

Bitterroot Family Homeschool Co-op

Student & Parent Handbook

Focus: Bitterroot Family Homeschool co-op is a Christian-based homeschool co-op program. As a ministry of Bitterroot Family Church, we are an “open” homeschool group and we invite those who are not Christians to attend as well. Anybody who teaches classes or desires to be part of the board must agree with our statement of faith and teach accordingly. Our goal is to glorify and honor God through all that we do at Bitterroot Family Homeschool co-op, based on Colossians 3:17 “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” We strive to be an example of Christ as we live, teach, and grow in our community. We seek to support and encourage each other, based on 1 Thessalonians 5:11: “Therefore encourage one another, and build each other up.” Our goal is to raise our children in the truth of God’s word and teach them to walk accordingly while doing our best to reflect the same in our own walk as parents and teachers of our children.

Participation: Membership is open to all local homeschoolers who are in agreement with and have signed the co-op handbook and guidelines as well as the attendance policy.

One parent per family must commit to teaching a class, assisting in a class and/or helping with setup or clean up and/or other duties to help serve the co-op and make it run smoothly. Parents should expect to stay and be available to help out during all class times.

A parent or guardian must be present at all times during co-op classes (**unless otherwise approved by the board**), social events and field trips. In the event that you should appear to have an unassigned hour, you **MUST** remain at co-op in the parent break area with expectations of being used to fill in where the need may arise. In the event you leave to run an errand or get food, another adult must be left in charge of your children and the Director in charge that day must be notified. A Guardianship form must be filled and signed by the parent, the new attending guardian and the board director.

You are expected to attend each weekly co-op class. If you absolutely cannot attend one week, you must have prior permission from the Director for your children to attend with an adult who will be responsible for them while they are at co-op. This can be a grandparent or another co-op parent. Students are expected to be on time for classes, showing respect for their teachers and those helping to organize classes, as well as provide the most amount of time for the student to participate in the class. Students who are continually late to class may be asked to sit out of that class if it is interrupting the lesson.

All co-op members are expected and required to participate in at least 2 fundraising events per year. We have many opportunities to be able to serve in fundraising. It is through fundraising that we are able to keep costs so low and affordable.

Any photographic or video material taken during co-op events or activities by teachers or board members will be strictly for use in co-op publications, print or advertising material, social media or websites. A photo release is included on the handbook signature page if you would like to opt out of shot images.

Name Tags: Every adult and child that attends co-op must wear a co-op issued name tag that will have a lanyard. Young children in the nursery can wear a sticker name tag on their back. All diaper bags and items that come into the nursery with the children must have a name tag on them. If a name tag is lost, the family will be charged a \$2 replacement fee.

Our classes: We will have four classes in the morning each week on our co-op class day. Each week for the whole school year each age group will have a devotional time, a structured socialization class with games, music etc. We will have two additional classes on different topics that will rotate every 11-12 weeks, taking off the week of Thanksgiving and 3 Weeks for Christmas. (See the Class schedule). We will learn about things together that are not as easily pursued at home (e.g. science experiments, art, drama, skills, hobbies, hands-on activities, first aid, up-front speaking opportunities). Additionally during the afternoon of our co-op day we will have 2 more classes that will rotate each week. Those classes are elective and subject to change each year. We always seek to make learning fun and interesting, and always SHOW more than TELL. Homeschool children will find a place to make friends in this group. It is a social network for the kids as well as for the parents to find like minded friends to grow and do life with.

Class Ages: Our ages groups are as follows, 2-3 years of age are in our "Sprouts" class, 4-5 years of age are in our "cubbies" class, 6-8 years of age are in our "beavers" class, 9-11 years of age are in our "grizzlies" class, and 12+ years of age are in our "flamingoes" class. **The class a child will be assigned to will be based on the age they are in September when co-op classes begin. As children progress through these age groups we understand that there will be times when some children move up to the next age bracket while others will not and that can be a hard transition. We also recognize that there are circumstances that may indeed require a move for certain students- these needs and potential changes to an assigned age group of a child will be determined by the board if a request is made. Please be aware that while we attempt to do the correct thing and make good informed decisions, we will be unable to please everyone all the time. Please respect the decisions the board makes. Afternoon classes are offered to kids ages 6+.**

Class Days: Classes are held at Bitterroot Family Church at the corner of Church and 4th street in Stevensville. We will meet once weekly for classes every Wednesday from **9:15-3:30pm** with at least one field trip per month. We will start classes September **4th**. Over the summer we will have some social get togethers and field trips as an opportunity to get to know one another and for kids to become acquainted before starting classes.

Cost: There will be a non-refundable family registration fee due at the time of registration. This fee will be used to pay for supplies and equipment for co-op, board-approved co-op celebrations or activities, background checks, and anything else the board deems necessary or beneficial to the co-op.

The cost for morning class (9:15am-12pm) is \$100 per family and \$10 per child for the whole school year. **(ie. 1 family with 3 children= \$130)** We strive to make our co-op affordable for everyone. Teachers will have a dedicated amount to spend per class they teach. Any supplies additional to that amount must be taken before the board. All membership and fundraising belongs to the co-op and is non-refundable. Parents may also donate supplies or funds to support the activity they are leading or use the supplies we already have at the co-op. There may be a few classes such as cooking that may have a small additional fee as the cost can add up per child. These classes will be revealed to all parents in advance. The Cost for afternoon classes (age 6+) is \$50 per family and \$5 per child attending. **(ie. 1 family with 3 children = \$65)**

You will get a monthly update from the board, so you have full confidence and communication knowing that the family fee is being utilized to educate your children to the best of our ability. The board meeting minutes will be sent out via email to the email address you have provided.

Scholarships: As available, and when financially needed, members may petition for a scholarship, to be approved by the co-op Board. Your oldest child must be at least 5 years old at the start of co-op to qualify for a scholarship. These will be given on a first come, first served basis with the Board's discretion and will only be applicable for the family registration fee.

Communication: Our main method of communication from teachers will be through email and the BFC Co-op App/website. Please check your email and the app regularly to stay informed as you will be responsible with the information given. We also use Facebook messenger which is a messaging app you can download on your phone for group texting and communication as well as our private Facebook group. If your phone number, email or address changes, please inform the Director or a member of the board as soon as possible.

Planning Meetings: Board members will meet once a month to discuss progress and any concerns or suggestions brought to board members. In July and/or August we will have a Teachers meeting where all the teachers can discuss things and can meet and get together with their teachers assistants. We will also have one meeting date to be announced open to all co-op members to make sure all questions are answered and everyone can get to know the Board members/teachers etc.

Co-op Ideas and Feedback: We are very welcoming of any feedback, questions and concerns regarding co-op. The following are the official steps to submitting a concern or suggestion. Submissions must be emailed to the Director(s) and must come from the original party that has the concern or suggestion. No concerns made through a third party will be addressed. The Director(s) will review concerns and questions and address them in a reasonable manner. If the situation warrants, the Director(s) may consult with the other Board members.

Bathroom: We have two bathrooms available that are single occupancy. For children who don't need help in the bathroom they can be escorted by an adult helper to the bathroom and back to their class. Young children who need assistance in the bathroom will be escorted to the bathroom by a helper and a parent called to assist them. At no time should anyone other than a Parent or approved guardian be in the bathroom with a child. Failure to comply with this will result in immediate removal from the co-op. It is a priority to ensure that our children are always safe and protected as well as the adults. In nursery aged children, parents will be called for any diaper changes. Students may not at any time occupy the bathroom together, one student per bathroom.

Teachers: Classes will be taught by parents or other adults volunteering to teach a specific topic. Teachers must be prepared, punctual, and faithful to all classes that they commit to teach. If you are teaching a class, it is your responsibility to let your helper know what tasks and what involvement is expected of them. Some teachers appreciate perspective from helpers during lessons, others prefer help with student assignments and others may have different expectations. We want to communicate and work together well. Please be clear and contact the Director if there are any concerns.

Teachers who are going to be in charge of the class will be expected to have a background check run and/or go through a sexual abuse awareness training. Teachers may have no more than one planned absence per semester (unless approved by the board). Failure to repeatedly show up on time prepared to teach may result in teaching privileges and/or co-op membership being revoked.

Teachers will be asked to prepare an overview of what they will be teaching for their classes and email an overview to the director to send out to parents. Parents will be communicated with and involved with everything their children are learning. Parents are free to approach a teacher or a board member if they have questions or concerns about any class. Parents are also able to listen in on any class when they aren't assigned duties elsewhere. We want to be open and transparent about all of our classes.

Conduct: The teacher is the authority in the class. Students are expected to treat teachers and adult helpers with respect and courtesy and give them their obedience and attentiveness. No physical violence, extreme behavior resulting in safety concerns, or bullying of any kind (hitting, slapping, biting, taunting, name calling etc) will be tolerated at the co-op. Should this occur, the decision of whether your family will be permitted to return to co-op will be made at the Board's discretion.

The following steps will be taken in dealing with a behavior issue:

1st time - student will be spoken to by the teacher or a helper and parent will be notified.

2nd time - depending on the circumstance, the student's parent will be notified of the concern and may be asked to join in the class and assist with the challenging behavior or they could be asked to attend with their child's classes on a continuing basis if disruptive behavior is an ongoing concern for the teacher.

3rd time - parents will be asked to remove their child, the child's return will rest upon the results of a meeting between parents and board members seeking a resolution.

No corporal punishment or physical discipline will be administered by any adult that is not the child's parent. Any adult who does not adhere to this will be removed immediately and permanently dismissed from co-op. Adults talking with children about behavior must remain kind in their words and tone to help bring about positive behavior

No talking loudly or running inside the classrooms or hallways.

Do not bring items to class that are not related to the class. Cellphones are not to be used during class hours.

Parents are responsible for their child(ren)'s behavior. If there are any damages to co-op or church property caused by a child, the parents are financially responsible for replacing items.

When meeting on premises for co-op, or at a co-op function (not social meet-ups on personal property or time) There will not be permitted any illicit substances, drugs, alcohol, or vaping. A student or parent who is found to be using any of the aforementioned substances will be asked to leave the property immediately. The decision to handle these situations is not a condemnation of a person for their personal decisions, but rather a reflection of the co-ops desire to keep all children and parents safe during their time at co-op and to provide our children with the best biblical example we can. The determination of further participation in the co-op will be at the board's discretion.

Co-op is a place for learning and developing Godly relationships. Students will be encouraged to treat others kindly and respectfully. No inappropriate touching or conversation will be permitted between students to include public displays of romantic affection.

Handling Concerns: Regarding other members/children:

If anyone has a concern about the behavior of any adult and/or child at co-op or a co-op member is observed continually breaking the guidelines or by-laws at co-op, he or she should first approach that adult or parent (in regards to their child) privately, in a Christ-like manner.

If the matter cannot be resolved privately, this concern can be brought to the attention of a board member. The board member will notify the Director of the issue, then the board member will approach the individual with the person who voiced the original concern. The Board will intervene in the event the situation has not been resolved privately between the two parties first. Reconciliation and restoration are always the intended outcome of all issues.

If the matter still cannot be resolved to the Board's satisfaction, the Director and any designated board member, with the prior approval by a majority vote of the board, may ask the adult and/or child not to return to the program that semester, or if the behavior is severe, permanently.

The Board's decision may be reviewed at any time by the Board at a called meeting at the request of:

- a. any board member.
- b. the original complainant, or
- c. the removed person

This meeting shall be private, involving only the Board, the removed person, and the complainant(s) involved in the original situation.

Denial/Termination of Membership: We expect everyone, adults and children alike, to behave in ways that endeavor to enhance our children's studies in a Christian environment and to promote general Christian fellowship, benevolence and camaraderie while at co-op. We expect the adults to be the examples in this area, treating students and other adults with respect, courtesy, and kindness, according to Biblical principles. Non-biblical actions of members at co-op or non-compliance with the by-laws or guidelines can be grounds for termination of membership by a majority vote of the Board, effective immediately after the vote is made. If a member's membership is terminated, the co-op member will be notified by the Director(s) or another designated Board Member.

Absence Procedures: Planned absences- No more than two planned absences are allowed. It's okay to travel, but if you plan to be out more than three weeks per trimester, this is not the year to participate in the co-op.

Unplanned absences (sickness/family emergency) If you or your child have been sick (fever, diarrhea, vomiting, flu or Covid symptoms etc) within the 24 hour period prior to co-op, please do NOT attend co-op this week. If your kids will not be in class you MUST let the teachers and director know they won't be there that week. You can find the link to email the right people in the BFC Co-op App.

If you are teaching and can't make a week due to an unplanned absence you MUST notify the director as soon as possible so somebody can fill your space and so you can transfer your planned lesson and materials to a substitute.

If you are assisting in a class you must notify the teacher you help as well as the director. If you are serving in any other area let the director know so your spot can be covered that week.

If you and your children develop a habit of not attending (multiple unplanned absences, more than 2+ planned absences.) you will be asked to give up your spot in the co-op (with the exception of extenuating circumstances) so that those who are on a waiting list and able to be there can attend. While this may seem harsh, we desire for families to be involved and participate in co-op- this cannot happen if we aren't there. These decisions are subject to board approval.

Field Trips: In order to attend field trips you MUST RSVP before the cutoff date. This is important to be respectful of those leading the field trips so they can plan things out and be ready to give our kiddos the best learning experience.

During field trips you must read and sign a field trip release form for your children. This will hold you responsible if your child gets injured on a field trip or damages something it will be your responsibility for damages.

During Field Trips children must be accompanied by the parent. Parents are responsible for their children and it is of utmost importance that parents keep their children close and make sure they are respecting the places we visit. If there is an issue with a child wandering from parents unsupervised, being disrespectful to the field trip leaders or behaving inappropriately in any way that may damage our reputation as a homeschool co-op one or more of the Board members will address you privately. With a

second offense your child will have to take the semester off from field trips. A 3rd offense will remove their privilege of attending field trips for the year.

Social Days and Meet Ups: Between co-op days and field trips and over the summer break we will have some social meet ups and days just to get together for kids to socialize. This is a great time for parents to connect and socialize as well. However children and adults must adhere to the same policies as for class days. We will not tolerate bullying, physical attacks, verbal attacks or such behavior. If it is a recurring problem you will be asked to keep your child within a close range where you can supervise their behavior and help them learn to be kind with other children. If it continues your child will be suspended from social get togethers for the semester with the ability to try again the following semester.

Safety: We take the safety of everyone at the co-op very seriously. As such we have fire and emergency exit signs located throughout the building. At the beginning of the co-op year we will remind everyone of our safety procedures, and throughout the year, provide training and follow-up safety protocol at the discretion of the board. All Exterior doors that open to a public area of access will be locked as soon as co-op begins. The board may decide to assign a person to monitor any doors that may need frequent opening.

The Board reserves the right to edit (add to or take away from) the handbook at any time. The amendment of any items will be emailed, and a paper copy will be available at the next co-op meeting.