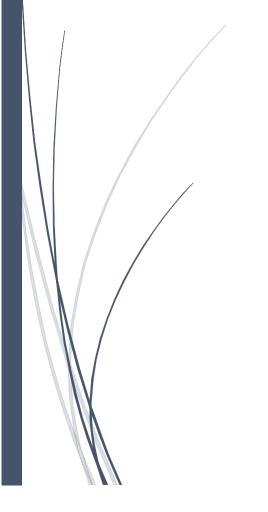
# Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Programme

School Prospectus







Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Programme info@prosperityfoundation.org.nz

Prosperity Foundation,
16 Rowandale Ave, 2102 Auckland

Dear	_,
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Thank you for your interest in collaborating with us to establish the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Programme in your school and community.

Education is of course indispensable for individual and collective progress. In striving for Hauora (health and wellbeing), communities are increasingly learning to tend towards physical, spiritual, mental and social wellbeing. Education must consist of material learning related to all intellectual fields of human endeavour, as well as learning concerned with refining character and qualities of the human spirit which enable people to make sound moral choices and to serve their whanau and community effectively. At this time when new challenges effect our communities on a daily basis, it is necessary that parents, communities, government and educators strengthen collective effort to empower young people to realise their potential to be builders of a just and peaceful world.

The Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Programme engages 'junior youth' - those aged roughly 11 to 15 - in an educational process of intellectual and moral empowerment. Tuakana-teina underpins the programme which facilitates the voluntary service of older youth – usually aged 17 to 30 – who act as true friends and wise advisers to their younger peers. Through a combination of study, discussion, arts, recreation and service projects, the programme assists young people in navigating a crucial stage of life, one in which they encounter both opportunities and challenges as they investigate the world and develop their sense of identity and purpose. The programme is founded upon the belief that those in their early adolescence possess altruism, a sense of justice and a desire to contribute to the construction of a better world.

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

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

Sincerely,

### General information

### **Background**

Deep seated social and economic problems effect young people most severely. When social environments become degraded through backbiting, teasing, exclusion, bullying, gossip, conflict, violence, threats and mistrust, the impact of such an environment on young people becomes evident in signs of distraction, depression, self-harm, suicide, truancy and drop out. At this time when our young face new and serious challenges, it seems necessary that parents, whanau, leaders and educators reflect more deeply on how we can work together to collectively empower young people to not only defend themselves against harmful forces but to realise their true potential as builders of a just and peaceful world.

### Nature of the programme

The Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Programme (JYSEP) is an educational process which seeks to develop the intellectual and moral capabilities of 'junior youth' - those between the ages of 11 and 15. The programme makes strong reference to the four dimensions of Hauora (health and wellbeing) – physical, spiritual, mental and social. It is conceived of as a 'spiritual' empowerment programme in that it places emphasis on developing the qualities of the human spirit such as truthfulness, hope, generosity, compassion and excellence, as well as 'physical' and intellectual powers, such as scientific reasoning, analysis, creative thinking, expression and comprehension. The 'mental/emotional' and 'social' aspects of wellbeing are addressed in the context of the friendships and bods of mutual support established between programme participants, facilitators and with whanau.

The programme is organised around the concept of a junior youth group which meets regularly to engage in various activities. The nature of the group is one in which the junior youth take ownership as they consult with one another, build unity and support one another. The atmosphere of the group meetings is joyous, friendly, intimate and free of censure or ridicule. A junior youth group will meet once or twice weekly during or after school, depending on local circumstances. Some of the activities that the group will participate in include the exploration of moral concepts through the study of the program curriculum, complimentary arts and crafts, sporting activities and recreation, and the designing and implementing of community service projects.

Community development is not something which one group carries out on behalf of another. Social transformation requires the active participation of the community itself. The junior youth programme facilitates tuakana-teina - a group is guided by an older youth mentor, known as an 'animator'. The animator is a true friend who helps the junior youth to create this environment and accompanies them throughout the duration of the programme.

### **Aims**

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

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

### Why junior youth?

The period of junior youth – the years from 11 to 15 - represents a unique and pivotal time in one's life. It is a transitional period during which rapid physical, intellectual, emotional and moral changes occur. Junior youth are no longer children and should not be treated as such, but they are also not yet in the fullness of youth. During these years, young people develop habits, attitudes and beliefs which are very difficult to alter once puberty is past. It is therefore essential that young people receive appropriate guidance and direction during these formative years.

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

### Junior youth texts

A curriculum of texts form a core element of the junior youth programme. There are currently 12 texts available (as of Feb 2025), each of which focus on the development of particular moral capabilities, for example, hope and excellence. The study of each text also stimulates the development of essential intellectual capabilities such as literacy, numeracy, and scientific reasoning. The exploration of concepts in the texts inspires meaningful service projects, artistic and cultural expression and equips young adolescents with the skills, attitudes and qualities necessary to deal with the complexities of life.

### Service projects

Service projects provide opportunities for junior youth to channel their talents, energies and aspirations towards improving the community by putting into practice what they have learnt. Throughout the programme, animators will assist the junior youth to make observations about their environment, think of ways in which the group can serve others and combat issues facing them. Animators will support the group by helping them to devise projects, implement them and reflect on what they learn and how they can improve. The projects develop leadership, initiative, and creativity, build unity, and give junior youth the conviction that they can improve the conditions of the world around them.

# Programme Curriculum

Cover	Title	Age	Category	Brief description
Breezes Confirmation	Breezes of Confirmation	11-13	Language & Expression	Gaining an understanding that when we work towards noble goals our efforts attract divine confirmation
Wellspring of Joy  PRE FUELCATION EDITION MATERIAL IN DEVELOPMENT  VERSON 1.1.1.PF	Wellspring of Joy	11-13	Language & Expression	Developing an appreciation of the profound connection between joy, reliance on God, and certitude
Habits of an Orderly Mind  PREPRIESCATION EDITION MATERIAL EN BUYLLOMINY VERSION LLL.PF  REMARKS	Habits of an Orderly Mind	11-13	Scientific	Exploring the characteristics of an orderly mind, with a view to developing those habits needed to draw on its powers - imagination, thought, memory, and understanding
Glimmerings Höpe	Glimmerings of Hope	11-13	Language & Expression	Gaining an understanding of the concepts of hope and despair and recognizing that one's choices in life have implications
Walking Straight Path	Walking the Straight Path	13-14	Language & Expression	Recognizing the moral implications of actions through traditional stories from different cultures that address universal themes

On Health and Well-Being  PRE-PUBLICATION EDITION  MATERIAL IN SECURITION  A TELEPHONE	On Health and Well-Being	13-14	Scientific	Learning about common diseases and the immune system to gain an understanding of the importance of protecting the body and drawing on knowledge, both scientific and spiritual, in promoting well-being
Learning About Excellence  FILE PERIOD SPILION MALIBRA IN SPILIOPERS  WHEN AS A SPILIOPERS  WHEN AS A SPILIOPERS  WHEN AS A SPILIOPERS  WHEN AS A SPILIOPERS	Learning About Excellence	13-14	Language & Expression	Reflecting on the meaning of excellence in the context of work and family relations, as well as its intellectual and spiritual dimensions; exploring the nature of spiritual excellence as it pertains to rectitude of conduct, a chaste and holy life, and freedom from prejudice
Thinking About Numbers  FE PERICENS ENTIREM VALUE OF THE PERICENS AND THE PERIOD VALUE OF THE PERIOD VALUE	Thinking About Numbers	13-14	Mathematics	Thinking about some of the applications of mathematical concepts in day-to-day life, with a view to enhancing those capabilities needed to make numerical statements about reality
Drawing Power Word	Drawing on the Power of the Word	14-15	Language & Expression	Exploring the nature of material and spiritual progress and the importance of the effective use of language in achieving it
Observation and Insight  FIR PRINTIPO CRITICS  MATERIAL S DIVISORMAN  VERSION LLLIF  STREET	Observation and Insight	14-15	Scientific	Learning what careful observation entails and recognizing how important it is in understanding physical and social reality and in bringing about the kind of changes needed to achieve enduring prosperity
The Human Temple  FILTERICATION ENTIRES  MATERIAL TO SENSE OF SENSE  VERNING LEAFF	The Human Temple	14-15	Language & Expression	Gaining insight into the inner powers that adorn the human being, which distinguish us from the rest of creation

Making Sense of Data				
FRE-PUBLICATION EDITION MATERIAL IN DEVELOPMENT VERSION 1.1.1.1FF Subman Stat.	Making Sense of Data	14-15	Mathematics	Enhancing the capacity to draw conclusions about the world by using numerical data
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# Reflections from participants, families and animators



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

Former participant

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

Current participant

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



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

Former participant



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

Former participant



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

Former participant





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



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

Former participant

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

Current participant



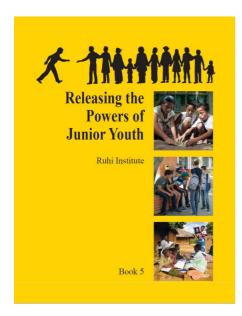


# Training youth to serve as animators

#### The Ruhi Institute

Since its inception in the early 1970s, the Ruhi Institute has striven to serve through its educational activities young people between the ages of 11 and 15, often referred to as 'junior youth', who represent a special segment of society. As it witnessed the idealism and energy of so many in this age range, the Institute became convinced of the importance of providing them with the opportunity to explore a number of themes and concepts that would enable them to deal with the complexities of life, combat the forces of moral decay gaining strength everywhere, and become active agents of social change.

Book 5: Releasing the Powers of Junior Youth



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

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

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

<u>Unit 3:</u> Serving as an Animator: The purpose of the third unit, 'Serving as an Animator', is to help participants become familiar with the various aspects of the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Programme. After first considering the nature of the group, the unit embarks on a discussion of the materials, the study of which represents the core of the Program. The unit ends by discussing several matters related to the work of the animator, sharing insights into how to go about helping a number of young people form a group, how to conduct the first few meetings, and how to converse with parents about the nature of the programme and the progress of their sons and daughters. The capabilities required to serve effectively as an animator will, of course, develop over time, and those pursuing this path of service need not feel compelled, at the beginning, to offer the program in all of its dimensions.

## Frequently asked questions

### Is this a religious programme?

The Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Programme is not a religious program in that it does not seek to indoctrinate participants into a particular religious community. Rather, it seeks to provide young people with the opportunity to explore moral and academic themes and concepts that would enable them to defend themselves from harmful social trends, strengthen a healthy sense of identity and purpose, combat the forces of moral decay gaining strength everywhere, and become active agents of social change. The programme is shaped by the assumption that human nature is both material and spiritual, and that attention needs to be given to developing both the powers of our mind and spirit.

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

### What does 'spiritual empowerment' mean?

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

### What is the duration of the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Programme?

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

### What training do animators of the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Programme receive?

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

being able to offer the Program in its entirety as they gain experience in interacting with junior youth.

### Can students, teachers and parents be involved hands-on with the Programme?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Quote from a text of the program