

External Review of Spirituality for Kids: Exploring the Journey of Life Level 2

Reviewer: Genevieve Lowry MS.Ed, CEIM, CCLS

**Reviewed Level 2: Strengths and Developmentally Appropriateness:
middle childhood**

Introduction

The reviewer was again provided with access to online materials as well as hardcopy *Lightbook* and Guidebook there was no *Family Book* included for level 2. The reviewer used the developmental lens of middle childhood learners to consider the appropriateness of the curriculum, *Spirituality for Kids Exploring the Journey of Life Level 2* to teach social emotional skills. The following is a review of the developmental appropriateness of level 2 and recommendations for creating curriculum for early childhood and adolescence for level 1 and 2.

Strengths:

Level 2 of Exploring the Journey of Life finds Ari and Gabby on their own working together to solve challenges as they move from one world to the next. Similar to Level 1, activities are accessible and encourage reflection and applications to one's own life. The inclusion of a friend as Ari continues his journey speaks to the changes that occur in middle childhood and the growing importance of peer relations. The relationship of the two children feels realistic for middle childhood friendships. One of the greatest strengths of Level 2 is the practice provided of the skills learned in Level 1. The children are often challenged to think back to what they know by referring to an earlier lesson and considering the implications to their current situation. This happens multiple times in the series reinforcing newly learned skills in practical ways that deepen a child's understanding of a concept both in the video and through the activities and journal reflections. The switch from learning in Level 1 to action in Level 2 is a smooth transition made possible by the groundwork in level 1. The two children are encouraged to work the tools and model for those watching their discussions, frustrations, and problem solving that ultimately gets them back to earth.

One issue of Level 1 was the religious overtones in the language. The language of level 2 is more inclusive and for the most part does not feel overtly religious. The focus of Level 2 provides tools for developing a True Voice and sharing the Light with others. Although in Level 2 there is less emphasis on the use of language that feels religious there are still places where this can be improved upon. Often sharing and caring is discussed as an action taken to create more spiritual fulfillment. Changing to the language of energy transfer from one to the other or to demonstrate how sharing and caring can grow might be a more accessible language. In Lesson 5 Color your Days with Light, spiritual fulfillment is discussed as being *earned* (*Lightbook pg 28*). The word earn carries a very different meaning than for example, experienced. Is the message that Spiritual fulfillment is a commodity to be earned or something anyone can experience?

Developmental Appropriateness: Middle Childhood 6-12 years

In Exploring the Journey of Life Level 2 children are reacquainted with Gabby, a friend of Ari's whom we met briefly in Level 1 while Mr Why takes on a supportive role in the videos only coming when they summon him. In middle childhood academic and peer relationships are an important aspect of development. Children within this age band begin to develop friends based on interests rather than proximity as in earlier stages. During middle childhood children develop metacognition or the ability to think about thinking or in other words: No longer learning to read but reading to learn. They also begin to rely on Mr. Why less as they solve problems on their own using the tools used in Level 1. Demonstrating a core shift in middle childhood as children during this age band begin to rely more on friends and their ability to apply learned knowledge to new settings and challenges, but still need and seek adult approval and interactions to support their learning.

Goal setting and cause and effects are themes throughout the curriculum. Children are asked in many activities to consider goals they might have for the future and how to acquire them. This is a developmental task of middle childhood. It is used well throughout the curriculum. Starting with Lesson 1 Setting Goals laying a foundation, Lesson 3 Taking Responsibility and continuing again in Lesson 10 Appreciation. Although there are a few places where this might be examined differently without losing the core concepts of the curriculum the weaving of ideas is strong and builds in ways that make sense for this age band. Cause and effect is also understood by middle childhood and another recurrent theme throughout the curriculum. The building of these ideas is a strength of the curriculum as it provides a foundation from the basic understanding. For example, in Lesson 2 Cause and Effect explains the basic principles that are more fully developed in Lesson 4 The Ripple Effect and continuing in Lesson 9 The Power of Words. An interesting and dynamic tool of flow of the curriculum is the interwoven nature of these distinct ideas and how they are separate yet also connected to one another. This is well thought out and successful in how the back and forth demonstrates the interconnectivity of the two concepts.