



A HANDBOOK FOR CHILDRENS' CLASS COORDINATORS

A compilation of recent guidance from the Universal House of Justice and International Teaching Centre concerning the duties and responsibilities of children's class coordinators

The Coordinator

Q. What are some of the abilities and qualities one should try to develop in order to be an effective coordinator?

“A number of attitudes and abilities are essential to foster in coordinators at all levels: deep understanding and appreciation of the nature, purpose, and methods of the training institute; commitment to the community-building process; recognition of the need to nurture the potential of others; dedication to learning; a collaborative spirit; and a readiness to support others and be supported by them in adhering to a Bahá’í way of life.” (1)

“Let the coordinators of every training institute, the members of every Area Teaching Committee, every Auxiliary Board member and every one of his or her assistants, and all members of every local, regional and national Bahá’í body, whether elected or appointed, appreciate the significance of the Guardian’s plea to ponder in their hearts the implications of the moral rectitude which he described with such clarity. May their actions serve as a reminder to a beleaguered and weary humanity of its high destiny and its inherent nobility.” (6)

“From among these dedicated friends, some, thoroughly conversant with the processes shaping the cluster, attend to the administrative needs of the Plan as cluster coordinators...” (1)

Q. What should motivate a coordinator?

“Their [the coordinators’] actions are always motivated by a desire to see capacity develop in others and to foster friendships founded on cooperation and reciprocity.” (5)

Q. What assistance is available to a coordinator for the fulfilment of their responsibilities?

“The work of the coordinator should be reinforced by assistance from a growing number of experienced individuals, and meetings for the exchange of information and insights become regular and more systematic in approach. So, too, must periodic occasions be created for the three coordinators appointed by the institute—or, where applicable, teams of coordinators concerned with study circles, junior youth groups and children’s classes respectively—to examine together the strength of the educational process as a whole.” (2)

“At a minimum, in the most advanced clusters a trio of coordinators is appointed, one for each of the three defined areas of action of the institute. As various subunits are identified, the more experienced friends may be asked to serve as additional institute coordinators or as helpers to coordinators.” (1)

Q. How long does a coordinator normally serve for?

“Experience in recent years clearly indicates that coordinators will need to be allowed to serve for a few years in order for the required capacity to be built, and creative means will have to be developed to enable them to devote a period of their lives to this field of

endeavor, perhaps, in the case of the youth, in conjunction with their continuing education.” (1)

Q. *If tests or difficulties are encountered during one’s service, how can they be overcome?*

“Obstacles, when they arise, are ultimately resolved through perseverance and further experience. Fruitless debate, insistence on personal views, creating false dichotomies, or the “tendency to reduce a complex process of transformation into simplistic steps, susceptible to instruction” can be carefully avoided or wisely overcome. It is learning together that is yielding the insights necessary so that “stumbling blocks can be made stepping stones for progress”.” (1)

Materials and Curriculum

Q. *Which material should be used by teachers in their classes?*

“...we explained in our Riḍván 2010 message that the lessons prepared by the Ruhi Institute would constitute the core of a programme for the spiritual education of children, around which secondary elements could be organized.” (2)

“The Ruhi Institute has already been requested to expedite plans to complete its courses for training children’s class teachers at different levels including the corresponding lessons, starting with youngsters aged 5 or 6 and proceeding to those aged 10 or 11, in order to close the present gap between existing lessons and its textbooks for junior youth, such as *Spirit of Faith* and the forthcoming *Power of the Holy Spirit*, which provide a distinctly Bahá’í component to the program for that age group. As these additional courses and lessons become available, institutes in every country will be able to prepare the teachers and the coordinators required to put in place, grade by grade, the core of a program for the spiritual education of children, around which secondary elements can be organized. Meanwhile, institutes should do their best to provide teachers with suitable materials, from among others currently in existence, for use in their classes with children of various ages, as necessary.” (3)

Q. *How would one know if extra material, other than the Ruhi books, is required in a particular class?*

“Whether or not any additional elements are required to reinforce the educational process for each grade would generally be determined by teachers themselves, on the basis of specific circumstances, not infrequently in consultation with the institute coordinator at the cluster level.” (2)

Q. *If needed, where should additional elements come from?*

“It is assumed that, if found to be appropriate, any additional items would be selected from resources readily available.” (2)

“We long to see, for instance, the emergence of captivating songs from every part of the world, in every language, that will impress upon the consciousness of the young the profound concepts enshrined in the Bahá’í teachings.” (2)

Q. If found to be useful, should these additional items be promoted for use in all classes?

“There will seldom be cause to formalize the use of such items, whether directly through their adoption by training institutes or indirectly through their widespread systematic promotion.” (2)

Building Capacity and Accompaniment

Q. Is the training of new teachers, by itself, enough to bring about progress?

“Of course, it is not the provision of training by itself that brings about progress.” (5)

Q. What else is required?

“Efforts to build capacity fall short if arrangements are not swiftly made to accompany individuals into the arena of service.” (5)

“And as men and women of various ages move along the sequence and complete their study of each course with the help of tutors, others must stand ready to accompany them in acts of service undertaken according to their strengths and interests—particularly the coordinators responsible for children’s classes, for junior youth groups and for study circles, acts of service crucial to the perpetuation of the system itself.” (3)

Q. After training, is it enough to encourage the teachers of children’s classes with words alone?

“An adequate level of support extends far beyond encouraging words. When preparing to take on an unfamiliar task, working alongside a person with some experience increases consciousness of what is possible. An assurance of practical help can give a tentative venturer the courage to initiate an activity for the first time. Souls then advance their understanding together, humbly sharing the insights each possesses at a given moment and eagerly seeking to learn from fellow wayfarers on the path of service.” (5)

Q. What is an indication that an individual has been accompanied effectively?

“Hesitation recedes and capacity develops to the point where an individual can carry out activities independently and, in turn, accompany others on the same path.” (5)

“Not only are courses being held to train teachers for the first three grades of the program for which materials currently exist but a network of coordinators and their helpers is also gradually being established in each cluster to accompany the teachers, so that they can learn to sustain the classes and help the children to advance from grade to grade each year.” (1)

Reflection Meetings

Q. What is a reflection meeting?

“Specifically, a space has been created, in the agency of the reflection meeting, for those engaged in activities at the cluster level to assemble from time to time in order to reach

consensus on the current status of their situation, in light of experience and guidance from the institutions, and to determine their immediate steps forward. A similar space is opened by the institute, which makes provision for those serving as tutors, children's class teachers, and animators of junior youth groups in a cluster to meet severally and consult on their experience." (3)

"He or she [the coordinator] should arrange periodic gatherings for them to reflect on their endeavors. Events organized to repeat the study of segments selected from the institute material may occasionally prove helpful, provided they do not inculcate a need for perpetual training." (3)

"Reflection meetings ... provide spaces for the community to begin to consider how to apply the teachings of the Faith "to improve some aspect of the social or economic life of a population, however modestly"." (1)

Q. What should an effective reflection meeting include?

"Gatherings for reflection are increasingly seen as occasions where the community's efforts, in their entirety, are the subject of earnest and uplifting deliberation. Participants learn what has been accomplished overall, understand their own labours in that light, and enhance their knowledge about the process of growth by absorbing the counsels of the institutions and drawing on the experience of their fellow believers. Such experience is also shared in numerous other spaces that are emerging for consultation amongst friends intensely engaged in specific endeavours, whether they are pursuing a common line of action or serving in a particular part of the cluster." (4)

Q. With regard to the reflection meeting, is there any approach which has been found to be an obstacle to sustained progress?

"Reflection meetings sometimes centered too much on planning or instruction rather than the opportunity to learn from experience and revise action accordingly." (1)

References

- (1) Insights from the Frontiers of Learning
- (2) Letter of the Universal House of Justice, December 12, 2011
- (3) Letter of the Universal House of Justice, Ridván, 2010
- (4) Letter of the Universal House of Justice, Ridván, 2013
- (5) Letter of the Universal House of Justice, December 29, 2015
- (6) Letter of the Universal House of Justice, December 28, 2010