



## What is Learning Life?

**Purpose** Learning for Life is designed to support schools and organizations in their efforts to prepare youth to successfully handle the complexities of contemporary society and to enhance students' self-confidence, motivation, and self-esteem. Learning for Life also helps develop social and life skills, assists in character development, and helps youth formulate positive personal values. It prepares youth to make ethical decisions that will help them achieve their full potential.

**Rationale** At a time when drugs and gangs are ravaging our schools and communities, Learning for Life is a catalyst to help stop this trend. Learning for Life uses age appropriate, grade-specific lesson plans to give youth skills and information to cope with the complexities of today's society.

Learning for Life makes academic learning fun and relevant to real-life situations. As a result, the core values and skills learned by participating in Learning for Life not only make students more confident and capable, but also give youth an invaluable understanding of how things work in the real world.

School demand for character education programs has greatly influenced the dramatic growth of Learning for Life. Learning for Life is done in more than 7,000 schools and organizations nationwide, serving more than 1 million youth.

**Program Components** Learning for Life has five program components:

**Elementary School.** This program is designed for kindergarten through sixth grade. The curriculum for each grade level consists of fifty-seven lesson plans designed to reinforce social, ethical, and academic skills in such areas as critical and creative thinking, ethical decision making, conflict resolution, interpersonal relationships, practical life skills, building self-esteem, writing and other language arts, and participating citizenship.

Lesson plans focus on themes such as "Accepting Consequences," "Conservation?," "Gangs," "Ethnic Heritage," "Meeting Deadlines,?" "Violence Prevention?" "Money Management," "Never Give Up," "What Is Freedom?," "Respecting Differences," and "Sticking to What's Right." The lessons are designed to instill in young people the importance of respecting the rights of all

people, and to prepare young people to participate in and provide leadership in American society.

The elementary school program has grown at a phenomenal rate since its introduction in 1991. It is one of the fastest-growing components under the Learning for Life umbrella.

**Special Needs.** This Learning for Life program teaches youth with special needs the life skills they need in order to achieve self-sufficiency. The lessons also focus on and enhance youth self-development. Areas covered include the following;

- *Self-concept.* Youth develop an awareness of personal, social, and civic responsibility.
- *Personal/social skills.* Youth learn how emotions affect their own behavior and that of others.
- *Life Skills.* Youth are taught basic skills for independent living, such as personal hygiene, meal preparation, and job-readiness training.

Because of the varying forms and levels of special needs that schools encounter, the Learning for Life curriculum is sometimes supplemented with the elementary school, junior high/middle school, and senior high school Learning for Life program materials. In this way, Learning for Life is tailored to fit the needs of each individual class and student and is certain to be age appropriate.

**Junior High/Middle School.** This is a school-based program (for grades seven and eight) designed to enable community role models and mentors to motivate and interact with students. Role models and mentors with backgrounds similar to those of students share their personal paths to success, including the obstacles and successes.

The Learning for Life junior high/middle school program also includes a series of forty-one workshops that help youth assess and develop the personal skills and values needed to make future career choices.

Youth learn to ascertain the need for having a job and being employed, to recognize obstacles, to make mature and ethical decisions, and to deal responsibly with their decisions.

**Senior High School.** The senior high school program continues Learning for Life's school-to-career emphasis and is for ninth- through twelfth grade youth. This school-based program consists of a series of 36 workshops that teach the practical skills necessary to acquire a job and stay employed. Topics include "Job Applications," "Writing Resumes," "Job Interviews," "Employer and Labor Relations," "Money Management," and "Where to Find a Job."

The high school program also consists of a series of career seminars for tenth through twelfth graders presented by community representatives. The seminars cover careers that the youth have chosen to learn more about. Youth get in-depth understanding and first-hand knowledge of their career area, including entry-level requirements, special training needed, important academic disciplines that must

be mastered, typical working conditions, promotion opportunities, and other relevant information to help them prepare for the real world of work.

**Exploring Program.** Exploring is a worksite-based program. It is part of Learning for Life's career education program for young men and women who are 14 (and have completed the eighth grade) through 20 years old.

Exploring's purpose is to provide experiences that help young people mature and to prepare them to become responsible and caring adults. Explorers are ready to investigate the meaning of interdependence in their personal relationships and communities.

Exploring is based on a unique and dynamic relationship between youth and the organizations in their communities. Local community organizations initiate a specific Explorer post by matching their people and program resources to the interests of young people in the community. The result is a program of activities that helps youth pursue their special interests, grow, and develop.

**Volunteer Leadership** Schools and organizations participating in Learning for Life are called groups or posts (Exploring). Each group or post is led by a minimum of four adults, at least 21 years of age. Other volunteer leaders, both men and women, are also involved in the program and serve in a variety of positions. Standards for leadership are established by the participating organization.

**Training** Learning for Life offers a two-hour training seminar designed to prepare volunteers and teachers to use Learning for Life materials. The training can also be conducted to orient school administrators, prospective financial supporters, and other interested parties on the value of the program and how it is used to supplement and enrich the core classroom curriculum.

The best time for this training is during regularly scheduled in-service training time before the start of the school year.

The *Learning for Life Guidebook* includes training outlines for the elementary school and special needs programs and for the junior high/middle school and senior high school programs. The videotape *Learning for Life: Curriculum Training*, No. AV-09V020, can be used to facilitate training.

**Recognitions** Learning for Life offers a recognition plan for elementary and special needs youth to encourage positive behavior, to foster a sense of belonging in the group, to assist in building self-esteem, and to reward a positive work ethic.

For kindergartners through fourth graders the recognition plan is an honor wall chart with spaces for student names. There are fifteen brightly colored peel-off stickers that relate to the fifty-seven lesson plan themes that are in each book. When the class completes a designated set of themes, the teacher places the appropriate sticker on the honor wall chart by the name of each student who participated. In addition, students receive stickers to wear on their clothing. Kindergartners through second graders are called "Seekers"; third and fourth graders are called "Discoverers."

The fifth- and sixth-grade recognition plan also is an honor wall chart with fifteen peel-off stickers and iron-on patches for the students to wear on their clothing. Fifth and sixth graders are called "Challengers."

The special needs curriculum also has a recognition program with its own honor wall chart and incentive stickers. Special needs students are called "Champions."

**Cost** The average cost of conducting Learning for Life is approximately \$300 per year, per classroom. This includes all program and administrative costs, curricula, training, youth and teacher recognitions, and staff support.

**Participation** Learning for Life participation is: 949,553 students\* and 6,622 groups\*.

\* As of December 31, 1997

**Educational Endorsements** *We are encouraging school districts across Oklahoma to implement Learning for Life as a tool for teachers and counselors and are confident this program will make a difference in the lives of many students.*

Sandy Garrett, State Superintendent  
Oklahoma State Department of Education

*The Learning for Life program is on target in terms of the values issue and the character development issue.*

Dr. Paul Houston, Executive Director  
American Association of School Administrators

*Our Learning for Life program takes important values and teaches them in the classroom. The Louisiana Department of Education is proud to endorse the Learning for Life program.*

Cecil J. Picard, State Superintendent of Education  
Louisiana State Department of Education

*Learning for Life helps to build a concept, a process, for parents to be involved, and stay involved, with the education of their children.*

Samuel G. Sava, Executive Director  
National Association of Elementary School Principals

*Learning for Life is highly interesting and relevant to present lifestyles. The lessons encourage the growth of self-esteem in students. It provides quality instructional materials for youth of today. Thank you for your care and concern for all children of America*

Sharon Cash, Principal  
Chidester Elementary School, Chidester, Arkansas

*I urge teachers and administrators to give favorable attention to Learning for Life and hope they will implement the program in their classrooms.*

Sandra E. Dowling, County School Superintendent  
Maricopa County, Phoenix, Arizona

*Congratulations on the development of Learning for Life in support of the complete education of America's students! Your commitment is right on target as we move toward the twenty-first century and as we aim toward personal, economic, and societal benefit for all.*

Pat Nellor Wickwire, Ph.D., President  
American Association for Career Education, Hermosa Beach, California

*The Learning for Life curriculum is exciting...Learning for Life empowers students to take control of their lives...Learning for Life materials are powerful, but simple and easy to use.*

Stacey C. James, Center Director, Big Bend Area  
Health Education Center, Tallahassee, Florida

*Learning for Life is presented the 1995 Chairman's Award... in appreciation of the dedicated service to educational partnerships for the benefit of children and families.*

The National Association of Partners in Education, Inc.

### **Mission Statement**

It is the mission of Learning for Life to serve others by helping to instill core values in young people, and in other ways prepare them to make ethical choices throughout their lives so they can achieve their full potential.

**No. 2-973**  
**Printing**

**1998**