

SPIRIT Builders Homeschool Co-op

General Information

(revised Jan 2023)

Welcome! We are a group of homeschool parents who desire to give our children regular, consistent opportunities to learn “SPIRIT” – Strength, Positivity, Imagination, Respect, Integrity and Teamwork in a community of families with the same goals. Our Co-op offers a supportive environment for you and your student to learn, play, and meet new friends. Included in this handbook, you will find all the information you need for attending the Co-op.

Mission Statement

We believe that learning should be a well-balanced, exciting process of discovery that ultimately shelters and builds upon the uniqueness of every student. We exist as a Co-op to provide a nurturing atmosphere that encourages respect, creativity, and enjoyment of learning. We agree to teach in alignment with our Statement of Faith (see Page 3). We ask that all members respect our Statement of Faith, regardless of personal belief, which means that they will not teach against this Statement of Faith. We welcome members of any background who are willing to teach/assist in accordance with this policy. Please remember that we are meeting in a Christian church, and that we begin our day with a praise/devotional/prayer time in the mornings and talk about, sing about, and celebrate Jesus. We also teach our classes with a Christian worldview.

Who we are: Homeschooling families in the Fort Worth area with at least one child, age 5 years or older.

When we meet: Roughly every week during the school year on Wednesday mornings from 9:00 – 12:10pm for a total of at least twelve times each semester.

Where we meet: Eagle Mountain Baptist Church, 8780 Eagle Mountain Circle, Fort Worth, TX 76135. (817) 237-4135. www.eaglemountain.org

Dues: We charge a supply fee of \$15 per child for co-op class supplies. Children under 3 are free. Also required is a \$15 per adult, \$10 per child charge for church building use. Children under 3 are free for this as well. Families may visit twice before fees are required.

Commitment and dues are by semester: August thru December and January thru May. Payment arrangements may be made with the Treasurer if needed. If you withdraw from the Co-op at any time during the semester, or if a child and/or family is asked to leave for behavioral or other issues, dues will not be refunded or pro-rated as the funds will have already been allocated.

What our Co-op Day Looks Like:

Each Co-op day begins with everyone gathering in the sanctuary for about 15 minutes, during which time we will cover announcements, say the pledge, sing praise songs, have a short devotional and open the day in prayer before being released to classes. Students will then attend three class periods that are 45 minutes long each. Younger students will have a morning snack time scheduled. Please send a small, individual snack and a labeled bottled drink with each of your children, and make sure your child has his snack with him when he goes to class. Please, do not send anything with nuts as we have a few children with allergies!!! Students remain with their classes for the entirety of the school day.

Classes:

We divide the children into classes based on their ages as of September 1st of that school year. Possible classes offered for students ages 7 and up may include: History, Geography, PE, Art, Chess, Music/Rhythm, Theater, Science, Legos, Home Ec/Sewing, etc. Age groupings are always tentative and subject to change each semester based on the ages and numbers of children enrolled. Actual classes being offered each semester depends on what the volunteer parents have chosen to teach based on their talents and interests. Specific class offerings and teacher/student assignments for the semester will be decided before the first class of the semester is held.

There will be planned activities for ages 4-6 such as the following: Show and Tell, Art, PE, Singing, Story Time, Snack, Magic School Bus Science, Recess on the playground, etc.

All children that will be with your family on Co-op days must be enrolled and participate in their age appropriate classes, including infants and toddlers. Nursery will be provided during all class periods for babies up through three years old. We want everyone to be able to give their full focus and attention to the responsibilities, classes and children to which they are assigned. With this being said, exceptions will be allowed for infants (under 1) if their mom prefers to keep them with her as long as she can still adequately function in her volunteer role. Besides this, only under special circumstances and with prior approval from the coordinator, will any child be permitted to stay with their parent while classes are in session.

Special Days:

We take a few Wednesdays off each semester for Fall and Spring Breaks. Please attempt to plan your family travels with these breaks in mind. We will have at least one large event as a co-op each semester. In the Fall semester, we have either a Thanksgiving or Christmas celebration. In the Spring, we have a Valentine exchange and end with a Field Day/End of Year Celebration. We follow the school-closing-for-bad-weather-policies of Eagle Mountain/Saginaw and Azle ISDs.

Commitment:

This is a parent taught and managed Co-op, mostly by Moms. We require that each parent assist in class for the duration of the school day every day his/her child attends the Co-op. Everyone's participation is necessary for our Co-op to be successful and function smoothly. Teaching and Assistant Teacher Positions are discussed and assigned prior to each semester. New members will not be a Lead Teacher for the first semester of enrollment. Parents will volunteer as either Lead Teacher or Assistant Teacher in at least two classes. Other volunteer opportunities may include caring for the littlest ones in the Nursery, leading

devotionals, planning special events, and clean-up/restoration of classrooms. While we will always do our best to match people with their preferences and talents, please be flexible and willing to help where needed. For specifics on what the responsibilities are for Lead Teachers and Assistants, please see the “Involvement” section of the Co-op Rules and Policies.

A few classes may require the parent to purchase a book or some supplies that fall outside of the Co-op’s individual class budget. An example could be a book for Spanish class or material for a sewing class. If this is the case, it will be announced with class offerings.

Communication:

We communicate mainly via our Facebook group, “Spirit Builders Homeschool Co-op,” so we ask that you have a Facebook profile and join our group. It is a private, secret group for you and your family’s protection. Only current members of the Co-op are part of the Facebook group, with very few exceptions.

Leadership:

We are mostly a group-decision based Co-op, a true cooperative venture! We have a governing Board of at least three parents who do administrative tasks, make final decisions and handle any issues that may arise. Board members are parents who have been with us for over one school year, exhibit needed gifting and skills, and have expressed interest in serving and leading the Co-op.

Board of Director responsibilities:

- Teacher Coordinator - assign teachers to classes, make and post class schedule, assigns classrooms. This person is your contact if you will be absent, in addition to your substitute/assistant teacher.
- New Family Liason - if you have friends interested in joining, have them talk to this person. They will also show new families around and help them get connected and integrated to Co-op. This person will also introduce the new families to the group during the first group planning meeting and the first opening assembly of the semester. They will also make the names tags for the Co-op.
- Treasurer – handles finances and record keeping, receives payment for co-op dues, pays reimbursements to teacher for supplies, and manages the co-op budget. This person also updates the student roster each semester and keeps signed paperwork. They will also donate a toner cartridge to the church for Co-op printer use each year.
- Other Board duties -
 - a. set the calendar for the year (with input from the group) and post to the group
 - b. meet as a Board before each semester starts to make sure all things are covered and discussed before the group semester planning meeting
 - c. update the handbook as needed and post the updated version to the group
 - d. manage the Facebook group, keeping an eye on content posted, etc.

Because we are a cooperative venture, we also rely on our families to help fulfill some of the roles that are needed throughout the school year. This list is not exhaustive, as there may be other needs as well, and possibly may be covered by Board members:

- Moderator – makes sure we start and end our group meetings in a timely fashion, that we stay on task, and ensures that someone takes minutes in case of absentees. This person can also remind the group of the rules, dress code, etc.
- Secretary – at our group meetings, this person will take notes of items discussed, decisions made, etc. and then post them to the Facebook group for reference.
- Clean-Up Supervisor – this person makes sure that the students in charge of collecting the trash do their job, that the rooms are returned to order, and any items left behind are placed in the Lost-and-Found box in the storage area.
- Devotions – during our opening assembly, this person will lead our time of devotions and prayer.
- Greeter/Attendance Taker – someone who arrives early and will greet and record the families as they arrive at Co-op each week.
- Student Council Parent Rep –one parent at minimum will attend the Student Council meetings, for guidance and supervision. This person will also help with elections each school year.
- Supply Closet Maintenance – keeps our supply closet area in order, makes supply purchases as needed, and manages the Lost-and-Found.
- Special Meal Coordinator – when we have an event at Co-Op, the Student Council will plan the activities, but this adult will manage the food sign-up for that event.
- Prayer Coordinator – when a special situation comes up, this person will be the contact for prayer requests, and possibly handle any meals that may be needed
- Slides for Opening Assembly – updates the birthdays with the student and parent roster list provided by the Treasurer
- Parents Night Out – we all need time away from the kids, and this is a good way to better know the adults in our group. This person will plan at least 2 events per semester.
- Field Trip Coordinator – another great way to get to know one another better! This person will plan at least one event per semester, preferably obtaining us a group rate for admission!

Our Eagle Mountain Baptist Church representative is Pastor and homeschooling dad, David Cecil. He maintains the church website, so if the co-op link needs modifying, see him.

SPIRIT Builders STATEMENT OF FAITH

We are, in general, a group of Christian homeschooling parents who base our faith directly on the Bible. We lovingly accept that not everyone agrees with our religious beliefs. However, we WILL teach in accordance with these beliefs:

- That God is the Sovereign Creator of the universe and our Heavenly Father who cares personally for mankind.
- That Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God, who died for our sins, rose from the grave, ascended into heaven, and will someday return in judgment.
- That the Bible is God's inspired Word and is the divinely authoritative standard by which Christians live.
- That man, because of his personal sin, needs to be made whole and restored to fellowship with God through Jesus Christ.
- That any person can become a Christian as was done in the Bible, namely by trusting in Jesus as Savior and Lord and validating that faith through personal repentance, public profession, and baptism.
- That the Holy Spirit dwells within each Christian as a comforter, counselor, and encourager, and gives gifts for abundant living and assurance for eternal life.

SPIRIT Builders Rules and Policies

1. Involvement

This Co-op functions at the low cost it is able to offer due to the help and involvement of the parents. In order for children to participate in the Co-op, a parent or guardian must volunteer and remain on-site for the entire time the Co-op is in session. We require two-deep adult supervision in our classrooms, with our high school classes being the only exception to that rule. Volunteering could include teaching a class, assisting in a class, taking care of the little ones, or set up/tear down/clean-up as needed. At no time may the parent leave the church property during Co-op.

All children are required to participate in each class each period. Children are not allowed to stay with their parent during classes except for infants (if mom prefers) or approved exceptions. Children should not be roaming the church unattended before, during, or after Co-op. Your children should be in the Sanctuary at the beginning of the Co-op day and helping clean up or loading your vehicles at the end of the day.

All participants are expected to arrive on time for the start of each Co-op. Repeated instances of tardiness or absences may cause us to ask you not to return the following semester since this places a heavier burden on the rest of the volunteers.

Lead Teacher Responsibilities:

- You will decide, in conjunction with the Board, what type of class you will teach.
- You will provide a description and details for the class, as well as create the lesson plans for the twelve times classes will meet during the semester. You may want to contact your assistant and get their ideas and input on this as well.
- You will purchase the materials/supplies needed for your lesson plans if we don't already have what you need on hand in the supply closet. Each class has a budget that will be reimbursed to you as you turn in your receipts to the Treasurer.
- You will be committed! Children will be looking forward to your class. It is your responsibility to be prepared, be in attendance faithfully and make it a fun experience for them!
- You will be responsible for the instruction and control of the class.

- You will make sure your classroom is picked up, clean and returned to the proper order at the end of each class period and before leaving. Students should be involved in this as well.
- If you won't be able to make a class due to an emergency or illness, you will be responsible for notifying your assistant and the Board Member with at least 2 hours notice (preferably the night before). Pass on the instruction and materials your assistant will need to teach the class for you that day.
- If your students need to bring specific items for your class or dress a certain way, please tell parents via the Facebook page by the Monday prior to that class.

Assistant Teacher Responsibilities:

- You may collaborate with the lead teacher, at their discretion, on ideas for the class content, lesson plans, and so on.
- You will be a support to the lead teacher in the classroom. Assist as needed with such things as helping students, answering questions, classroom control, clean up, etc.
- You will be energetic, engaged, and excited to be with the kids in your class!
- If the lead teacher of your class will be absent due to illness or emergency, you will be expected to fill in as lead teacher for that day and a substitute will be assigned to help as your assistant. The lead teacher is responsible notifying you and making arrangements to provide you with the needed materials and instructional information for that class.
- You will assist the Lead Teacher in making sure your classroom is returned to the proper order at the end of each class period and before leaving. This includes picking up all trash and supplies, the tables and chairs wiped down with Lysol wipes, and the room vacuumed if necessary. Students should be involved in this as well.

2. Agreements

The parent must read, sign and agree to the "Statement of Faith," "Spirit Builders Rules & Policies" and the "Waiver Form" as well as read the "General Information." The parent will also pay applicable dues in full to the Treasurer each semester, making payment arrangements if necessary. The parent must also go over the rules and expectations with their children, specifically the ones relating to dress code and conduct in the classroom.

3. Dress Code

ITEM	ACCEPTABLE ATTIRE	SPECIAL COMMENTS & INTERPRETATIONS
Tops	<p>Tops may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any collared, polo or oxford-style dress shirts or knit-collared shirts • Sweaters, sweatshirts and hoodies (hoods may not be worn in the building) • T-shirts and other pullover tops • School designs/logos; <p>College/Military: Brand names and any/or other appropriate words are acceptable.</p>	<p>Students are prohibited from wearing tops that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are oversized or immodestly undersized including tops that are tight, low-cut or show cleavage or midriff (stomach) when the arms are raised • Depict or reference alcohol, drugs, tobacco, weapons, nudity, gang affiliation, death, violence, vulgar or obscene language or images and/or insults to race, religion, gender, or ethnicity. • Sleeveless shirts, tank tops and any tops/dresses that expose the back are not allowed.
Pants/Bottoms	<p>Pants must fit appropriately and at the waist.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jeans • Shorts, skirts, skorts, capris, Dockers® or similar style pants, dress pants in denim or solid colors • Joggers, sweats and warm-up pants and athletic shorts in solid colors <p>All shorts, skirts, jumpers and skorts must be finger-tip length or longer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torn, cut/slashed material above the knee that reveals any area of the skin or undergarments is not allowed unless leggings are worn underneath. • Form-fitting garments such as leggings and spandex must be solid colored and worn with an appropriate shirt, dress, skirt, jumper, etc. that is fingertip length. Shirts must fully cover the bottom. Sheer/see-through leggings/spandex are not allowed. • Oversized, sagging or baggy clothing is not allowed. • Pajama pants or similar styles are not allowed.
Dresses	<p>Dresses must have sleeves and be at least finger-tip length.</p> <p>Jumpers in denim or solid colors must be finger-tip length.</p> <p>Rompers must be finger-tip length and have sleeves.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slits/kick pleats in skirts or dresses must be modest. • Dresses/skirts/jumpers must meet the acceptable length requirements regardless of whether leggings are worn. • Pre-kindergarten through fourth grade girls must wear shorts under dresses, skirts and jumpers.
Shoes	<p>Shoes should be worn that enhance the student's safety.</p> <p>Students participating in physical education class/athletics must wear athletic footwear to participate.</p> <p>Sandals must have a heel strap.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum shoe height is 2 inches for students in grades pre-kindergarten through 4. • Shoes over 2 inches are not recommended for all other grade levels due to safety reasons. • Flip flops, athletic slides, aqua socks and non-athletic toe shoes, slippers, house shoes, skate shoes and Heelies® are not allowed.
Jewelry/ Accessories	<p>Jewelry and accessories should not be a safety hazard.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fishnet hosiery/clothing is not allowed. • Gages in ears must be plugged. • Hoods, hats, caps, visors, head coverings, do-rags, bandanas, sweatbands and sunglasses are not allowed in the building. • Any jewelry, accessories, tattoos that contain vulgar, obscene or offensive images are not allowed (See paragraph in Tops above).

4. Conduct Guidelines for Adults/Teachers

All teachers, parents and adults who may be in the classroom are expected to use words and actions that exemplify Godly behavior. We are role models for our children and should always strive to exhibit patience, kindness and love in all our interactions with them. Please keep a pleasant voice (firm when necessary) and avoid raising your voice and any remarks that would be demeaning, discouraging, or embarrassing to an individual. Let us encourage and build one another up with SPIRT!

This also includes how we interact with other adults in the Co-op. If you have an issue with someone, please go directly to them and attempt to work it out. If it is still not resolved, you may choose to speak with the Board about it but please refrain from any gossip or back-biting. Let's have fun learning and sharing this experience together and sharpen one another for the better!

Please remain flexible and willing to help in whatever capacity is needed.

Also, please silence your cell phone and refrain from using it during class. Please do not bring books, tablets, magazines, etc. as your attention to the children in the classroom is needed at all times. Also, please refrain from talking/socializing with other adults while class is in session.

5. Misbehavior and Discipline

Children are expected to be respectful and follow teacher's instructions at all times. Misbehavior on the part of a child should be immediately addressed in an appropriate manner. Left uncorrected, misbehavior leads to the disruption of the class and less enjoyment for the other students. Teachers have the authority to decide on appropriate action/discipline in the classroom. However, if the parent of the disruptive child is in the classroom, it is the parent's responsibility to address the issue, not the teacher. Discipline could include a verbal reminder/warning, or having the child removed from the class for the remainder of the period depending on the severity of the offense. Corporal punishment is not allowed by teachers or the church pastor.

If the child is removed from class, the assistant teacher will walk the child to the church pastor's office. The church pastor will take the child to his/her parent, but if the parent is teaching, the student will be assigned to sit in the pastor's office until the parent is available. It is up to the church pastor and Board whether the misbehavior is severe enough or frequent enough to warrant being removed from the Co-op for the rest of the day or even permanently.

6. Code of Conduct for Students

- a. *Respect individuals in authority* at all times. This includes but is not limited to teachers, teacher's assistants, Co-op leadership, and church staff. Teacher's instructions should be followed right away and with a good attitude. Raise your hand if you have a question during class. Wait your turn to speak and don't interrupt the teacher. No excessive talking or disruptive behavior allowed during class.
- b. *Respect fellow students* by treating others the way you would like to be treated. Respect fellow student's personal space. No gossiping, yelling, name calling or teasing one another, even in fun. Students will speak to and about everyone in a kind, encouraging, and respectful manner. Offensive or inappropriate language will not be tolerated at any time.
- c. *Respect the church* building property at all times. If a student damages church property, parents may be financially responsible for the damage and more serious disciplinary actions may be taken. Understand that the church is a place of business. Be quiet and do not run in the halls. Students must stay in their classrooms unless excused by their teacher. No wandering around or loitering in the building when classes are in session. Students are not allowed on the stage in the Sanctuary unless given permission or instructed to by the teacher. Students are not allowed to touch, handle, or play with the church's equipment unless given express permission by the teacher.
- d. *Have a willing, cooperative spirit.* Students are expected to participate in class. Bring all necessary supplies to Co-op and take home your belongings at the end of the day, including any art projects or papers from the day. Help clean and restore your classroom at the end of class. Electronic devices are not allowed to be used in the classroom, unless given specific permission by the teachers. Pocketknives are not allowed to be out or used during class.

7. Visitors

We occasionally have families who visit to observe our Co-op for possible future involvement. Please be welcoming and answer any questions they may have. If you have invited someone, please advise the Board. They will advise the applicable teachers so they can be prepared for the student's presence in each class with enough supplies, seats, etc.

A visiting family member, such as a grandparent, may come on occasion to observe in each room their children are attending, but he/she must keep disruptions to a minimum and conduct themselves in an orderly, polite manner.

Please do not bring any un-enrolled children to Co-op with you, such as charges you are babysitting or visiting cousins, except in extenuating circumstances with prior Board approval. This puts un-due stress on our volunteers, and sometimes on the students themselves.

8. Miscellaneous

- Depending on how many teachers, assistants, and/or students in attendance in each age/grade level on a given Co-op day, there may be times that we will need to combine classes. Please remember to be flexible and keep a good attitude.
- Be considerate of others and DO NOT bring sick children to Co-op. Conditions include but are not limited to: fevers, extreme runny noses, diarrhea, vomiting - within the last 24 hours. These are contagious conditions, and you should keep your child at home. Any child who becomes sick during the day will be escorted to his/her parent, and that family will be asked to leave for the day. If a sick child's sibling still wishes to attend Co-op, they may do so, as long as they have a parent and/or guardian attend as well. The only exception to this rule is that a high school student may be dropped off and attend co-op without their parent present due to a sick sibling at home. This situation will still count as an absence for the family.
- We ask that your family have up to 2 absences per semester. If you find that your family misses or will miss more than that, it may be worth considering if participating in co-op is a right decision for your family for that semester.(added by Amy on 5/17/2023)
- If you lose an item, we do have a lost and found box in the storage area for any items we find left behind.
- Parents, please communicate any special needs or allergies that your child may have to our teachers. We desire to work with parents to help make the day go as smoothly as possible for everyone!
- If you can, and if weather permits, do try to join us at a local park for a picnic lunch following our Co-op day each week. It's a great time of fellowship for the moms and a release of bound up energy for your kids!

****Please notify the Board if you have questions about, or do not agree with, any of the rules, guidelines and information above.***

Because we desire to provide a safe and nurturing environment for all students and their parents, there is zero tolerance for the unlawful possession of weapons, firearms, alcohol, or any controlled

substance. The student or parent will be dismissed from the program immediately and charges will be filed with the appropriate civil authorities.