the left side, and 9-11 can choose ones from the right side. If your group is small, just introduce the more common, concrete principles.

We did this with ages 6-11. Some children had difficulty pronouncing the big words, so we simplified them. For ex., World language, and end to racism, etc. The customer had a "cheat sheet" in her menu, with the names of the kids, in the order of their stage appearance with their ingredient, so in case they froze and forgot she could quietly prompt them. A microphone on a stand at a low height next to the customer is a big help—kids often can't speak loud enough, especially if they are nervous. It is wise to use an older youth or adult for both the waitress and customer role.

Rehearsal is necessary for this skit—kids need to practice their dancing moves and speaking their lines to the customer. Have them rehearse as a group saying their last line, loud and clear. Also, some kids wanted to say their individual line in a funny voice, as the waitress did. Based on experience, I do not advise this—they have enough trouble remembering and clearly articulating their line as is and their altered voices are usually a lot harder to understand.

**Materials needed for the making of the kid's costumes:**

Poster board for aprons and hats, many different colors
Tissue paper for topping the chef's hats
Markers, including Colorific Gel ones if using black, dark blue, or brown poster board
Pencils, erasers, pencil sharpeners—many kids like to draw in pencil first
Yarn or string
Hole punches
Scissors
Clear strapping tape—scotch may not be strong enough
Permanent double stick tape also works for the chef hats
Stapler and extra staples
yardsticks/rulers for those who like straight lines
trays to hold bunches of markers, so all kids aren't trying to dig through one container at a time
Ingredients listed on separate sheets

**Other supplies for skit:**

Little table and of course chair for customer

Menu—it also holds the order and list of children, their ingredient, and lines for customer

Table cloth and settings

Boombox and extension cord for rehearsal

Music *(If you do get the Herb Alpert CD, I would suggest you remove the picture on the front. It is way too sexy and sexist to be in a Baha'i educational setting--and the kids will take notice! )*

Gum for waitress

Tablet and pen for waitress

Costume for waitress (see above description for ideas)

Dialogue sheets for waitress and customer for rehearsal

Cooking supplies etc, enough for each child to choose 2

## In the Days to Come (M)

Creative dramatics to a song about the future world civilization.

This one is by Jack Lenz, taken from *The Greatest Moments* CD. It sounds gospel-like to me. Available from www.bahaibooksonline.com . We do this at Rivan b/c its about how the world will be different in the future—which I tie into the coming of Baha'u'llah. It can also be done at an Ayyam-i-Ha celebration with the theme of world unity, or for Naw Ruz, relating it to the spiritual springtime of the planet. You could say that the song is about the spiritual summer which is coming someday. The following introduction I would not use at Ayyam-i-Ha b/c its a bit too religious oriented, and we already sing a prayer and have the kids read writings on the theme and I think that's enough for that type of party. The guests are expecting more religious connotation at Ridvan, however. I like the flexibility of this piece in that it can be done with 5-20 kids, ages 6-12. Unlike all the other creative dramatics to songs in this document, the movements for this piece often do not obsessively match the lyrics directly, only indirectly.

I always like to tie a performing arts piece to the Baha'i Writings to show how relevant Baha'u'llah's teachings are to the world and to our daily lives. So this is how I introduce "In the Days to Come" at the first rehearsal. First we open with a prayer about unity to music and share prayers. I then explain what the dance is about—the glorious future all the world's religions have prophesied, when all the earth's peoples will live in peace and unity.

*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

We talk about how people everywhere are worried and depressed about the condition of the world. Many have no hope for a better future. As servants of humanity and spiritual beings, we have the responsibility of sharing Baha'u'llah's Revelation with as many souls as possible—b/c it is His teachings that are designed to bring about world peace. The Kingdom of God on earth is coming no matter what we do, but Baha'is are informed that the sooner the majority of the world is abiding by the teachings of God for this Day and Age, the sooner will world unity arrive—and thus the sooner will the massive suffering end. Again and again in the Baha'i writings we are told that:

*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

It is our duty to spread the word about the counsels of the Pen of the Most High. They are the only means that can get at the root cause of the world's troubles, the best means to heal the world:

*They whom God hath endued with insight will readily recognize that the precepts laid down by God constitute the highest means for the maintenance of order in the world and the security of its peoples. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 331

*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

*Through each and every one of the verses which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed, the doors of love and unity have been unlocked and flung open to the face of men. ~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 95

And then I emphasize that it is the expression of the students' inner beauty, their virtues, that are the key to their success as teachers in this cause:

*Whoso ariseth, in this Day, to aid Our Cause, and summoneth to his assistance the hosts of a praiseworthy character and upright conduct, the influence flowing from such an action will, most certainly, be diffused throughout the whole world.*
*~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 287

*Every cause needeth a helper. In this Revelation the hosts which can render it victorious are the hosts of praiseworthy deeds and upright character. The leader and commander of these hosts hath ever been the fear of God....*
*~Baha'u'llah:* Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 26

*In this day the hosts that can ensure the victory of the Cause are those of goodly conduct and saintly character. ~ Baha'u'llah:* Tablets of Baha'u'llah, page 88

*Materials needed:*
the song
2 sheets of paper, preferably song sheets with notes and words for realism
a large golden sun on a stick
candles with holders so dripping wax will not burn hands
attractive sphere of the earth
a barstool with attractive cloth affixed to it
international costumes for the kids and a soothsayer or fortune-teller- looking outfit
a long jump rope, (and if more than 5 kids, a wooden pole, a hula hoop and balloon-- Its nice to have one of *Special Ideas'* (www.BahaiResources.com) balloons which say "No Room in My Heart for Prejudice.")
2 play swords
a soccer ball or inflatable earth ball

*About the globe:* This was meant to look like the crystal ball of a fortune-teller, but we painted it to represent the world, b/c the fortune teller was looking into the future of the world. We put a light dusting of shimmering, iridescent, very fine white glitter on it so it sparkled a bit. Thus, a standard school globe on a stand will not work—especially on its stand. We made ours out of a glass globe for lighting, bought at a hardware store. (I hated the idea of using glass, but I was desperate! Suffice it to say, we rehearsed with a foam ball steadied in a bowl, and only used the glass for the final rehearsal and actual performance.) Anyway, given that it was designed to contain a light, it of course was not a perfect sphere. I removed the brass base and inside the opening, I put a battery powered night light that was circular. It was taped to the opening with clear duct tape. But, it could only be turned on by pressing the part that was inside the globe. Since I did not want to fuss with taping it together the day of the event, and of course the batteries

would wear out, I just removed one battery, leaving the switch in the on position. (The battery compartment was much more accessible). Then I placed a blue silk scarf over the base and secured it with gold elastic thread. (Yes, the battery compartment was then covered, but it was still easy to remove the scarf.) The night light not only illuminated the earth sphere, it also functioned as a small pedestal.

The scarf looked really pretty—when the fortune-teller walks in she is carrying the globe upside down, and it is completely covered by the silk scarf. B/c of its pedestal, It looks like a vase or something. Then she gracefully flips it when she gets to the bar stool, and the illuminated globe appears, with the shorter silk scarf draping over the longer cloth on the bar stool. Its a pleasant surprise. The "crystal ball" then stands on its pedestal of light, and one can't tell that its not perfectly round due to the scarf skirt.

**Here is the intro I give to the audience while the performers are getting into international costume:**

The final presentation is a dance performed by children called "In the Days to Come – it expresses our faith that world peace is not only possible but inevitable.
All the major world religions, including the Baha'i Faith, have promised a glorious golden age for humanity, when peace and unity will envelope the whole earth.
The Baha'i teachings explain that every time a new Divine Messenger appears in the world, Their teachings set in motion an irresistible process of individual and social transformation. Baha'u'llah describes this process as a Divine Spiritual Springtime. The new Revelation releases mystical and powerful spiritual forces that vivify and illumine the hearts and minds of humanity. Each time, civilization significantly advances both spiritually and materially.
Baha'u'llah's teachings provide the insights and tools we need for this day and age for societies all over the earth to build a more unified and peaceful world community.
He says: *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.*
We know this process will take an enormous amount of effort and time and there will be many trials as humanity passes through this period of transition towards spiritual enlightenment. It requires many millions of people to embrace the oneness of humanity and transform the structures of society to reflect unity and justice for all.
This is the ultimate goal of Baha'u'llah's Revelation---the spiritual transformation of individuals, communities, nations, and the entire world.
We invite people of all Faiths to accompany us on this profound and far-reaching path of service to humanity. People of all backgrounds can augment this process of spiritual and material transformation by helping educate our children and youth to love and practice the virtues, to serve humanity and their communities, and to apply spiritual principles to today's myriad crises and conflicts. The spiritual education of our children is essential to world peace. We hope that watching the children perform this dance gives you hope for humanity's future.
*"Yet so it shall be;"* Baha'u'llah proclaimed, *"these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the "Most Great Peace" shall come..."*

**The lyrics and movements:**

Place cloth covered bar stool in center front before music begins.

In the days to come we'll be singing in the sunshine
*(Child playing fortune-teller walks in, moving to the beat, holding the scarf covered "crystal ball". (See paragraph above for the special effect.) This child has to be not only very expressive and confident, but also very coordinated. He should end up center stage. 3 others walk in to the beat with him, one holding a giant golden sun on a stick, the other two, sheets of paper, to indicate song sheets. The sun-holder is behind the fortune-teller, the singers are on each side. As soon as the fortune-teller gets to the stool, the sun holder steps back and to the side, and the singers follow. The sun-holder is slightly behind and between the 2 with the song sheets, holding the sun up over their heads. All this time the fortune-teller is standing over his crystal ball, waving his hands over it as if conjuring up an image, and looking interested, surprised, excited, pleased, etc.)*

*(Another version we did, which also looked nice, and which foreshadowed the "walking in the good light" line, looked like this: Instead of having singers and a sun, walking in to the beat with the fortune-teller and flanking each of his sides was a child holding a burning candle. When the fortune-teller stopped in the center of the stage, they began to encircle him, always staying directly opposite to each other, always looking at each other, walking in a step-stop-step-stop rhythm together. When the lyrics said "living in His oneness" they were at the fortune-teller's sides and turned to face the audience, then all 3 left together, making room for the next set of performers.)*

We'll be laughing in the good times *(the singers look at each other and laugh heartily but silently)*
In the days to come
In the days to come

We'll be living in His oneness *(singers put arms around each other's shoulders)*

We'll be thankful for His justice
*(Fortune teller clasps hands and looks upward, as if thanking God—then immediately leaves the stage with his stool and ball, goes to the side and stays there for the ending section--- unless you have a very small group and need him for other parts. The singers and sun-holder person exit also, where depends on if you need them for the upcoming parts. If you have a huge group and a huge stage, they can remain on stage until the ending. However, they would still have to move far right or left so new-comers can be seen. They could even sit down cross legged with the sun-holder kneeling behind them and continue to sing until all join in a train at the end.)*

When the world is one
*(A new group of kids enter. If you only have 3 they carry a jump rope, and 2 immediately begin to twirl it and the 3rd jumps. If you have more than 3, here are some other things they can do in addition to jump roping: 3 carry in a pole, and 2 hold it down low while one jumps over it, then they switch jumpers and holders—work out order ahead of time. Make sure jumper faces audience when jumping. You can even have 2 hold hands and jump together over the stick if you have an extra kid. Another group of 3 or 4 is carrying a balloon and hula hoop. 1 or 2 hold the hoop up in the air, while 2 bat the balloon through it to each other. Make sure you teach the kids where to do their actions so they are not blocking other groups. If you have 3 groups, it looks nice if the 3 jump ropers are in center front and the 2 stick jumpers and 2 balloon batters are to the side. Or if you have 2 groups of 3, they should be at the sides, the group of 2 should be in the center.)*

In the days to come, we'll be walking in the good light *(continue playing actions described above until right before chorus)*

We'll be growing in His good light
In the days to come
In the days to come, we'll be standing on the high ground

We'll be making us some big sound *(The kids are making quite a bit of sound with the jumping! This is their cue to get ready to shift activities.)*

When the world is one *(Kids place their objects on floor and quickly spread out evenly. Its a good idea to determine positions ahead of time so they are not blocking each other and evenly spaced.)*

CHORUS: *(kids should sing this part)*

That day is coming children
*(Kids are facing audience, they rotate hips to all face left, with right hand on hip, left hand over brow as if searching horizon to avoid sun-glare. Their legs and feet still face audience. It looks good if they do this dramatically by exaggerating the movement: They should bend their knees and swoop down and up with their torso and arm they turn to search the horizon.)*

I see a new horizon *(continue action from above)*

That day is coming
*(switch sides, and do same action as above, facing right, with right hand over brow and left hand on hip)*

When the world will be one
*(Arms down, bring hands to crossing position, as rise up uncross them and arc down at sides, as in forming a large circle. I tell them to begin the motion on the word "when" and complete it with hands at hips on the word "one" so they all look synchronized. Then this group leaves stage for next group to enter.)*

(end of chorus)

In the days to come we'll be loving to our neighbor
*(3 kids come out and form circle and very gently kick a soccer ball (or toss an earth ball—which is easier for audience in the back to see)--to each other around the circle—in order and always in control. If an earth ball is used, I personally don't think it sends a positive message if kids are kicking it. Kids will need to toss it over the saber fighters. 2 other kids have entered at same time with swords and are fighting with them within the group of 5 kids. They are on opposite sides of the 3rd soccer player to enter. This enables them to quickly incorporate into the circle, b/c there is very little time. )*

No more rattling of the saber *(Saber holders drop and slide their swords off stage and integrate into the circle of soccer players and join in the foot play. 5 kids is about right for the time allowed—any more and they wont all get the ball. They do this until the chorus. The ball is then kicked off stage.)*

In the days to come
In the days to come
We'll be thinking of the others,
Of our sisters and our brothers
When the world is one

CHORUS 2X *(soccer players spread out and perform same as for chorus above)*

REALLY UPBEAT INSTRUMENTAL *(Center person on stage comes to front, the others form line behind her and clap and rock/bounce to the music, lifting legs in air in exaggerated walk. When the music changes, the first person does the twist movement off to the side, still clapping. The twist involves moving sideways, while facing the audience, twisting feet and hips to move. The 2nd person in line, while continuing to clap, does the same thing, but goes to the opposite side. The 3rd person stays in the center, twisting and clapping. The 4th and 5th persons each fill in the space between the center person and the side kids. They are also clapping, but they are moving forward and back by bending their knees and almost jumping back and forth, partly sliding. During this time, all the other performers have line up in a place that gives them easy access to the stage, and they have placed their hands on the shoulders in front of them to form a connected train.)*

In the days to come, we'll be happy for our children
*(The fortune-teller re-appears carrying the stool with the crystal ball on it. The 5 kids doing the instrumental dancing form a line by placing their hands on the shoulders in front of them. The first person in line places her hands on the shoulders of the fortune-teller. As they rock side to side to the music they move across the stage and the other line of connected kids hooks onto the end of the fortune teller's line. They move around the stage in a circle, rocking to the music until the chorus. This takes time and the lines below allow barely enough time. The kids have to be synchronized and organized for this to work. As they form a circle, the fortune-teller goes into the center of the circle.)*

No more hatred, no more killing
In the days to come
In the days to come

We'll be beating swords to plough shares
We'll be shutting down the warfare
When the world is one

CHORUS 2X *(Kids should sing this. They break their connection and in synchrony do the actions from the first two chorus. They are still in a circle, so you need to remind them to spread out a tiny bit and all face the audience. Also, the fortune teller should be center front, and he is moving his hands around his crystal ball instead of moving with the rest of the group. He also does a few different movements: For "I see a new horizon", he dramatically swings his arm up and points to himself with his thumb, places his hand on his brow, but then gradually extends out straight in front of him, veering to the right, as if sharing a vision with others, looking determined. He also holds up his index finger and thrusts toward audience, for "when the world will be one," instead of doing the arcing movement that the others are doing.)*

(ends with):

When the world will be one (repeated 3x)
*(Kids do not bring the arc back down for the 3rd repetition, but hold hands and keep them raised up high. Or, if this is too hard, instead of doing the arc at all for the 3rd repetition, they can hold hands while lowered, then raise them up high. The fortune-teller is in center front and the 2 kids on his side place their hands on his shoulders to close the circle. Fortune-teller then raises the globe up in the air with both hands and holds it for several seconds after the last line. Song ends with kids all holding hands, raised in air, with the fortune-teller in the front and center holding up globe/crystal ball. It looks lovely. Then the lights go out for about 5 seconds, and all the audience sees is the glowing globe. When the lights return, the dancers bow.)*

## If I Were to Be

A love poem about Baha'u'llah comes to life with objects from the poem.

During break time, I set up the materials for the next activity in the classroom, and to make it a surprise and more mysterious, I forbid them to go in or peek until I summoned them.

I covered the round classroom table with a shimmering steel blue cloth. Upon this was placed the props. Then I set up a dry erase board which had its own stand, (but did not use the extension legs, which would make it too high for me). The board was placed on a short black cloth covered platform on the floor, covered with a silky maroon cloth, which was then covered again with a sheer black netting with sparkles all over it. A silky magenta cloth framed the top and sides like a curtain. The magenta cloth was threaded through decorative napkin rings which perched on the top corners of the board. It looked really lovely and magical.

Behind the board, I placed my props in order of presentation along with a powerful halogen flashlight, and a tiny flashlight with the opening covered with a blue cloth held on with a rubber band so its light was very faint. (A blue pen light also would work). The props were as follows and were taken from the poem called "If I Were to Be" by Mary Wilson (on pages 28-29 in the *March/April 1992 Brilliant Star*). A large color photo of **Baha'u'llah's house** in Tehran, (taken from a calendar) a **pretty prayer book** opened to the prayers for assistance with tests, a **dove or other bird clinging to a real branch,** (these are available at arts and crafts stores, and often have real feathers) **painting of a boat**, (one that might be used in 1800's Baghdad) a large color **drawing of a nightingale in a rose garden,** (There is an extremely beautiful color rendition of a nightingale singing in the book Song of the Nightingale by Grant Hindin Miller, illustrated by Pamela Matthews. The cover of the book has this picture, but there is a larger copy inside the book. The internet will also have pictures for downloading). A really high quality **silk rose** with rose oil in it, (or even better, a real one) a beautifully hand decorated **3D taj** (Persian hat) made out of cardboard, a painting of a **red roan horse**, (or a quality plastic or glass one could be used) a **red silk banner** with "BAHA'U'LLAH" glued on in shiny gold letters, a highly **illuminated tablet** of Baha'u'llah's, glued onto a mat decorated with gold drawings and tiny gemstones, (I think I got it from the Dawn Breakers) a painting of a **mulberry tree**, a painting of a **cypress tree**, (A live branch from one of those

tree could also be used) and a small glass **vase full of chinchilla dust.** (Available at pet stores—or you can use fireplace ashes—which are messier.) All pictures were framed by cardstock. (If possible, and of the right size, it would probably be more interesting to use 3D objects instead of pictures, if you have them or can make them.)

I was dressed completely in black, including black gloves. I also had trained an older child as an assistant, giving him a black long sleeved shirt and gloves also. He was needed just for the banner, which was about 4 feet long and needed to be held by two hands. (One of my hands would be holding the flashlight.) The banner had to be folded in half (to hide the shiny letters) and laid on the ground in front of the table so my assistant could locate and lift by the correct corner. One can also affix one end of the banner to a floor lamp, fold and clip it closed, and cover that with a silk cloth. In that case, it can easily be unveiled and opened by one person.

This is basically a love poem, and each object is mentioned in the order above. Each phrase begins with "If I were to be". For example, "If I were to be a bird, I would be a nightingale that sang her heart out in the garden of Ridvan."

I admonished the kids to show respect, courtesy, and self control by being quiet, as they would in a theatre. (Its helpful to have another adult there who can be like an usher and can remove disruptive kids if necessary. If kids know that this is an option, they are likely to be more quiet). Then we began the activity by quietly filing into the pitch black room. After finding seats on the floor (they were to stay on the carpet well away from the table b/c the cloths could easily fall) I began a beautiful song called "The Prisoner" from Jack Lenz's *We are Baha'is* cassette. Of course it is about Baha'u'llah and the chorus is "And His name will make us one." This set the tone of reverence I wanted for the visual presentation. Then I turned on a cassette called *Canyon Trilogy* by Carlos Nakai which is mystical, ethereal sounding Native American flute music. It played softly in the background the rest of the activity. From behind the decorated board, I read each stanza using the tiny, barely visible flashlight. It helps if the words are taped on the back of the board so the paper does not make rustling sounds as you pick it up and read, and also you always know where it is.

After each stanza I would lift the related prop up with my left hand (I was positioned behind and slightly to the right of the board, facing the audience) and swing it in front of the sparkly board. Then, w/ my right hand, I would grasp the large flashlight, aim it above the prop, press the "on" button of the flashlight (w/o clicking it fully on—the sound would be distracting) and shine it directly on the prop like a spotlight. After about 5-6 seconds, I would release the button, the light would go off, and I would slowly remove the prop, place it out of the way, and then read the next phrase and repeat this process until all 13 props had been presented. The key to pulling this off in the dark w/o mistakes is rehearsal, placing the props in order of presentation, and laying down the flashlights in the same spot each time. The pictures were laid on top of each other, positioned so when I grabbed one, it was not upside down—that would give a comical twist I was not seeking! It is also helpful to have a designated spot for the used props so they do not get in the way. The faint flashlight was helpful if I could not locate a prop quickly. It also helps to have a light colored cloth or card upon which to place both flashlights so you can locate them quickly in the dark. I also put a white sticker on the large flashlight on/off button. It may be easier to have an assistant do the lighting, if you can find the time to rehearse together. B/c it was dark, I am not totally sure what the response of the children was, but from what I could ascertain, most of the children seemed very engaged and attentive during this activity.

Immediately following the presentation, in the dark, students listened to another song: Its a tender love song, called "I Have Found Baha'u'llah" from a Baha'i children's CD called *Special Times* by Susan Engle and Jean White. It goes well with this love poem, and is sweet way to end the activity. The chorus is simple and kids can easily sing along. Another good option would be "Beautiful Feet" from the *City of Love* CD. That of course ties nicely in with the last stanza, about wanting to be the dust upon which He walked. The song is quite beautiful, but it uses a lot of metaphor and symbolism. After the song, the teacher may want to read the lyrics and explain some of the big words like "wayfarer" and the significance of several of the phrases/metaphors. It hints at a story, and sings about Baha'u'llah's journeys/exiles from

Tehran, to Baghdad, and to Akka. I have also explained how Baha'u'llah's feet were tortured using the bastinado—the beating of the soles of bare feet until they bleed profusely then being forced to walk.

Before doing this presentation, a teacher may want to discuss with the students all the different ways they can show love to Baha'u'llah, such as prayer, teaching, good deeds, service to God and to others, virtues, obedience to His Laws, etc. *("Observe My commandments for love of My beauty...." ~Baha'u'llah*, The Kitab-i-Aqdas page 20.)

One may also want to share this Hidden Word by Baha'u'llah set to music on a CD called *Heartfelt Connections* by Elaine Merrill Losey:

*O SON OF BEING! Love Me, that I may love thee. If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee. Know this, O servant. ~Baha'u'llah:* Arabic Hidden Words, # 5

## If I Were To Be II

(Public presentation using children).

This activity can also be done as a public presentation, using the children. They should memorize their stanzas, otherwise they are just holding objects and turning around. They should be taught how to walk and stand with dignity, to be still and reverent, without leaning on the wall or to one side, to not put hands in pockets, to hold their objects with respect, and to speak with eloquence, love, conviction, and clarity. Teaching the students to speak with feeling, slowly and loud enough took a lot of practice. Good cadence and intonation do not come naturally to most. Students also need to practice entering the room in a neat line, waiting until the person before them is completely turned back around before turning gracefully around for your turn to face the audience, to not speak as one is turning, to not turn back while still speaking, to always turn from the same side, etc. Proper speed of speech and movements had to be attended to repeatedly. They often went too fast or too slow after correcting for speed.

They used the same props as described above. Children enter single file in reverse order of their stanzas if coming from the audience's left, the same order if entering from the audiences' right. They are carrying their objects and turn and stand with their backs to the audience. You can also have all the props laid out on a surface such as some benches or chairs and covered with a large cloth so audience can't see them before they are presented. Try to make the surface attractive by covering it with a pretty cloth in addition to the one covering the objects. Someone then uncovers them all at once as soon as kids are all lined up with their backs to the audience, therefore blocking the audience's view. Or each child can have a scarf over their object on the chair or as they walk in holding it. I like to promote mystery. If the kids are not holding their objects as they walk in, they look better if they walk in holding their hands behind their backs or in front of them with lowered arms. You can have them each turn away one at a time as they arrive at their pre-designated location, or wait until all have arrived, and they can turn away as a unit.

The last time we did this, all the students were lined up against a wall. They clasped their own hands together in front of them. After I said: "And now Rays of the Sun Baha'i Children's Class will present *If I Were to Be*," the child who would be speaking the last stanza entered first and walked slowly, with dignity, to the end of the benches, where her object was located. She stood still, clasping hands, facing the audience. Then the next child entered and stood next to her facing the audience. Then the next and so on until all were in position, facing the audience, in front of their objects, hands clasped with lowered arms. When the last child to enter took his position, the first child who had entered, gracefully turned away from the audience, maintaining clasped hands. When she was fully turned away, then the child next to her did the same, and so on, one after the other until the last child to have entered turned.

They needed to be reminded to always turn in the same direction and to wait until the person next to them is fully turned before you begin your turn, and to maintain clasped hands until its time to retrieve your object. You don't want wigglely arms and fidgety hands—these are noticeable even with backs turned.

Then I said, “If I Were to Be”, and this was the cue for the child with the first stanza to turn around and present his object and phrase. Again, students needed to be reminded to turn consistently in the same direction. This is made easier if you teach them to always turn in the same direction so that the turning away and turning towards the audience complete a full circle.

If you have one child per object, and they will turn only once, it looks more formal if they can all pick up their objects before beginning the first line, and hold them throughout the poem. This has the same effect as clasping hands—it keeps the wiggles down. It looks more formal b/c they don’t have to bend over to get the object. And they are lined up in order of their phrases, so they don’t need to remember when they go. But we often had children presenting more than one object, so they obviously could not hold both. If you do have more objects than kids, it will have to be accepted that they will be retrieving objects for their part—and they will have to memorize more stanzas. They will also not be turning in a straight line order if you do what I do: Because I like the unpredictability of the turning, and kids can’t protest about random choice, I write all the objects on separate cards, face them down on the floor or in a basket, and kids choose randomly. They are allowed to trade before the rehearsal begins. I do like to choose the person to do the last line, however, b/c it should be done with such reverence and love. If you don’t want random turning or choosing, and say you have 6 kids, you can assign them in a straight line for the first six stanzas, then the first kid gets stanza 7, second kid gets stanza 8, etc., so they are always following the same order. The first child would also get the last stanza since there are 13 stanzas. It is a bit harder to not have the kids lined up in the same sequence as the poem. They really have to know their lines and the order of them. One kid mistaking their timing can throw the whole group off. Make sure they know who presents right before them.

If not holding one object for the entire poem, students also need to make sure before the poem begins that their props are lying face down, and not upside down, so they can gracefully lift them and turn in one smooth movement. They should hold the props with 2 hands, which I think is less casual and more reverent. The banner will require 2-3 kids if its big, and they have to work out a graceful/organized way of unfolding and folding it. Only one child will be able to turn with it. If 3 are opening it, the child holding the banner should be between the other 2. They need to note which corner to open and they also need to turn as a unit when folded back up. It is very important that the folded banner is in the correct position before the poem begins.

I like to position the child with the last stanza at the end of the line. At the end, she says her phrase, but stays facing the audience. The child next to her then turns around holding his object, then the next on up the line, until each child turns around in sequence, one at a time. If the kids have had more than one object, they choose one to turn with. Thus, the poem ends with all performers facing the audience with their object, then bow as a group. Then the last (or it can be the first) child turns away, places her object down and remains facing away. The next child in line then does the same, until once again all are facing away, with their objects put down. They then clasp their own hands with lowered arms in front of them, and turn as a unit and leave the stage in as dignified a manner as when they entered. This is a nice choreographed ending.

As soon as the children began to walk on stage, Native American flute music from Carlos Nakai’s *Canyon Trilogy* started playing in the background to create a mystical, spiritual tone to the presentation. Experiment with any tender and/or ethereal music.

Before introducing this performance piece, a teacher may want to discuss with the students all the different ways they can show love to Baha’u’llah, such as prayer, teaching, good deeds, service to God and to others, virtues, obedience to His Laws, etc. *(“Observe My commandments for love of My beauty....” ~Baha’u’llah*, The Kitab-i-Aqdas page 20.)

One may also want to share this Hidden Word by Baha’u’llah set to music on a CD called *Heartfelt Connections* by Elaine Merrill Losey:

*O SON OF BEING! Love Me, that I may love thee. If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee. Know this, O servant. ~Baha'u'llah:* Arabic Hidden Words, # 5

# IF I WERE TO BE

By Mary Wilson

If I were to be a house,
I would be the home
in which Baha'u'llah spent
His happy childhood.

If I were to be a sound,
I would be the prayer
which He and His fellow prisoners
chanted all through the nights and days
in the dark dungeon
of the Siyah-Chal.

If I were to be an animal,
I would be a bird
that befriended Him
in the lonely mountain cave
at Sulaymaniyyih.

If I were to be a vessel,
I would be the boat
that sailed Him
to the Garden of Ridvan.

If I were to be a bird,
I would be a nightingale
that sang her heart out
in the Garden of Ridvan.

If I were to be a flower,
I would be a rose,
that lay among many in His tent
in the Garden of Ridvan.

If I were to be a hat,
I would be the taj
that crowned the head of Baha'u'llah
as He left the Garden of Ridvan.

If I were to be a horse,
I would be the red roan stallion
that carried Him,
the Lord of all the Ages,
out of the Garden of Ridvan,
to Constantinople.

If I were to be a flag,
I would be the banner
that heralded the coming of Baha'u'llah
to the villages along the way.

If I were to be a leaf of paper.
I would be a tablet
that bore His mighty message
to the rulers of the world.

If I were to be a plant,
I would be the mulberry tree
that sheltered Him in prayer
in the garden near Bahji.

If I were to be a bush,
I would be the cypress tree
on the mountain of God
that marks the spot where Baha'u'llah sat
with His beloved Son.

If I were to be anything,
I would be the dust
upon which He walked.

## Journey into the Ridvan Garden

Imaginary journey using props, music, decorations, and multi-sensorial setting to create a lovely and captivating experience.

I had hung silk cloths plus some other sparkly cloths from the ceiling and covered the entire classroom, wall to wall, ceiling to floor. Even the couch got a makeover. Two Persian carpets adorned the floor. The floor and furniture were lined with real vines. The two tables were also covered with cloths, flowers, a photograph of the shrine of Baha'u'llah, beads, subtle sparkly glow in the dark glitter, and diverse candles and holders, including a bowl of 12 floating rose shaped candles. A paper peacock stood in a corner and peacock feathers were on one of the tables. Lilacs and Viburnum flowers lent a very noticeable delightful fragrance. It is this decorating job that makes this activity a level 3.

First we assembled in the living room and listened to a song called "In the Garden of Ridvan" from the *Baha'i World Congress* CD. ("In a Garden" from Joe Crones *It Takes a Village* CD is also perfect for this occasion.) After the song, while the kids took a short break, I lit the candles and started a tape of the singing of a real Nightingale on the boombox in the classroom. (Many of the accounts of Ridvan mention the Nightingales singing). Then I laid real roses in a small pile in front of the photo of Baha'u'llah's shrine. As part of the decorations, from the beginning, I had arranged chocolates wrapped in gold foil with a little rose ribbon stuck on top of each one. These were placed in a circle on a gold platter with rose petals in the center, in front of the photo of the Shrine of Baha'u'llah. Next, I read and briefly explained the following quote from Baha'u'llah using the sweetness metaphor:

*Cause me to taste, O my Lord, the divine sweetness of Thy remembrance and praise. I swear by Thy might! Whosoever tasteth of its sweetness will rid himself of all attachment to the world and all that is therein, and will set his face towards Thee, cleansed from the remembrance of any one except Thee.*
*~Baha'u'llah:* Prayers and Meditations, pages 82-83

I told the students that they were going to go on a pretend journey into the garden of Ridvan. They would be entering the tent of Baha'u'llah. While inside, they were to say a prayer and then they could take one sweet and one rose from the table. The sweet was to remind them of the sweetness of Baha'u'llah's words and teachings—these words and teachings from God are Baha'u'llah's greatest gift to us. Baha'u'llah was known for His generosity and gift giving. During His stay in the garden of Ridvan, as a token of His love, He gave away many of the roses piled high in His tent to be delivered to various people in the city of Baghdad. So I urged the students to give away their rose as a gift. I told them they could give it to one or both of their parents in gratitude for all that they do for them, or to a friend they are teaching, to someone who needs loving, or as a thank you to anyone who has shown them kindness.

Then students did an active visualization exercise about a journey into the garden of Ridvan. As I narrated, they imagined and pantomimed themselves cleaning up and dressing in their fanciest clothes, stepping into a boat and rowing across the Tigris river, noticing fish and swans. They anchor the boat, step out, enter the garden and imagine the beauty of the flowers. (According to historical reports, this garden had an enormous number of roses.) At this point the visualization ends and the children line up outside the classroom door. I laid some prayer books on a silk cloth covered chair next to the door. Before entering, if so desired, each child was given a dab of rose oil on their forehead, as it was custom to perfume oneself before seeing an important personage in those days. One at a time they entered the pretend tent of Baha'u'llah alone. Candles illumined the picture of the Shrine of Baha'u'llah. The student inside said a prayer and then chose a chocolate and a rose. As each child departed, another one went in.

*Arise, and proclaim unto the entire creation the tidings that He Who is the All-Merciful hath directed His steps towards the Ridvan and entered it. Guide, then, the people unto the garden of delight which God hath made the Throne of His Paradise.*
*~Baha'u'llah:* Gleanings, page 31

## The Mystic Rose

A very unique puppet show to a poem about a rose in the Garden of Ridvan.

This puppet show is done to a poem one of my daughters, Anisa, wrote during her 17th and 18th years. I have no poetry skills whatsoever, so I beseeched her to put her considerable writing skills to use for this dramatic presentation. I gave her a detailed description of the scenes I wanted put to rhyme, and waited almost 2 years for the final product. I asked her to make it appropriate for both children and adults. She would work on it sporadically, including during her year of service abroad. Near my birthday, Ayyam-i-Ha, and Mothers' Day I would remind her what a perfect gift the completion of her assignment would be. But it was worth the wait. I was delighted with her poetic interpretation and made very few changes to the original. Of all the dramatic pieces in this manual, this one required more reliance on others and rehearsal time, and I am more attached to this one being done with excellence than all the others. So, I encourage anyone who wants to attempt this to call me and I would be delighted to give details that are not covered in this description, or even send a video if necessary. But for those of you experienced in theatre, you may not want or need such input and can just run with it. But it may save you time to get a copy of the music we used or some verbal tips. I promise you, if done well, the audience will be mesmerized. Several months after the program, Jackie Mulhall, who assisted in prop making, but was unable to attend the event, had a conversation with one of the seekers who was at the celebration. He told her he was so touched and moved by the show that he told at least 20 other people about it!

This production is really most suited for Ridvan. Adults will find it very entertaining b/c it is unlike anything they have ever seen before and full of meaning and beauty—and some humor. It appeals very much to children b/c all children fear rejection and all relish in being chosen by those in authority for a special role or task. Other messages the poem conveys are: 1) The outward appearance is not as important as the inner condition, 2) It is more glorious to use one's attributes for spiritual rather than physical purposes, and 3) Its an honor to serve one's Lord. One can also interpret the roses to symbolize human souls.

This puppet show requires 4 adults or very skilled youth. One is the narrator, one is the mystic rose, one is the rose that's chosen the first 3 times, (we called it the popular rose) and one plays the hands choosing the roses. (The pickers). In our case, we were lucky to have a woman named Nadia Malarkey who had majored in drama and theater and had lots of experience, play the hands which choose the roses. She was skilled enough to convey the frivolity and gaiety of a young woman looking for a rose to put in her hair for a party , the masculinity and caring of a gentle young man searching for a rose to give to his sweetheart, the nobility and dignity of a king, and the wise, tender, slow, careful, deliberate movements of an old gardener—all with her hands only. For you see, this poem "puppet show" is done only with hands inside gloves and a few props. This is also why it is best suited for audiences under 120—hands are not that big.

**Before the show, the narrator (my husband) gave some background about how the poem is based on historical events in the garden of Ridvan:** (He deliberately did not mention the huge pile in the tent, b/c we felt that would diminish the importance of the mystic rose.)

*As you learned from the introduction earlier this evening, the Festival of Ridvan celebrates Baha'u'llah's announcement in Baghdad of His mission to His family and closest followers.*

*This puppet show is based on that event. Each day in the Ridvan garden gardeners picked roses and placed them in Baha'u'llah's tent. He would then give these roses to visitors as gifts to his friends and followers in the city of Baghdad.*

*This is the story of a rose in the Garden of Ridvan during the days when Baha'u'llah was there.*

*The puppet show begins by taking you on a journey back in time to Baghdad in 1863. During this time I would like you to close your eyes and imagine what it might be like as you listen to the description in the poem. I will tell you when to open them again to watch the puppet show.*

*And now we present the Mystic Rose.*

# THE MYSTIC ROSE

By Linden & Anisa Qualls

Close your eyes and come with me,
beyond this place, across the sea,
until we reach a distant land,
of mosques and desert caravans.

Welcome to Baghdad, come inside,
admire the city, feast your eyes.
Smell the spices, explore the bazaar,
look at things from near and far.

And when it gets too hot we'll go
to a river, that I know.
It's called the Tigris, perhaps you've heard,
upon its banks rest beast and bird.

Sit and feel the breezes blow,
and don't forget, this is long ago.
So we're walking here, we can't take a plane,
or drive a car or hop a train.

In fact it's 1863,
a hundred years before you or me.
But that doesn't matter because here we are,
outside the city, beyond the bazaar.
Sitting by water, enjoying the sun
in April when spring has just begun.

If you look yonder you can see
beautiful flowers and blossoming trees,
in a fragrant garden--- and if you want to go
we can take a boat-- but you have to row.

Ah, here we are upon the shore,
there's so many pathways to explore.
There's oranges and figs and cypress trees,
smell the jasmine, but mind the bees.

Pick some lilies and watch the butterflies,
and **now** it is time to open your eyes.
Behold two rose bushes, scarlet in hue,
their beauty and scent is rivaled by few.

So rich and velvet, the color of wine,
perfect exemplars of nature's design.
They give delight to everyone
though their blooming has just begun.

Ah, here comes a lady, lovely and tall
passing this way to go to a ball.
Her dress is splendid, her face is fair,
but she would like something to put in her hair.

Walking along, she decides on a rose
and seeing our bushes, thinks "one of those."
Our roses give off such flawless perfume,
and seeing her come, they both strive to bloom.

They stretch their hardest, they push and they pull,
and suddenly one of them.....opens in full!
The woman approaches, it's not hard to choose,
the one that has blossomed, she just can't refuse.

With the rose in her hair, the outfit's perfected,
and the other rose shrinks, feeling rejected.
"Oh well" it thinks, "my turn will soon come,"
although it still feels just a little bit glum.

But the big sky is blue, and the bright sun it shines,
and the rose bush is thinking "the next one is mine!"
And now comes a boy, not more than nineteen,
lanky and handsome, quiet and clean.

He wants a flower, to give to a girl,
she's funny and smart and pure as a pearl.
So he must have the best, no other will do,
It should be vibrant in color, and smell lovely too.

What's that? He detects a wonderful smell,
it comes from a rose, that much he can tell.
The bushes can see that he's coming up close,
"I'll do it this time" thinks our little rose.

It squeezes and pushes, it's ready to burst,
when all of a sudden, the other..... opens up first!
The boy wanders up "it's perfect" he thinks,
and as the other blossom is picked, the rose's heart sinks.

“I’m useless” it wails “I’m really no good,
why don’t I blossom like real roses would?”
Its stems’ start to droop, the leaves start to wither,
but just then a man is seen coming hither.

Not just a man, by jove it’s the king!--
taking a walk, enjoying the spring.
Look at his clothing, his gloves are so gold,
it’s all so dazzling, a sight to behold.

Why is he here, and so finely dressed?
He’s come here to pick the best of the best.
There’s a banquet tonight, in just a few hours,
and he needs to embellish the tables with flowers.

He walks up and down, inspecting each plant.
“Now is the time. I can’t fail, I can’t!,”
thinks the rose as it pushes with all of its might
to keep buds and leaves all standing upright.

The king looks so stately, so wonderfully fine,
and the little rose is praying “pick mine, pick mine!”
It’s sure it is ready, it’s time long overdue,
just as the other one..... blossoms with two!

The king stops and he chooses, he decides finally,
that “these two lovely roses are worthy of me.”
So picking he adds them to his bouquet,
gets on his horse and rides on his way,
leaving the rose bush completely forlorn.
The whole plant is wilting, including the thorns.

“I can’t bloom for a lady, a boy or a king,
I’m simply a failure, I can’t do a thing!
Nobody wants me, I’ve just been discarded.”
And the little bush weeps, feeling downhearted.

Just then it hears footsteps, a man’s walking near
with rough soiled gloves, lots of wrinkles, a beard.
It’s true, he is humble, without money or fame,
but there’s something about him, that our rose can’t quite name.

The other bush is offended; “I refuse to unfold
for gloves such as these so dirty and old!”
So that bush droops its head, and shrinks in disgust.
But our bush is thinking, “I must bloom, I must!”

It trembles with hope and tries like never before,
thinking “this is the hand I’ve been waiting for!”
The leaves straighten up, its roots start to stir,
and then the bud blossoms for this old gardener.

The gardener stops, he bends closer too see,
the petals are flawless,  with complete symmetry.
Inhaling the fragrance, he thinks “ah, perfection”
and takes out his clippers, to make the selection.

He picked the bush’s  blossom, and off the two went,
when crossing the garden  they came to a tent.
As they drew near it,  the rose felt magnetized.
And it was just as they entered, that it began to realize,
that it’s fate was special. It’s reason for being
was bigger than a boy, a lady, a king.

It was a gift
adorning a tent
that was preparing to witness
a momentous event.
It’s whole being quaked
as it was laid on the floor,
lovingly placed
at the feet of it’s Lord.
It felt luminous,
overwhelming elation,
as it witnessed the birth.....
of a new Revelation.

THE END

During rehearsals, until we really got it down, we practiced with the background cloth raised and had a large mirror placed so we could see our hands both from behind and in the mirror. The mirror showed us how it would be perceived by the audience. The hardest part of this presentation was not being able to see one's own hands, thus, one had to rely on tactile memory only. Nadia, who played the human hands, could see her hands from behind while she was still at the top of one of the play stands, but as soon as she dipped into the opening where the roses were, she had to find each rose when it was time to select, w/o looking as if she was fumbling.

**Props needed, and how they were made, and more tips:**

*4 copies of the script,* one for each participant. During rehearsal it really helped the "puppeteers" to have the lines that related to their character highlighted. The narrator had his own handwritten notes on his copy to remind him to wait for the music to begin, or a certain action to take place before proceeding with his dialogue, etc.

*A sound system &/or boom box.* Our boom box was attached to a sound system. The controls need to be behind the stage unless you can find a 5th person to rehearse with you and know when to start the music and fade in and out, etc.

*Music* for the beginning, for the garden scene, and for the very end. We had very mystical and ethereal sounding middle-eastern music (with a great flute) for the part up until the line "in April when spring has just begun." This was faded out, and turned off, and then from the second well of the boom box, music was immediately faded in that was gentle music with birds chirping and water flowing sounds. We extracted just enough of it from a longer song so that it naturally ended at the right time with just the natural sounds. It ended with "though their blooming has just begun". The last piece was on a CD (I had to remember to switch the boom box into CD mode) and began with "As they drew near it". It was a piano selection that was just beautiful and climaxed right at the moment of the last line, "of a new Revelation". Then I faded it out as the lights faded down at the end. Needless to say, it took a lot of rehearsal to coordinate this with my husband the narrator, and I had to practice using the volume button smoothly. Fortunately, my boom box has a lighted digital display of the volume, and we rehearsed at the location of the program with someone standing in the back of the room guiding us as to volume for all 3 selections of the music. I then marked these numbers down on a card and taped them to the box. Even though it was dark, I could still see the card. I had to do the last 2 pieces of music while my hand was on display as a rose. We deliberately did not use music during the main segment of the poem b/c the feelings conveyed jump around a lot and we felt any music could not possibly match the text.

*More details on the music*: The music we used for both the opening and garden scenes was taken from a recording entitled *Dawntide, The Lotus Project.* Its a compilation of various artists. The selection for the opening was called "Grandeur—Azamat" by Moon Milne. We started at the beginning of the song, and when the flute music comes in, the narrator begins. The second selection for the garden scene was taken from the final 1/3rd of "Journey to Paradise, a Prayer by Baha'u'llah" by Moon Milne and James Woodbridge. The piece is in 3 sections, short opening instrumental, recitation of a prayer, then closing instrumental. The closing instrumental ends with bird and water sounds, but is too long for our needs, so I figured out how much of it we needed for our section of the poem, then recorded that much so it ended perfectly on time with the birds and water sounds. The bird and water sounds are heard faintly throughout the entire song as background to music, but at the end they are the only sounds. It was perfect. The ending selection was called "Beloved" and is the first song on a CD also entitled *Beloved* by David Lanz. If started at the beginning of the song, if the narrator read at a typical pace, it climaxed with the last line of the song. Then it was faded out as the lights went down. It is very tender and we felt it captured the feeling that the rose was uniting with its Beloved and witnessing a new Revelation.

*A spot light.* I found the perfect floor lamp at Lowe's hardware store. It was on a stand with 3 moveable lamps. So we shined 2 on the stage with the rose bushes, and one up towards where the hands first appear. The rest of the room was dark. The narrator held a fake battery powered candle to see—we thought that was more in keeping with the ambiance than a flashlight. The other necessity, also available

at Lowes, is a *dimmer switch* on a cord. I could not find any lamps with dimmer switches that were right for us, but they have these switches on extension cords. All you do is plug the lamp into that and you can fade it on and off. The narrator held that switch. And that cord also works with an extension if your plugs are far away.

*A puppet theater.* I was fortunate to have my neighbor Jackie's 2 identical wooden play stands, which were easily converted into a large puppet theater on bar stools. One had curtains, a back drop cloth, and frocks or skirting at the top and bottom, the other was bare. For the bare one we found matching material and draped over the entire thing down to the floor and tacked it down on the wood. Both stands were on 3 bar stools, sharing the one in the middle. We put some rubber sheeting under them so they would not slip. We also draped matching cloth over the bottom of the one that had curtains, so the audience could not see our legs, etc. We used pillows to kneel on—very helpful for middle-aged knees! We used an easel and a chalk board covered with pretty cloth at the holy day location to block the view of the back stage from the sides.

*A brass curtain rod* with knobs at the end, which reminded me of an old fashioned royal-looking tent pole. This was for the scene change representing being in a tent: (Who knows what they really looked like?! I think I have read somewhere that Baha'u'llah's tent was purple—but one may want to research this. I did not happen to have purple for the tent, but the whole theater was draped in purple cloth with little tiny gold stars on it.)

A *yard of silk* almost the color of the mystic rose (that was a coincidence) was tied at the ends of the curtain rod.

I also tied a *very large piece of periwinkle blue silk* at the ends of the rod. The silk was perfect for its texture, graceful draping, etc., but our hands kept getting tangled in it as the mystic rose was being placed in the tent. So we knotted it half way up and that actually looked really elegant and appropriate—with a billow at the top and a narrow line below the knot. (The knots were scotched taped at the ends of the rod to prevent slippage.) This get up was readily available, and during the scene change, the narrator used a giant wooden clip to clip it above the opening. Then he took the reddish silk and draped it over the clip and the ends over the end of the rod. This was perfect for creating a peaked center and rounded sides, to simulate a tent.

*Large silky cloth* for covering theater during celebration, which can be removed easily during puppet show at appointed time. I suggest "silky" b/c not only is it pretty, that fabric slides off easily and will not cling to the stage. You want the stage covered so its a surprise, and you don't have to be trying to position the bushes in the dark b/c they have already been placed before the guests arrive.

A *small pillow* draped in light golden color silk, with *cloth weights* tucked inside (the kind you strap around your ankles or wrists) so we could not accidentally push it off the stage.

*Battery powered fake candles*—the kind folks put in their windows around Christmas time. They have a fake brass base, white stick, and clear glass "flame". These were placed at the edges of the stage for the tent scene and gave a very elegant look. We had to make sure they were a good distance from the pillow so the gardener would not knock them over!

For the Roses :
*3 different red gloves*, a pair of one color, (b/c at one point the popular rose bush blossoms with 2) and a single of the color for the mystic rose. If the person playing the mystic rose is left handed, it should be left handed. In our case, the mystic rose was a darker color. (That was deliberate b/c in popular media darker skin is usually associated with the bad guys.) I bought white cotton gloves from a costume shop and dyed them, but if you are in the right season, you can probably find red gloves. Each glove then had 5-7 petals which had been removed from silk flowers, glued onto the knuckle areas and below the thumb and pinkie fingers on the sides of the hand. It looks much more natural and attractive if only a portion of the bottom of each petal is glued so that they stand out and are not flat and tight on the glove. It is hard to explain, but trust me, I tried many different numbers, combinations and locations of petals, and this

arrangement mimicked a real rose bud the best. I found perfectly matching petals for the popular rose, but had to use artist's markers to shade the mystic's rose to match the glove, b/c I neglected to dye them together. You will probably find that regular markers found in stores for kids do not have enough variation in reds and will need a fancier set to get the desired effect.

*3 Dark green knee-highs* with the feet cut off—use a rubber band if slipping occurs. These go on the arms of the hands playing the roses, though they may never show much—its certainly better than bare skin just in case.

For the Rose Bushes:
*small heavy pyrex bowls* which were 7 inches in diameter at the top, with *chunks of foam* duct-taped all over to give them a lumpier look. Then chucks of *duct tape* were put on top of that, and *shiny green cloth* was wrapped around that, and pressed into the tape and crevices created by the foam. We had to use a lot of duct tape to secure that foam—it kept coming apart. Each bush had its own green color, and the fabric was rich looking and shimmering. Silk, or a fabric known as "Silk Essence" or bathing suit material has good shine. So we could position ourselves in the center of the bowl, since we could not see once the backdrop was used, we put a huge chunk of duct tape on the back of the bowl, under the cloth, where our wrists should rest, and that guided us. The audience could not see this.

*green cloth* secured to the base of the stage to represent the ground, different colored than the rose bushes.

For the lady:
*A pair of pink gloves, a dainty ring or two, and a cloth cotton embroidered hanky*. We also had *lacey arms* attached. Remember—this is 1863 and she's going to a ball.

For the lad of 19:
A *pair of black leather gloves,* such as a man would wear for riding—not lined—remember this is spring and also, in 1863 I am sure they did not use spandex.

For the King:
*A pair of gold metallic gloves*, available at a costume shop, *some ornate large rings, a small scepter*—we made ours.

For the old gardener: a *well worn, old and used and soiled pair of light colored leather gardening gloves.*

(I wish I had digital photos of the set—that would save a lot of words and descriptions.)

The human hands first appear at the top of the play stand that is entirely covered. The person doing this part is standing. They start moving towards the direction of the bushes, and it is during this time particularly that one sees the personality of the hands. The hands also always try to express what motions are suggested in the text. At the right time, they drop down, disappearing for a moment, then reappear next to the bushes in the opening of the theater. The person playing the human hands should have black or white long sleeves on.

My identical twin sister drove in from out of town to play the popular rose. We had a blast working together. We practiced, as only two identical obsessive-compulsive-perfectionists types can, for hours, using a mirror and each other for feedback. The rose bud look is achieved by **always presenting the back of the hand to the audience** with all 5 fingers coming together, slightly bent so that the thumb is at the same height as the others. The thumb is never seen. Just practice in front of a mirror and you will see that they can indeed look like buds.

We even came up with 8 ways to express motions or emotions in a budded rose. Most are for indicating striving to bloom. Then we wrote one word descriptions of each of them real big on a piece of paper that laid on the floor between us during the show. There was just enough light to see it. We obviously could not use our scripts b/c we could not be turning pages. This cue sheet reminded us to be varied in our

movements and made the roses more visually interesting. All these movements are done with the hands held in the bud position. If you really want to know, here are 8 ways for a rose bud hand to move:

The *rub*—a more subtle/restrained version of the motion of the rubbing of one's fingers together when they are indicating they want cash.

The *shake*—gentle jiggling back and forth, side to side.

The *twist:* rotating the wrist slightly back and forth.

The *rise:* raising the whole hand up straight, w/o showing the arms. We held our hands sufficiently low on the bushes so we could rise and strive w/o revealing too much "stem". The roses should initially be seen with the petals on the knuckles just barely showing. This gives room for "growth".

The *push and pull*: push the 4 long fingers out slightly then inwards—this matches some text exactly.

The *stretch:* unbending the fingers and raising them up but still keeping them together. The thumb then becomes hidden and lowered behind the other fingers. The wrist does not move.

The *contraction*: A different version of the push and pull, the fingers are kept bent while they move very slightly up and down.

The *tremble*: trembling, shaking in tiny movements. Unlike the shake, this does not involve moving the wrist, but mimics shivering or trembling with excitement or fear.

When the roses bloom, they do open up and thus look more like hands. The fingers are still slightly bent, but there is a little space between them, as if holding a ball.

**Here is the poem again, with "director's" notes:**

## THE MYSTIC ROSE

*Introduce by talking about roses being picked for Baha'u'llah's tent. Turn off lights. Start music after that. Its relatively loud. Wait until flute comes in to begin poem, then lower volume so not as to overpower the narrator. This first part is in darkness*.

Close your eyes and come with me,
beyond this place, across the sea,
until we reach a distant land,
of mosques and desert caravans.
Welcome to Baghdad, come inside,
admire the city, feast your eyes.
Smell the spices, explore the bazaar,
look at things from near and far.
And when it gets too hot we'll go
to a river, that I know.

It's called the Tigris, perhaps you've heard,
upon its banks rest beast and bird.
Sit and feel the breezes blow,
and don't forget, this is long ago.
So we're walking here, we can't take a plane,
or drive a car or hop a train.
In fact it's 1863,
a hundred years before you or me.
But that doesn't matter because here we are,
outside the city, beyond the bazaar.
Sitting by water, enjoying the sun
in April when spring has just begun.

*Music fades away, new garden music fades in to predetermined volume level.*

If you look yonder you can see
beautiful flowers and blossoming trees,
in a fragrant island garden--- and if you want to go
we can take a boat-- but you have to row. *(emphasis should not be on "you" but on "row")*
Ah, here we are upon the shore,
there's so many pathways to explore.
There's oranges and figs and cypress trees,
smell the jasmine, but mind the bees.
Pick some lilies and watch the butterflies,
and **now** it is time to open your eyes.

*Lights fade up, cloth covering theater is pulled off briskly from behind by puppeteer playing the human hands, sort as if saying TA--DA! Or it can be done gradually and slowly.....*

Behold two rose bushes, scarlet in hue, *each bush has a red bud in the center*
their beauty and scent is rivaled by few.
So rich and velvet, the color of wine,
perfect exemplars of nature's design.
They give delight to everyone
though their blooming has just begun.

*Garden music fades off. Set boom box to CD for last musical selection and adjust volume for that, set to correct song, put on pause. Narrator waits for music to completely end before beginning next part.*

Ah, here comes a lady, lovely and tall

*lively, happy looking, playful but dainty hands, almost as if dancing to a song, twirling. She has a handkerchief tucked into her ring*

passing this way to go to a ball.
Her dress is splendid, her face is fair,
but she would like something
to put in her hair.

Walking along, she decides on a rose
and seeing our bushes, thinks “one of those.”

*Points to both of the rose bushes separately, back and forth as if trying to decide*

Our roses give off such flawless perfume,
and seeing her come, they both strive to bloom. *one of the 8 striving motions*
They stretch their hardest, they push and they pull, *movements of roses match this description*

and suddenly one of them
opens in full! *Popular rose blossoms*

The woman approaches, it’s not hard to choose,

*lady enters near the bushes, (handkerchief is gone) points to popular rose*

the one that has blossomed, she just can’t refuse.

*Lady places hands around popular rose and withdraws it. Mystic rose shrinks with dejection.*

With the rose in her hair, the outfit's perfected,
and the other rose shrinks, feeling rejected. *Shrinks down even further*

"Oh well" it thinks, "my turn will soon come," *mystic rose moves, to indicate resignation*
although it still feels just a little bit glum. *Mystic rose droops a bit*
But the big sky is blue, and the bright sun it shines,
and the rose bush is thinking "the next one is mine!"

*Mystic rose wiggles optimistically, popular rose begins a new bud*

And now comes a boy, not more than nineteen, *boy appears at upper level*
lanky and handsome, quiet and clean.
He wants a flower, to give to a girl,
she's funny and smart and pure as a pearl. *Clasps hands as if delighting in his thought of her*
So he must have the best, no other will do,

*Boy's hands go into fist, move forward, not expressing aggression, but determination*

It should be vibrant in color, and smell lovely too.

What's that? He detects a wonderful smell,

*hands abruptly stop and turn towards bushes, then point*

it comes from a rose, that much he can tell.
The bushes can see that he's coming up close, *roses turn slightly towards boy's hands*
"I'll do it this time" thinks our little rose. *Jerks back and forth in confidence*
It squeezes and pushes, it's ready to burst, *both roses do some of the 8 striving motions*
when all of a sudden,
the other..... opens up first! *Popular rose opens up*

The boy wanders up "it's perfect" he thinks,

*hands enter next to bushes, his hands show delight at his find*

and as the other blossom is picked, the rose's heart sinks.

*He picks the popular rose and removes it, mystic rose dips down a bit*

"I'm useless" it wails "I'm really no good,

*moves as if lamenting, talking, but always retaining bud position*

why don't I blossom like real roses would?"
Its stems' start to droop, the leaves start to wither, *droops, shrinks, etc.*
but just then a man is seen coming hither.

*Mystic rose turns slightly in the direction of the king, popular rose begins new bud*

Not just a man, by jove it's the king!--

*Hands look as if striding, marching, royal demeanor, carrying a small scepter*

taking a walk, enjoying the spring.
Look at his clothing, his gloves are so gold,
it's all so dazzling, a sight to behold.
Why is he here, and so finely dressed?
He's come here to pick the best of the best.
There's a banquet tonight, in just a few hours,
and he needs to embellish the tables with flowers. *King enters near bushes, w/o scepter*
He walks up and down, inspecting each plant.

*He moves back and forth between them, as if studying them*

"Now is the time. I can't fail, I can't!,"

*Mystic Rose does wiggles excitedly, then begins to do some of the 8 motions*

thinks the rose as it pushes with all of its might

to keep buds and leaves all standing upright. *Both bushes straighten up, strive*
The king looks so stately, so wonderfully fine,
and the little rose is praying “pick mine, pick mine!”

*Mystic Rose thrusts forward and back slightly*

It’s sure it is ready, it’s time long overdue,
just as the other one blossoms with two! *Popular rose opens 2 hands*

*This second blossom should be a surprise for the audience, it should come up slowly but unexpectedly as the line is read, the mystic rose turns slightly towards the popular rose, to check out what just happened*

The king stops and he picks, he decides finally,
that “these two lovely roses are worthy of me.”

*King’s hands indicate satisfaction, picks both blossoms, removes them*

So picking he adds them to his bouquet,
gets on his horse and rides on his way,
leaving the rose bush completely forlorn.

*Mystic rose indicates these emotions by wilting, drooping, etc*.

The whole plant is wilting, including the thorns.
“I can’t bloom for a lady, a boy or a king, *Mystic rose shakes slowly as if talking*
I’m simply a failure, I can’t do a thing!
No body wants me, I’ve just been discarded.”
And the little bush weeps, feeling downhearted.

*Hand gradually lays on side, still in bud position, and very slowly moves up and down as if weeping, then lays on top of bush with palm down as if exhausted and in utter despair— releasing bud position momentarily*

Just then it hears footsteps,

*Mystic rose perks up & raises itself, popular rose begins new bud, slow footsteps are heard*

a man's walking near
with rough soiled gloves *very slow, yet graceful and gentle movements, as if strained with age*
lots of wrinkles, a beard.
It's true, he is humble,
without money or fame,
but there's something about him, *Mystic rose turns towards gardener hands slightly*
that our rose can't quite name.
The other bush is offended;
"I refuse to unfold *popular rose jerks back and forth, in twisting motion, as if angry*
for gloves such as these
so dirty and old!"

So the bush droops its head,
and shrinks in disgust. *Popular rose shrinks and curls up, pulls back and away*
But our bush is thinking
"I must bloom, I must!" *mystic rose moves up and down slightly in excitement, kind of*
It trembles with hope *bouncing a little*

*trembles, and begins to do some of the 8 striving motions, matching text as much as possible*

and tries like never before,
thinking "this is the hand
I've been waiting for!" *gardener enters near bushes, pauses at popular rose, then passes it by*
The leaves straighten up,
its roots start to stir, *shakes as if stirring and struggling*
and then the bud blossoms *opens up*

for this old gardener.
The gardener stops,

*gardener stops, moves closer to mystic rose, tenderly touches it, inspects it*

he bends closer too see,
the petals are flawless,
with complete symmetry.
Inhaling the fragrance
he thinks “ah, perfection”

*makes american A-OK sign, with thumb and index finger forming circle, other fingers up*

and takes out his clippers *gently, slowly, cups mystic rose and removes it*
to make the selection.

He picked the bush’s blossom
and off the two went,
when crossing the garden
they came to a tent.

*Lights fade down, scene change. Narrator in charge of lights, places tent apparatus over garden scene. Puppeteers remove bushes, replace with pillow and fake candles at the edges of the platform, almost next to curtains. Since we can’t see, narrator straightens our work if necessary, centering pillow, etc.* ***During this time Nadia hummed a beautiful melody****. When narrator senses scene is ready****, he repeats the last two lines to remind audience: “when crossing the garden they came to a tent.”***

*Lights fade up, new music begins. Mystic rose is held in the 2 hands of the gardener at the top of the playstand where human hands always first appear. I was so used to being in the bud formation, that I had to be reminded to remain in the open-blossomed mode for the rest of the show! A nice touch is to do a very light dusting of extra fine iridescent white glitter on the mystic rose for the next scene. The person playing the mystic rose dips their hand in a bowl of the glitter then brushes most of it off with the other hand. It creates a subtle sparkle.*

As they drew near it,
the rose felt magnetized.

*Mystic rose gently sways back and forth in gardener's hands, he gently carries it across the top*

And it was just as they entered *Gardener and mystic rose appear in tent*.
that it began to realize,
that it's fate was special.
It's reason for being
was bigger than a boy

G*ardener very slowly brings the rose towards the pillow, cradling it as if admiring it*

a lady, a king.
It was a gift
adorning a tent
that was preparing to witness
a momentous event.
It's whole being quaked

*rose fingers do gentle, slow contracting motions, gardener lovingly, tenderly lays it on pillow*

as it was laid on the floor,

*as gardener releases the rose, his hands slowly spread outward to the side in a graceful motion, as if presenting the noble rose to the audience, rose is blossomed, but back of hand is laying on pillow*

lovingly placed
at the feet of it's Lord.
It felt luminous,
overwhelming elation,
as it witnessed the birth.....
of a new Revelation. *Rose rises up from pillow, fully blossomed, as if inspired, music goes a bit louder, hold for 5 seconds, light and music fade together*

## Ridvan Garden Story for Public Celebration

Jackie Mulhall and I wrote this story together for the preschool class. Then we successfully used it at a public celebration. Older kids and adults really liked it also. It involves a huge project of making a miniature garden to give life to the story. Jackie made all the props and the garden diorama. She researched as best she could to have accurate depictions. It was gorgeous—any one who saw it was awed. Jackie is as obsessive as me when it comes to beauty and detail. The garden was about 3 feet wide and 5 feet long. It was built on plywood with green skirting around the edges. The landscaping was not only beautiful, but quite realistic and highly detailed.

Here are the components used in this story. Don't attempt this unless you love arts and crafts and have a decent budget of time and money.

- Silky shimmering blue cloth for the river Tigris
- Clumps of decorative deer moss for miniature rose bushes with tiny roses in them
- Miniature roses—these are found at most craft or fabric stores in bunches for weddings etc. We cut them with wire cutters and placed them in the moss
- Pile of miniature roses—this was part of the story so we glued a pile together, using a mound of green felt as a base
- Tent (not pup style), made from fabric and skewer sticks
- Tiny rug under the tent—cut some Middle Eastern-looking fabric into tiny rectangle. It should extend out in front of the tent so the pile of roses can be placed on that portion---b/c it was logistically too hard to place the dolls inside the tent around the pile for tea-time.
- Tiny birds, frogs, turtles, ducks, butterflies
- Ground coverings: Pebble pathway. Actually there were 4 avenues of rose bushes according to descriptions. The avenues were made by homemade playdoh covered with real moss extracted from outside. Then Jackie pressed the tiny pebbles into the moss to make an impression, dug out the impression with a spoon and glued the pebbles back in. The rest of the garden was just green playdoh covered in moss. She kept it green by misting it with a spray bottle. You can avoid the hassle of using live moss by buying a bag of dried Spanish Moss and grinding it up by vigorously rubbing it between your hands. This will create reasonably fine green fibers which can be spread over the ground to mimic grass. The area around the house was brown playdoh, covered in tumeric and other light colored seeds and coffee grounds—it had a more dusty dry look. The river was on the same side of the house, with a wall separating it from the garden. This was b/c we had a boat scene for representing going to the garden, and it would not have worked if the river was on the inside of the wall.
- Larger polished stones and bluish-green ones, for boulders distributed artistically about the garden
- Driftwood pieces and various bark shapes for logs and landscaping
- A winding wall and gate. Jackie made a wall b/c she read about a gate. (A gate can't just stand alone). The gate was a lovely arched copper miniature one from the store, but the wall was made by

covering foam bricks for sticking plants in with papier-mache. Then she painted it in a clay color. Texture was provided by incorporating tissue into the papier-mache while still wet.

- House: The house was designed to fit the architecture of mid 1800's Baghdad. (Look in The DawnBreakers or other Baha'i history books for photos and drawings.) It was a 2 story white building made by papier-maching a smaller box on top of a larger one. The flat roof was a separate piece of cardboard painted reddish brown which slightly over hung the walls. The house had a few bushes around it, windows, etc.
- Dolls. The people were simple wooden dolls of varying browns with just heads and bodies—i.e. no limbs—kind of like chess pieces. Fabric was glued gunned on them for clothing. Hair was yarn or wool or fabric. Female dolls had head scarves.
- Trees: Some were just parts cut from larger silk or plastic plants from the craft store, --which looked quite real. Some were made by wrapping straws with brown floral tape (one could also use brown pipe cleaners wrapped tightly around the straws or if thick enough, by themselves). Then Jackie affixed tiny silk palm leaf-looking leaves to the top.
- Miniatures of bird bath, benches, horse (reddish, preferably prancing, in motion), donkey, simple wooden boat, paddle, baskets, food, straw hats, ---from the store
- Tiny Taj on pillow. The miniature taj was made by covering a thimble in pretty fabric, and the pillow was made by sewing a tiny pillow with stuffing.
- Picture of Nightingale—this was color photocopied from an incredibly elegant and illumined Hidden Words. This book was bought over 25 years ago from the German Baha'i publishing Trust. It has both English, Persian, and Arabic script. It very well may no longer be in print. But with the internet and all, you may be able to find a photo or drawing of this bird fairly easily. There is also an extremely beautiful color rendition of a nightingale singing in the book Song of the Nightingale by Grant Hindin Miller, illustrated by Pamela Matthews. The cover of the book has this picture, but there is a larger copy inside the book.
- Recording of Nightingale. I got this from a BBC bird song sound effects CD. It was very short, so I recorded it over and over. There was only one bird, so we actually used 2 tapes at the same time to give the effect of quantity. Each tape player was placed on opposite sides of the room.
- Crown on pillow. We had a red velvet pillow and Jackie had made a beautiful golden crown with gem-stones. This was not in miniature. Costume shops carry these, but Jackie's fabric one was classier.
- Carpet—preferably Persian/Middle Eastern for ambiance. Kids will sit on this during story or even better—have 2, one for the diorama also.
- Sweets and a bowl. Use a really pretty bowl, or several bowls if you have a large group. Use small sweets that do not need unwrapping, and can be eaten quickly. We used chocolate covered raisons, and allowed just one. Counting takes too long. Unless all are the same flavor/color, Jelly beans will

cause too much distraction b/c kids will obsess over what color they want. This is meant to be a quick break, to enrich the experience, not a major diversion.

- Sleeping mats. These were just tiny rectangular felt squares, used in the night-time scene for the dolls to rest on.
- Small square of cloth for picnic. Should be right size for several dolls to gather around with food placed on it.
- Fragrance. Its a nice touch to spray rose perfume on the garden.
- 12 Real roses with their thorns removed for handling. 3 of them should be a different color. We chose red for the 3, and yellow for the 9.

The miniature animals, trees, dolls, metal gate, benches, etc. were bought from Michaels arts and crafts store or Jo Ann Fabrics. And an electric glue gun is essential to build this!

<u>And some additional materials for a different venue:</u>

Before the public event, the garden was used in the preschool classroom, and kids got some of the roles to play. In addition to the materials described above, they had *tiny pieces of felt dipped in rose water or rose oil* which they wiped their dolls with before they would go into the garden to see Baha'u'llah. (Baha'u'llah was only depicted by a taj on a pillow. I am not sure this is Ok?)

For the classroom drama, kids clothed and decorated their own dolls and adults helped glue gun the fabric on. Also before the dolls went into the garden, children pretended to brush and comb their "hair" with *tiny plastic brushes and combs*.

At various points throughout the script, kids were invited to move the animals, dolls, boat, etc. This is not feasible in a larger celebration. 6-12 children is about right for the class interactive version. *The preschool class script which is almost the same, but indicates actions which children do, follows this one*. The goal of course is to stimulate as many senses as possible in making a lasting impression of the magnitude of this holy period known as Ridvan.

All the following materials in italic are in miniature, to fit inside the diorama.

***Materials checklist to bring to Celebration:*** Garden*,* supports for garden such as crates or low table*, dolls, baby doll, taj on pillow, tent and it's rug, pile of miniature roses, house, baskets w/ food, sleeping mats, gardeners' hats, horse, donkey, simple boat, paddle,* nightingale picture, tape of nightingales cued and ready to play in a boombox, crown and pillow, 12 real roses—3 red, 9 yellow or pink or white, carpet, cloth to cover garden, sweets, bowl for sweets, scripts, timer, rose fragrance.

# Ridvan Garden Story

*(Invite audience to gather around the veiled garden: Little ones sit around edge of carpet, older kids behind them on knees, adults standing behind them. Ask children to not get on the carpet. Explain that during refreshments, groups of 4-5 kids can play in the garden w/ dolls. A timer will be used to rotate groups if necessary.)*

(Baha= short for Baha'u''llah, ***bold italic is spoken dialogue which includes action***, *italic which is in parenthesis is not spoken, but movement takes place.)*

## INTRODUCTION

Do you know how long the Festival of Ridvan is? It is 12 days long. 12 is also called a dozen. Eggs come in a dozen, but something else does too – roses. *(Have 12 roses ready, and while children count, lay them on the carpet around the garden, using different colors for 1, 9, & 12).* You will notice that the 1st, 9th, and 12th roses are different. During the story you will find out why.

It was during the 12 days of Ridvan that Baha'u'llah first told people that He was the Messenger promised by God whose teachings would bring world peace. All the past Messengers promised in Their books He would come. Ridvan was when that promise came true.

This is why Baha'u'llah called Ridvan the King of Festivals. *(Hold crown on top of pillow covered with velvet.)*

Baha'u'llah said: *Verily I say, this is the Day in which mankind can behold the Face, and hear the Voice, of the Promised One.....* (Gleanings, pages 10-11)

Thus, the holy days of Ridvan are the most holy of all Baha'i holy days.

Do you know why it's called Ridvan? It's because Baha'u'llah shared the news that He was the Promised One in a garden called Ridvan. Ridvan means paradise, which is like heaven.

**EXPLANATION OF THE VEIL**

Do you know why the garden is hidden under this veil? Its b/c much of what happened during those 12 days in the garden of Ridvan is a secret. Baha'u'llah said what took place there had to be kept a hidden secret.

He explains that it was SO wonderful, SO amazing, SO powerful spiritually that if people were to fully understand their souls would not be able to handle it. But we know a few things about those special days, and we'd like to tell you that story. *(Lift veil)*

## THE RIDVAN STORY

The Ridvan story takes place in a far away land called Iraq, in the city of Baghdad.

Everyone in Baghdad was so sad! Baha'u'llah was moving away to another place. You see Baha'u'llah had lived in that city for many years. The people of Baghdad loved Him so much. Baha'u'llah was very kind and loving toward everyone. He would give money to people who didn't have any. He would visit the old and the sick in Baghdad bringing fruits and sweets. On days that He could not visit them He sent others in His place who would cook food and clean their houses. The rich and the poor alike loved Baha'u'llah.

B/c He was loved so much, powerful leaders became jealous. So they worked together to force Baha'u'llah out of Baghdad to a country far away.

Those wicked leaders did not want people to be more in love with Baha than with them. They did not want Baha's teachings to spread. They thought that by getting rid of Him, people would just forget about Baha and His teachings. But they were wrong. There are millions of people today who love Baha'u'llah and practice His teachings.

I want you to know that in our religion, and in several others, out of respect and reverence for the holiness of God's Messengers, we do not show Them in pictures or pretend to be Them in drama. We use symbols instead. We will symbolize Baha by this taj on this pillow.

Many people came to Baha'u'llah's house to say good bye. *(Gather dolls around house).* They were so so sad. "Do not leave us!" they begged "We can't live without you!" Crying men and women ***laid their young children and babies*** at His feet saying: "Take our children, only promise not to leave us!" You see, these parents loved Baha as much as their own children! Baha'u'llah tenderly lifted these babies one by one, gently kissed and blessed them and gave them back to their parents, telling them to raise their children to serve God.

So many weeping and upset people came to the house that Baha's family could not pack their belongings, so.....

Baha decided to take His oldest son, Abdu'l-Baha, with Him to a garden nearby. At the garden Baha would then pitch a tent, visit with people and say His good-byes.

As Baha left His house, men threw themselves in His path just so that His blessed feet might touch them as He passed. As Baha walked out, He gave generously to the poor and comforted people who would never see Him again. But no words could help them feel better.

## BAHA'U'LLAH RIDES A DONKEY

Baha usually rode upon a donkey wherever He went, so we'll imagine Him ***taking the donkey to a boat*** which will take Him to the garden. He always wore a simple turban but when He boarded the boat He wore a beautiful taj.

*(Have boatman take a pillow with a taj on it. Move paddle along side boat as its moved. After that, take other dolls by boat to the garden.)* ***Now everyone is going to board the boat to go to the garden of Ridvan.***

**ENTERING THE GARDEN OF RIDVAN,**

**THE 1st DAY OF RIDVAN**

On the first day of Ridvan, Baha'u'llah entered the garden. *(Move taj into Garden and turn on nightingale tape.)* Do you hear that? The nightingales are singing. *(Point out picture of nightingale.)* The Ridvan garden was full of nightingales. The garden was aflame with the brilliant color of roses and the air was thick with their sweet smell. It was as if the garden knew of the great sadness that people felt and it wanted to tell the joyous news of Baha's message to lift their spirits. Just think about how special that day was!

Close your eyes and think about the sweetness of the smell of the roses. Hear the sweetness of the nightingale's singing. Think about the sweetness of the love that Baha had for all people, even those who wanted to hurt Him. Think about the sweetness of His teachings, which came from God.

Baha'u'llah said:

*Cause me to taste, O my Lord, the divine sweetness of Thy remembrance and praise.* (Prayers and Meditations, pages 82-83)

And now you can taste ***a sweet chocolate*** to remind you about these things.

**PILING THE ROSES, HAVING TEA**

Everyday at sunrise the gardeners would pick the roses that lined the four avenues of the garden and pile them in front of Baha's tent.

*(Put gardener's hats on dolls and pick mini-flowers and place them in front of the tent.)*

So large was their pile of roses that when Baha'u'llah's companions gathered there to have tea they were unable to see each other across it.

*(Place the large glued pile of miniature roses on the rug then get out the cups of tea and sit dolls around the pile on the rug.)*

What do you think Baha did with all those roses? ..... He gave a rose to each visitor, sometimes extras for those who were sick and could not come to visit. *(Pick up a real rose and cradle it.)* The visitors would carry those precious roses home so tenderly. Each night the gardeners prayed that there would be many more roses blooming the next morning for Baha's tent.

**HOLDING THE TENT ROPES**

While Baha was encamped in the Ridvan garden there was much wind for some days. *(Shake the tent and make wind sounds).* His tent swayed. Some thought it might be blown down, so they took turns to sit and hold the tent ropes so that it would stay steady. *(Choose 4 dolls to stand next to the 4 corners of the tent).* Night and day they held the ropes, so glad, in this way, to be near Baha.

## NIGHT IN THE GARDEN AND THE NIGHTINGALES

***At night, everyone would sleep in the garden****. (Get felt rectangles and lay a doll down on each one.)*

One night Baha came out of His tent and some followed Him on a walk. *(Choose 4 dolls to wake up)*

The sound of the nightingales was so loud *(turn up the tape)* that it was hard to hear Him speak even though He was only a few steps away. Baha paused to gather those near Him. He said: "Listen to these nightingales, they love the roses so much that they stay up all night to sing about it. How can anyone who says they are in love with God choose to sleep during these days?"

(Paraphrase, taken from God Passes By, page 153)

Each time anyone passed Baha's tent at night they noticed that He was awake. Yet He never got tired and continued to spread love and joy to the stream of visitors who kept flowing in from Baghdad. *(Turn down the nightingale tape).*

## THE 9TH DAY OF RIDVAN--BAHA'U'LLAH'S FAMILY JOINS

*(Have all dolls wake up for this new day).*

Morning dawned on the 9th day of Ridvan. Do you remember the special colored roses? The ninth rose represents this special day. On this day, Baha's family joined Him in the garden.

*(Place a woman, a boy, and girl doll in the boat*. Put baskets of food and miniature blanket in boat. Move to entrance of garden.)*

They brought food and blankets with them and I imagine they all had a picnic in the garden. *(Show dolls having a picnic, using a small square of cloth for family to sit on.)*

**(Is this okay—to represent some of the Holy family with dolls? Based on the account of Bahiyyih Khanum, taken from Days of Ridvan, p. 53, We are assuming that Abdu'l-Baha was already in the Garden with Baha'u'llah, and that the children are Bahiyyih, possibly Mirza Mihdi, and others. We deliberately did not mention Abdu'l-Baha, b/c we know He should not be represented with a doll.)*

## THE 12TH DAY OF RIDVAN--THE RED ROAN

The 12th day of Ridvan was the very last day. Throughout that day, people poured into the garden to make their final farewells. A beautiful ***red roan horse*** was given to Baha'u'llah to ride.

A ***man*** *(new doll)* named Siyyid Husayn came with the horse to help care for it. Siyyid Husayn was a funny guy. He really loved to say or do something to make Baha'u'llah smile. He used to ***dance*** in front of Baha's horse to get Baha to laugh.

Finally, at sunset, the camels mules were all loaded, everyone took their seats, and the red roan ***stallion*** was brought out for Baha'u'llah to mount. *(Dolls gather into the street, around horse, taj is placed on saddle.)*

The call to prayer was heard: 'Allah-u-Akbar' – God is the Greatest! – rang out as He was leaving. People ***threw themselves*** in the path of Baha's horse to try to keep Him from going.

Remember, in the beginning of the story I had said that Baha'u'llah always wore a simple turban and rode a little donkey.

On that day for the first time everyone saw that Baha'u'llah was an excellent horseback rider.

When He left the garden of Ridvan He rode away like a king wearing a beautiful tall taj, riding his red roan horse!

Baha told everyone: "Don't be sad – beloved friends will be staying here with you in Baghdad. I will send a message to you as to how we are doing. Serve God and live in peace." (Paraphrase taken from the spoken chronicle of Mirza Asadu'llah Kashani in Days of Ridvan).

The people of Baghdad who were left behind were terribly sad but at the same time had an unspeakable feeling of joy and love b/c a new Messenger from God had once again returned to this world.

**THE END**

**Ridvan Garden Children's Class**

Same story as above, but altered to include children in the actions. They get to use dolls they made to participate in the story.

For details in making the materials for this class, see the description at the beginning of the previous document entitled Ridvan Garden Story for Public Celebration. ***Bolded words in italic are spoken dialogue which includes action***, (*italic words which are in parenthesis are not spoken, but movement takes place).* Baha is short for Baha'u'llah.

Because preschoolers are so fussy about who gets to do what, and the last thing we wanted was a tantrum to ruin the atmosphere we so laboriously created, Jackie handled the participatory actions this way: Children moved only their own dolls and a few designated objects. Their dolls had equal status—the dolls representing Abdu'l-Baha's mother and siblings were made and moved by adults. The actions were divided up so that all students got to participate in unique actions with objects and/or their own dolls at least once, and many times, the whole group got to use their dolls at once. How you divide up the action is of course based on your own needs, the number of kids, maturity levels, size of the garden, etc. There are many actions in this story that a child is not designated to do, but which they could easily do. We wanted the kids to remain entranced and calm, so that meant more adult control over how the story flowed—otherwise, with a bunch of little ones over-involved, it could easily become mayhem. It also disrupts the continuity of the story if the narrator has to keep stopping to give instructions for actions.

## DEVOTIONS: Prayers, Allah'u'Abha

## INTRODUCTION

Today's class is extra special b/c we will be learning about Ridvan. Do you know how long the Festival of Ridvan is? It is 12 days long. 12 is also called a dozen. Eggs come in a dozen, but something else does too – roses. *(Have 12 roses ready, and while children count, lay them on a pretty cloth, using different colors for 1, 9, & 12).* You will notice that the 1st, 9th, and 12th roses are different. During the story you will find out why.

It was during these 12 days of Ridvan that Baha'u'llah first told people that He was the Messenger promised by God whose teachings would bring world peace.

All the past Messengers promised in Their books He would come. Ridvan was when that promise came true. This is why Baha called Ridvan the King of Festivals. *(Hold crown on top of pillow covered with velvet.)*

Baha said: *Verily I say, this is the Day in which mankind can behold the Face, and hear the Voice, of the Promised One.....* (Baha'u'llah: Gleanings, pages 10-11)

The holy days of Ridvan are the most holy of all Baha'i holy days.

Do you know why it's called Ridvan? It's because Baha shared the news that He was the Promised One in a garden called Ridvan. Ridvan means paradise, which is like heaven.

Today we are going to pretend that the people we made last time are going to visit the garden of Ridvan when Baha'u'llah was there.

What do you think the people should do before they go visit someone as great and holy as Baha'u' llah? (Solicit responses such as wash up, comb hair, use perfume.*)* We'll need to ***wash*** our own hands before we wash our dolls up. *(Use tiny perfumed cloths and brushes and combs for preparing dolls.)*

**RULES OF PLAY IN THE RIDVAN GARDEN**

1) When you come into the room sit around the edge of carpet under the table. Please do not get onto the rug. Be sure the people next to you have enough space too.
2) Keep your hands in your laps. You can move your doll in the garden when I call upon you. What virtues will you need to practice? (self control, patience, respect, obedience)

3) After I tell the story you will have time in groups of 4 to play with the garden. We will use a timer to take turns.

4) Please be gentle and respectful ! The garden can fall apart if we are not careful.

*(Enter room with garden diorama with dolls. Garden is in the center w/ a veil on top. Children sit around it. Have real flowers, strands of ivy, picture of a nightingale & nightingale song tape(s) ready to play. Have rose fragrance in the air.)*

**INTRODUCTION BEFORE LIFTING THE VEIL**

Do you know why the garden is hidden under this veil? Its b/c much of what happened during those 12 days in the garden of Ridvan is a secret. Baha'u'llah said what took place there had to be kept a hidden secret. He explains that it was SO wonderful, SO amazing, SO powerful spiritually that if people were to fully understand their souls would not be able to handle it.

(Provide example of strong light in the eyes?) Think of this as I tell the story. *(Lift veil)*

## THE RIDVAN STORY

The Ridvan story takes place in a far away land called Iraq, in the city of Baghdad.

Everyone in Baghdad was so sad! Baha'u'llah was moving away to another place. You see Baha had lived in that city for many years. The people of Baghdad loved Him so much. Baha was very kind and loving toward everyone. He would give money to people who didn't have any. He would visit the old and the sick in Baghdad bringing fruits and sweets. On days that He could not visit them He sent others in His place and they would cook food and clean their houses. The rich and the poor alike loved Baha.

B/c He was loved so much, powerful leaders became jealous. So they worked together to force Baha out of Baghdad to a country far away.

Those wicked leaders did not want people to be more in love with Baha than with them. They did not want Baha's teachings to spread. They thought that by getting rid of Him, people would soon forget about Baha and His teachings. But they were wrong. There are millions of people today who love Baha'u'llah and practice His teachings.

Many people came to Baha'u'llah's house to say good bye. *(Gather dolls around house).* They were so so sad. "Do not leave us!" they begged "We can't live without you!" Crying men and women ***laid their young children and babies*** at His feet saying: "Take our children, only promise not to leave us!" You see, these parents loved Baha as much as their own children! Baha'u'llah tenderly lifted these babies one by one, gently kissed and blessed them and replaced them in their parents arms, saying to raise their children to serve God.

So many weeping and upset people came to the house that Baha's family could not pack their belongings, so..... Baha decided to take His oldest son, Abdu'l-Baha, with Him to a garden nearby. At the garden Baha would then pitch a tent, visit with people and say His good-byes.

As Baha left His house, men threw themselves in His path just so that His blessed feet might touch them as He passed. As Baha walked out, He gave generously to the poor and comforted people who would never see Him again. But no words could help them feel better.

## BAHA'U'LLAH RIDES A DONKEY

Baha usually rode upon a donkey wherever He went, so we'll pretend to have Him ***take the donkey to a boat*** which will take Him to the garden. He always wore a simple turban but when He boarded the boat He wore a beautiful taj.

*(Have boatman take a pillow with a taj on it. Move paddle along side boat as its moved. After that, take other dolls by boat to the garden. )*

**ENTERING THE GARDEN OF RIDVAN, THE 1st DAY OF RIDVAN**

*(Turn on nightingale tapes)* Do you hear that? The nightingales are singing. *(Point out nightingale picture).*

The Ridvan garden was full of nightingale birds. The garden was aflame with the brilliant color of roses and the air was thick with their sweet smell. It was as if the garden knew of the great sadness that people felt and it wanted to tell the joyous news of Baha's message to lift their spirits. I want you to think about how special this day is. Close your eyes and think about the sweetness of the smell of the roses. Hear the sweetness of the nightingale's singing. Think about the sweetness of the love that Baha had for all people, even those who wanted to hurt Him.

Think about the sweetness of His teachings, which came from God.

Baha'u'llah said: *Cause me to taste, O my Lord, the divine sweetness of Thy remembrance and praise.*

(Baha'u'llah: Prayers and Meditations, pages 82-83)

I'm going to ***give you a sweet chocolate*** to remind you about these things.

*(Garden up till now does not have tent pitched. Have 2 children place the rug and then the tent.)*

**PILING THE ROSES, HAVING TEA**

Everyday at sunrise the gardeners would pick the roses that lined the four avenues of the garden and pile them in front of His tent.

*(Have 4 children put gardener's hats on their dolls and pick a couple flowers and place them in front of the tent.)*

So large was their pile of roses that when Baha'u'llah's companions gathered there to have tea they were unable to see each other across it.

*(Have <u>1 child</u> place the large miniature pile of roses on the rug then choose the next <u>4 children</u> to get out the cups of tea and sit around the pile on the rug, outside the tent—unless your tent is big enough.)*

What do you think Baha did with all those roses? ..... Baha gave a rose to each visitor, sometimes two or three, for the sick and weak at home who could not come to visit. *(Have children pass real roses to each other.)* How do you think the visitors treated the roses they received from Baha? ..... The visitors would carry those precious roses home so tenderly. Each night the gardeners prayed that there would be many more roses blooming the next morning for His tent.

## HOLDING THE TENT ROPES

While Baha was encamped in the Ridvan garden there was much wind for some days. *(Shake the tent as children make wind sounds).* His tent swayed. Some thought it might be blown down, therefore, they took turns to sit and hold the tent ropes so that it might be steady. *(Choose the next 4 children to hold tent and/or place their dolls at each corner).* Night and day they held the ropes, so glad, in this way, to be near Baha.

## NIGHT IN THE GARDEN AND THE NIGHTINGALES

*(Have all the children get felt rectangles to sleep on in the garden. They each lay their doll on a rectangle.)*

One night Baha came out of His tent and some followed Him on a walk. *(Choose next 4 children to wake up)* The sound of the nightingales was so loud *(turn up the tapes)* that it was hard to hear Him speak even though He was only a few paces away.

Baha paused to gather those near Him. He said: "Listen to these nightingales, they love the roses so much that they stay up all night to sing about it. How can anyone who says they are in love with God choose to sleep during these days?" (Paraphrase, taken from God Passes By, page 153)

Each time anyone passed Baha's tent at night they noticed that He was awake. Yet He never got tired and continued to spread love and joy to the stream of visitors who kept flowing in from Baghdad. *(Turn down the nightingale tapes).*

## THE 9TH DAY OF RIDVAN--BAHA'U'LLAH'S FAMILY JOINS

*(Have all dolls wake up for this new day).*

On the 9th day of Ridvan Baha's family joined Him in the garden. *(Place a woman, a boy, and girl doll in the boat. Name the family members.* These dolls were made by adults, so an adult does this action).* They brought ***food and blankets*** with them.

*(Adult or <u>2 Children</u> put baskets of food and miniature blanket in the boat. Have several mini baskets w/ food, a small square of cloth the right size for the doll family. Move boat to entrance.)*

*****(*Is this okay—to represent some of the Holy family with dolls? Based on the account of Bahiyyih Khanum, taken from <u>Days of Ridvan</u>, p. 53, We are assuming that Abdu'l-Baha was already in the Garden with Baha'u'llah, and that the children are Bahiyyih, possibly Mirza Mihdi, and others. We deliberately did not mention Abdu'l-Baha, b/c we know He should not be represented with a doll.)*

Let's use the little blanket for our family to sit on and ***have a picnic*****.** *(Place the blanket down and spread out the baskets and food. If preschoolers are restless by now, say something like: "Lets spread a blanket out on the floor, and have a little picnic just like Baha'u'llah's family did." Serve a quick snack, then return to story.)*

## THE 12TH DAY OF RIDVAN--THE RED ROAN

The 12th day of Ridvan was the very last day. Throughout that day, people poured into the garden to make their final farewells. A beautiful ***red roan horse*** was given to Baha'u'llah to ride.

A ***man*** *(new doll)* named Siyyid Husayn came with the horse to help care for it. Siyyid Husayn was a funny guy. He really loved to say or do something to make Baha'u'llah smile. He used to ***dance*** in front of Baha's horse to get Baha to laugh.

Finally, at sunset, the mules were all loaded, the howdahs *(nice to have a picture)* were settled on them, everyone took their seats, and the red roan stallion was brought out for Baha'u'llah to mount. There were such unbearable cries to see Baha in the saddle. *(Dolls gather into the street around the horse. Place taj on saddle.)*

The call to prayer was heard: 'Allah-u-Akbar' –God is the Greatest! rang out as He was leaving.

People ***threw themselves*** in the path of Baha's horse to try to keep Him from leaving. On that day for the first time everyone saw that Baha'u'llah was an excellent horseback rider.

Remember, in the beginning of the story I had said that Baha'u'llah always wore a simple turban and rode a little donkey. When He left the garden of Ridvan He rode away like a king wearing a beautiful tall taj, riding his red roan horse!

Baha told everyone: "Don't be sad,--- beloved friends will be staying here with you in Baghdad. I will send a message to you as to how we are doing. Serve God and live in peace." (Paraphrase taken from the spoken chronicle of Mirza Asadu'llah Kashani in Days of Ridvan). The people of Baghdad who were left behind were terribly sad but at the same time had an unspeakable feeling of joy and love b/c a new Messenger from God had once again returned to this world.

**ALLAH'U'ABAHA**

Now that the Baha'is knew the Promised One had finally come, they began to greet each other with Allah'u'abha- which means God is the most glorious! *(Optional: Sing and dance to Allah'u'abha song from Jack Lenz's " We are Baha'is" CD. )*

(Students get to take home the dolls they made, the tiny perfumed cloths, the little felt squares for sleeping mats, and a tiny rose—or a real one if there are enough.)

## 3 Dances

If you give me at least 2 weeks notice, I can also make a VHS copy of 3 different dances. I do not describe them in this document b/c I find describing choreographed dance moves way too difficult, time consuming, and not very clear no matter how detailed. (However, I do describe musical creative dramatics in this document b/c its a bit easier and less complex than dancing.) If you do want the video, please understand that of course being kids, they do not execute the choreography perfectly---but you get the idea. The students will need anywhere from 6-10 hours of rehearsal time to do these well. Here are the 3 songs my students did pure dance to, (as opposed to drama to the lyrics):

- "Brothers and Sisters" (good for ages 6-10) from Red Grammers' *Down the Do-Re-Mi* recording. We use it for our Ayyam-i-Ha party with the theme "Unity in Diversity & the Oneness of Humanity".

- "In This Day Baha'u'llah" (good for ages 8-11) from *We Have Come to Sing Praises*, by the Baha'i Gospel Choir. We use this at our public celebration of Ridvan.

- "Raise Your Voice" from the Wildfire World Theater *Wallukaga and the Kabaka, Unity Connection.* This song is a very upbeat piece from a traveling Baha'i Youth Dance Troupe. It is perfect for an Ayyam-i-Ha party or celebration with the theme of "World Unity". 9-12 year olds, who are getting more into popular music by this time, don't find it too corny to perform. Younger kids like the music but find the choreography too demanding. This recording is available through the same Canadian service which sells the Nancy Ward and Jack Lenz productions. Though their stuff is available through some other Baha'i suppliers, I don't think I have ever seen this anywhere except through www.bahaibooksonline.com.

## Hilarious Fundraiser

I want to end with a description of a fundraiser our community did in March of 2000. It was called "The Wacky-Tacky Outrageous Caricature/Fashion Show" and everybody to this day agrees it was the best and most uplifting, hilarious, enjoyable, inclusive and unifying event our community has ever had. Our community never laughed so hard and so much together--and all ages participated. The kids still ask to see the video and laugh heartily all over again. Humor and creativity were the main ingredient (I found out later that people actually peed in their pants from laughing so hard!) As outrageous as it was, it never became crude, demeaning, or gross. I must say that this community, as small as it is (about 12 active believers) is abundantly blessed with a very high percentage of playful, artistic, dramatic, and extra-ordinarily creative souls. We made $2000.00 for the arc. Baha'is came from as far as 3 hours away to attend, b/c our community has a reputation for creativity. We had about 70 guests. The location was decorated as wacky and tacky as we could dream of, using duct tape to secure every thing. I describe the event here so Baha'is everywhere can be inspired to break out of the auction mold for **fun**draisers and really have fun while raising serious funds.

We also made copies of the video tape and sold them for $10.00 so folks could someday show their unborn offspring or grandkids how cool they really are.(n't) Some acts could also truly be used as blackmail if any Baha'i ever decides to leave the Faith and go into politics. Or, if one's parents do not like a prospective spouse for their kid, there were some acts that could be used to frighten them off! On the other hand, our daughters show the video to potential suitors as a screening tool. If the guys don't flip and run out the door, or better yet, if they really like the acts, my daughters figure they can handle being a part of our family someday, --- if that option should arise for consideration.

A sampling from the 21 entries:

*Eco Girl:* We had a woman (Jackie Mulhall) dressed up in clothes made from recyclable garbage with her husband being a snooty MC complete with sunglasses and goatee, describing her high fashion.

*Vegan Voodoo:* A giant carrot (Jackie's husband, Kevin) being pursued by his kids in chefs outfits with giant forks and knives to drum music. The carrot costume, made by Jackie, was just a large long tube of stretchy orange fabric, with opening at end for feet, no arm holes, an opening for the face, and green plant like material at the top.

*Ken & Barbie:* a pair of teenage boys (Daniel and Michael Malarkey) pretending to be Ken and Barbie, singing and acting to a song by the same name

*Monster Mash:* A mad scientist (Daniel Malarkey) and his creation—a female in a leopard print gown, high heels, black long sleeved gloves, pink wig—and hideous monster mask (my younger daughter, Anisa) yielding a potato masher and dancing to the song "Monster Mash."

*A Polka in Dot's Diner--a Live Sneak Preview of the Only Fitness Video Exclusively for Waitresses:.* This is where *Recipe for a New World Order* was born (see entry in this document), though the costume was created years ago for *Moody Matilda* (Also in this document). For this fundraiser I did a shorter version with just a customer, w/o any kid-chefs. I think this was the highlight of any comedy I ever did.

*Pauline the Plumber:* A 1950's looking homemaker (Nadia Malarkey) dancing in a bathrobe, slippers, etc., with a toilet plunger, to the Austin Power's theme song for International Man of Mystery.

*The Yellow Springs Royal Ballet:* This was the grand finale. It was a bunch of professional middle-aged Baha'i men (one being my husband Roi, I am proud to say, David Mader, Behrooz Modarai, and Rick MacLean) in tights, socks, tutus, boxer shorts and t-shirts with huge paper flowers, doing hysterical ballet to Tchaikovsky's "Waltz of the Flowers" from *Nutcracker Suite*. The audience went wild.

The flyer:

Please come to the Y.S. community's Fund Raiser for the Arc.

We promise you will eat well and laugh a lot
because we have really summoned up
our best creative abilities to present you with .....AN INTERNATIONAL DINNER
followed by THE WACKY TACKY OUTRAGEOUS FASHION/CARICATURE SHOW.

Also, all guests will have the privilege
of being the first to witness the
WORLD PREMIERE OF THE YELLOW SPRINGS
ROYAL BALLET!!
(Be assured, this alone is worth the admission price.)

Saturday, March 25th, 6:00 PM
The Unitarian Fellowship, 2884 U.S. Route 68,
just a few miles south of Yellow Springs.
Children and youth are most welcome to participate too.
(For more fascinating details see other side)

The call for performers:
(Describes what we were looking for, details of program, etc.)

Please come to the Y.S. community's Fund Raiser for the Arc.

We promise you will eat well and laugh a lot because we have really summoned up our best creative abilities to present you with.....AN INTERNATIONAL DINNER followed by THE WACKY TACKY OUTRAGEOUS FASHION/CARICATURE SHOW. Also, all guests will have the privilege of being the first to witness the WORLD PREMIERE OF THE YELLOW SPRINGS ROYAL BALLET!! Be assured, this alone is worth the admission price.

We would love to tap into your creative energies too. So please consider bringing a wild outfit to adorn yourself with as you prance down our runway. Depending on the # of participants, folks can be in 1-3 demonstrations of their ability to totally disengage from ego and vainglory. Here's your chance to "model" detachment from self! Most of us have a silly/goofy/weird side that is just looking for an excuse to reveal itself--and for what greater and nobler purpose can there be than for the Arc? If you don't want to be in the show, you may want to at least dress to fit the theme of our fundraiser. (Thrift stores and relatives' closets are a gold mine for unusual fashions.)

Here are some details for you to ponder:

- The date is: Saturday, March 25th. The time is: 6:00 PM sharp (we must be out by 10 PM). The location is: The Unitarian Fellowship, 2884 U.S. Route 68, just a few miles south of Yellow Springs. From I-70 take U.S. 68 South. Pass through Yellow Springs. At 1.8 miles past the KFC the Fellowship will be on your left. From Cincinnati take I-675 N. Go East on U.S. 35. Take U.S. 68 North (left). The Fellowship will be on your right approximately one mile after you pass State Route 235. If you get lost call the Fellowship at 937-372-5613.

- Children and youth are most welcome to participate too.

- Non-Baha'is are welcome, as long as a Baha'i pays for their ticket.

- All you need to do is: send your check by MARCH 15TH to Yellow Springs Baha'i Community, P.O. Box 93, Yellow Springs, Ohio, 45387. Checks should be made out to Yellow Springs Baha'i Fund, earmarked for the Arc Fundraiser. The *suggested* minimum donation is: $20.00 for individuals, 30.00 for married couples, 10.00 for children under 15, and is free for kids 2 and under. *Please specify # of people your check represents*. This is your RSVP. We must have this information to determine the amount of food needed. If you really loved the show, you can always give more at the event. If you hate the show, you can still give more for love of the Faith. Don't wait until the last minute--space is limited to 75 people. BUT PLEASE COME EVEN IF YOU CAN AFFORD TO DONATE ONLY $1.00 per person! You can always say extra prayers instead of giving more money. Your participation and prayers are even more important to the success of the event than the cash!!! From

a spiritual perspective, its the unified efforts, sacrifices and prayers that will truly help the Arc get built. For some, $1.00 per family member is a sacrifice, and that is what attracts spiritual confirmations, not the dollar amount itself.

- If you plan to submit yourself to being in the show, call Linden Qualls at 937-767-7079 NO LATER THAN March 20th. You will need to give her a title for your presentation. We must know in advance so we can organize a play list.

- Some tips for participants: You can be as wacky, tacky, weird, bizarre, etc. as you like as long as you are reasonably modest. (No cleavage, for example). Please be careful not to mock or portray any negative stereotypes of different nationalities, ethnic groups, religions, age groups, genders, or large or disabled folks. Its OK to poke fun at and satirize cultural fads and trends though, (like new age, punk, hippie, etc).

- You can bring your own entrance music. Have the selection clearly marked so our sound technician can find it quickly. Be aware that you don't need to be on stage long enough for an entire song, however.

- We are thinking that the pure fashion walk/prance will take less than 3 minutes for each outfit and mini-skits (that's *skits*, not *skirts*, by the way) and other miscellaneous expressions of creativity, less than 5 minutes per piece.

- You can dance as you present your attire. (You should have seen Nadia Malarkey as "Pauline the Plumber" dancing to an Austin Powers piece at our Feast to promote this idea. It was hysterical. If you're lucky, she may do it again at this event!)

- Remember, exaggeration and extremes are the key to caricature portrayal. Some ideas to get your imagination ticking: the tacky tourist, the over glamorous pop diva, the earth goddess, the just-too-cool-for-you type, the 50's housewife TV commercial model, the aren't-I-so-beautiful/handsome super model, the gruff cleaning woman, the mafia man, the computer geek, the macho Marlboro man. (See, there are plenty of opportunities for you guys out there!) Think of classic characters on TV and in the movies and then really intensify their attitudes, mannerisms and attributes. Or make up your own character. Just have fun doing it. Practice in front of a mirror to make sure you look totally ridiculous.

- There will be no time for a dress rehearsal, so please come well prepared. Your outfit and/or skit should not take more than 5 minutes to be ready. We'll supply the safety pins. You will learn your position on the play list when you get here. But DO NOT wear your outfit to the dinner. We want this to be a surprise! Labeled brown paper bags work wonders for concealing your creation.

# VIRTUES LIST & SOME COMMENTARY

Here is a list of virtues you can refer to when designing skits or asking children to label virtues in a dramatic piece. Many are very similar, for example: consideration/thoughtfulness/courtesy, compassion/kindness/caring, faithfulness/loyalty, fairness/justice, truthfulness/honesty, etc.)

One thing that has become very clear to both Jackie and me in teaching virtues is that often one finds in a behavior that is virtuous, aspects of several virtues. Also, that often one virtue is a subset of another or involves an aspect of another. For example, patience almost always involves self control and detachment, generosity involves detachment and sacrifice, responsibility involves reliability and trustworthiness, contentment involves gratitude for what one has, obedience involves detachment and sacrifice of one's own will, etc.

About trustworthiness: This virtue is given special emphasis in the Baha'i Writings. It is more encompassing than honesty and truthfulness--you can be honest but not trustworthy, but you can't be trustworthy and not honest. Thus, basically, honesty is a subset of trustworthiness, but not the other way around. Trustworthiness includes honesty and truthfulness, but honesty does not necessarily include trustworthiness.

For example, you don't lie but you don't show up for appointments or you make commitments you don't keep, ---but if you are trustworthy, you never lie *and* are reliable and always keep your word, etc. In other words, if one is worthy of trust, they do not break trust by lying *or* letting others down. One can be honest but really untrustworthy in other ways. I know people like that. They tend to make a lot of excuses. My students frequently confuse trustworthiness with honesty, so I felt compelled to share how I clarify it to them.

For excellent descriptions and resources of virtues see Linda Kavelin Popov's virtues materials. Decks of cards, books, and music about virtues are all available through the Baha'is Distribution Service (800-999-9019) or through the Virtues Project Website: www.virtuesproject.com

Here is a list. I am sure there are more, but this is plenty to work with. This list is on my classroom wall on a large decorated poster and my students refer to it constantly when I ask questions in class. My daughters also frequently used it when young. I use it when there is a conflict and I take those involved to the list and ask what virtues were missing from the interaction, which thus caused the problem, and what virtues would remedy the situation. The list is the focal point of many games and activities. The list enables virtues awareness to become deeply integrated into our family and class life. I also used it every day to point out what virtues I witnessed in my daughters. It now helps me see virtues in my students that I may be over-looking. I often refer to it when asking kids what virtues the characters in stories were displaying or missing, to create educational activities, and when creating affirmations for people. I can't imagine a home or school environment with out such a list!

The list is on next page.

## Virtues to Bring Joy and Beauty to the World

caring
cleanliness
compassion
consideration
contentment
cooperation
courage
courtesy
creativity
detachment
determination
discipline
enthusiasm
excellence
fairness
faithfulness
flexibility
forbearance
forgiveness
friendliness
generosity
gentleness
gratitude
helpfulness
honesty
humour
humility
joyfulness
justice
kindness
love
loyalty
mercy
moderation
modesty
obedience
orderliness
patience
peacefulness
perseverance
reliability
respect
responsibility
reverence
sacrifice
self control
service
steadfastness
tactfulness
tolerance
trustworthiness
truthfulness
wisdom