



# **Mankato Homeschool Connection**

## **Handbook 2021-22**

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# MISSION AND GENERAL INFORMATION

## MISSION

Mankato Homeschool Connection is a Christian homeschool cooperative. We exist to create a supportive community for both parents and students, adding enrichment to the educational experience of the homeschooling community.

## VISION

Our ultimate vision is to encourage the Christian homeschool community in their walk with Christ and each other to better equip all to bring the light of Jesus into their homes and throughout all the world.

## VALUES

Community

Enrichment Education

Distribution of responsibility

Provide Active/Phy Ed Classes Regularly

Teaching from a Biblical Perspective

## LOCATION

Mankato Homeschool Connection will meet at:  
Sunrise Church 722 Sunrise Dr, St. Peter, MN, 56082

## SCHEDULE

- The Co-op will meet each Thursday afternoon from 1:00 pm to 3:45 pm during the scheduled months or weeks we are in session.
- The doors to the building will be open at 12:00pm.
- Daily Schedule as follows:
  - 12:00 pm - Open gym time for families - supervise your own children
  - 1:00 pm - Opening - meet in gym
  - 1:10 - 1:55 pm - First Hour Class
  - 2:00 - 2:45 pm - Second Hour Class
  - 2:50 - 3:35 pm - Third Hour Class
  - 3:35 - 3:45 pm - Clean up in classrooms then bring to sanctuary
  - 3:45 pm - Closing and pick up kids from sanctuary
- In the case of inclement weather, we will cancel the co-op if Mankato Public Schools or St. Peter Public Schools cancel school.
- If Mankato or St. Peter Public Schools are on a two-hour delay or have canceled school for any other reason aside from weather, you will be notified via our website, email, Facebook, and/or text whether co-op will be on for the day or if it will be canceled. Please be on the lookout for these notifications. All decisions for cancellation will be made by 10:00 am.
- If Sunrise Church has an event, including but not limited to funerals, it is possible that we will have to cancel co-op for that week.

- The first 3 weeks of co-op in September will meet at Spring Lake Park in Mankato. This will be a more relaxed time to begin to get acquainted with other families. Each age group will have one outdoor class and then there will be free play time or a chance for group games as desired.
- Beginning in October, the co-op will meet for three separate six-weeks sessions going through April.
- Please see the tentative schedule in the appendix for co-op dates and special activities and field trips already planned.

## **WEBSITE**

We now have a website that is to be used for registration, news, events, and much more! There is a part of the website that is viewable by the public, and another part that is private and for members only. When you request to become a member of the Co-op, you will establish your username and password. Once your request is approved, you will be able to login and view member-only content, like our calendar, detailed schedules of field trips, and member directory. The website address is [mankatohomeschool.com](http://mankatohomeschool.com). The website is maintained by Homeschool-Life.com.

**IMPORTANT:** Once you login to the website, you will stay logged in until you log out. Be sure to log out of your account if you are on a public computer or a computer/mobile device that can be accessed by others.

The following is Mankato Homeschool Connection's statement of faith. It is important for those who belong to this co-op, as well as those who might be considering it, to understand what core beliefs this co-op stands for and is built upon.

## **STATEMENT OF FAITH**

We believe the Bible to be the only inerrant, authoritative Word of God. (II Tim. 3:16)

We believe that there is one God, Creator of all things, eternally existent in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. (Deut. 6:4; Gen. 1:1, I John 5:7)

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory. (John 10:30; Matt. 1:18; Heb. 4:15; John 10:32; Rom. 3:25; Matt. 28:6; Rom. 8:34; Luke 21:27)

We believe that salvation is by grace through faith alone. (Eph. 2:8)

We believe that faith without works is dead. (James 2:17)

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit, by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life. (Gal. 5:16)

We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ. (John 17:20-23)

We believe that marriage is a God-ordained institution consisting of the union of one man and one woman. (Gen. 1:27, 2:24, 5:1-2, 1 Cor. 11:3, Eph. 5:23, 25)

We believe that God created humanity in His own image, male and female. Those whom God has designed to be male (XY) will always be male, and those whom He has designed to be female (XX) will always be female. (Gen 1:27, Mat 19:4)

## **MEMBERSHIP & REGISTRATION QUALIFICATIONS**

To be considered a member of the Mankato Homeschool Connection, a family must:

- Register their family on our website.
- Attend (or watch the video for) orientation night.
- Pay their membership dues which are required to be paid by August 19th unless other arrangements have specifically been made. If unable to afford the dues, there is a financial assistance form that can be filled out. We do not want the cost of the dues to be a roadblock to any family wanting to attend MHC.
- Acknowledge that they agree, understand, and will submit to all the following when registering on our website:
  - Statement of Faith
  - Code of Conduct for Parents and Students
  - This Handbook
  - Liability and Waiver
  - Interview with at least two leadership team members in person at an informal park setting (lasts about 15-20 minutes – first year only)
- Be legally homeschooling or legally public schooling at home, OR if child(ren) is/are not compulsory school age, intending to use one of these options when child(ren) become compulsory age.
- Participate in at least one fundraising event during the year or consider donating \$75 if you are unable to participate at all.

### **MEMBERSHIP DUES**

The dues to join the co-op are \$120/year per family. These dues must be paid by August 19th and are non-refundable. Dues can be paid by check and mailed to:

Mankato Homeschool Connection  
PO Box 4212  
Mankato, MN 56002

or by CASHAPP payable to the name \$MHCCconnect.

### **MEMBERSHIP REQUIRED TO ATTEND**

- To attend co-op days and any special event or field trip hosted by Mankato Homeschool Connection, the child(ren) and parents must be active and current members in the co-op.
- Visitors will only be permitted if space allows and prior approval is given by the directors.
- Parents are expected to be present at any co-op time or extra activity if their child(ren) is/are there. Rare exceptions to this rule may be made at the discretion of the Leadership Team. If a parent needs to be gone and wants to send another adult in their place (i.e. grandma, grandpa, etc), that adult has to be able to fill the role of the absent parent including actively participating in the classes and teaching if needed. They also need to sign our statement of faith.
- If a special needs child would require the support of a therapist or aide while at co-op, we will allow this person to attend as a visitor with the sole purpose of working with that child. This person would have to work for a reputable company, wear a name badge from their employer while at co-op, and agree to abide by our entire Handbook. The

parent of the child receiving the support will be responsible for making sure that the therapist or aide is abiding by our policies.

## **DENIAL OR TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP**

Because Mankato Homeschool Connection is not funded publicly, the Leadership Board reserves the right to deny membership for any reason. These reasons may or may not be disclosed to the applicant and may include, but are not limited to, refusal to agree to the co-op's statement of faith, refusal to uphold the code of conduct or any other policy listed in this Handbook, failure to pay membership dues, etc. Membership may also be terminated if a member no longer meets the membership qualifications, or their behavior conflicts with our membership policies.

## **REGISTRATION**

Members are required to renew their membership yearly. Registration dates will be announced in advance on our website and in our Facebook group. New members and current members wishing to renew their membership will not be accepted outside of this registration period unless an exception is made by the Leadership Team.

Yearly registration will typically start July 1st and end within 30 days. Registration opens to current members first, then to families on the waiting list in order, and then to the public. If the co-op is full before the registration period is supposed to end, registration will close early. Priority for registration is always given to current members first. If space allows, a second registration period in December may be held for the second half of the year.

## **CLASSES, SUPPLIES, AND AGE DIVISIONS**

Classes are divided by general age and/or grade level. Class divisions can sometimes change after the registration period depending on the volume of students registered for each group. Parents are generally able to place their students in classes outside of their general age group, if they feel it is in the best interest of their child(ren).

## **CLASS SCHEDULE**

Classes are typically assigned for each age/grade group after the registration period ends. Our goal is to provide most students with a choice of class selections but this will vary based on facility and space availability. All students through 6th grade will always have a class hour for gym. Other classes will vary based on teacher suggestions and other factors but will typically include at least once during the year a science, history or social studies, and art class.

## **CLASS FEES**

Classes do not have any individual fees. All fees are included in the yearly registration fee.

## **SUPPLIES**

Every student should bring basic supplies with them to co-op weekly. Please label supplies as much as possible. Parents are responsible to provide the following supplies for each of their children:

- Backpack
- Markers
- Pens
- Pencils
- Glue stick
- Liquid glue
- Crayons
- Colored pencils
- Pencil sharpener
- Scissors
- Notebook or clipboard with loose-leaf paper

### **Class Changes**

Students are expected to stay in the class they were originally registered for for the duration of the session. Children may only change classes under special circumstances and must be approved by the board. Written requests for change must be sent to the board via email.

### **Bible Classes**

As a Christian co-op, Bible classes are permitted as long as they are consistent with the MHC Statement of Faith and do not include specific doctrinal teaching.

## **TEACHERS, HELPERS, & NURSERY HELPERS**

Parents coming together and giving their time and talents to the children of our co-op by acting as a teacher, helper, and nursery helper is the driving force behind our co-op. To make a co-op successful, every parent who brings their child to co-op must be willing to be a co-teacher or helper for at least two hours each session (rare exceptions may be made at the discretion of the acting Directors.) The amount of time parents will need to teach and/or be a helper will be dependent upon the number of families registered. All classes will have two co-teachers unless one teacher has a class already planned that they do not feel they need a co-teacher for. That class will then have at least one helper. Parents must also be willing to be placed on the sub list to cover for any absences.

All parents will have at least one session a year where they get an hour off of teaching or helping for fellowship. This is an important aspect of our co-op – the fellowship parents gain from coming together and the encouragement and friendships that blossom from that fellowship. We call this our Parent Connect Time and is often a favorite hour for many of our parents. An area will be set up in the lobby of the church where parents can gather round and have coffee and a light snack. Please encourage your children that the snacks are a treat for the parents only.



## **TEACHERS**

Teaching our children is a huge responsibility but very much appreciated. We have been very blessed with amazing parents that have shared their time and talents with students that are not their own. At Mankato Homeschool Connection, teachers are responsible for the following:

- Passing on knowledge of a given subject and being worthy examples for the students.
- Submitting a brief class description to the directors at least two weeks before the class is scheduled to begin.
- Communicating with your co-teacher or helper so that they can be well prepared to take over in the event of your absence.
- Holding students accountable to the code of conduct using the 1-2-3 system and using the “Post-It Note” system when needed (see “Policies” for more information on these systems).
- Praying for your class.

## **HELPERS**

Teachers would not be nearly as effective without their helper. Helpers are an integral part of the classroom experience – helping with all sorts of tasks to help make the class run smoother. The helper also serves to make sure that at least two adults are always in each classroom. At Mankato Homeschool Connection, helpers are responsible for the following:

- Assisting in passing on knowledge of a given subject and being worthy examples for the students.
- Looking ahead at lessons when possible to be prepared to take over teaching if the teacher is absent.
- Assisting in holding students accountable to the code of conduct and any other duties that the teacher needs help with.
- Praying for your class.

## **NURSERY HELPERS**

Without parents being willing to serve in the nursery, meeting for co-op would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for many families. Even if you do not have a child young enough to be in the nursery, this is your opportunity to serve families who could not attend co-op without nursery care. It can also be a time for fellowship with the other parents also serving in the nursery. At Mankato Homeschool Connection, nursery helpers are responsible for the following:

- Always maintaining a close watch on all children in the nursery and assuring that all children in your care are accounted for at regular intervals.
- Taking potty trained toddlers to the bathroom when requested and changing infants and toddlers who are not yet potty trained when their diapers are soiled.
- Reading and playing with the children in the nursery at regular intervals.
- Being worthy examples for the children in your care.
- Praying for the babies and toddlers in your care.

## **LEADERSHIP BOARD, DIRECTORS, AND COMMITTEES**

The fundamental responsibility of the Leadership Team (board and directors) is to provide direction and oversight to the Mankato Homeschool Connection co-op. The Leadership Team consists of 3 directors and a leadership board.

### **DIRECTORS**

#### Selection of Directors

- All directors will be selected by the Board. When a director position opens up, the board will select a qualified candidate from the current co-op membership to vote on. A majority vote is required.
- At all times there will be at least two directors but preferably three.

#### Responsibilities of Directors

- Providing oversight and direction to the co-op day and seeing that the fundamental mission of the co-op is being pursued.
- Run the co-op day including set-up, opening, notification of when classes are over, dismissal, closing.
- Keep track of absences and find replacement teachers as needed.
- Regularly monitor all classrooms and help out as needed with getting supplies, bathroom breaks, etc.
- Be a point person for any concerns or behavior issues that come up throughout the day.
- Involving others in carrying out the work of co-op. This includes assigning and selecting qualified teachers and other volunteers.
- Helping to establish and uphold the policies of co-op.
- Reporting regularly to the board president any issues needing board involvement.
- Serve on Thursday committee to help plan and prepare for the co-op day.
- Staying at the co-op to assure the building is clean, secure, and everyone from the co-op has left. The directors should expect to be the last to leave.
- Keeping emotions in check when it comes to co-op matters. The guiding document should always be consulted in handling difficult situations, and feelings should be put aside. This includes, but is not limited to, showing humility and grace when votes do not go the way you would have liked or when a fellow director or a board member disagrees with you on how to handle a situation.
- Seek UNITY first. Unity in the Leadership Team is essential to a healthy co-op. Individuals on a team will not always agree, but agreement is not necessary to achieve unity when it has godly and humble Team Members.

Information on leadership board duties can be found within the bylaws.

### **Qualifications of all Leadership Team Members**

- Genuine faith in Christ evidenced by a life characterized by faithfulness
- Membership in Mankato Homeschool Connection for at least one year.

- Has demonstrated a strong commitment to homeschooling and the co-op, its mission, statement of faith, and practices.
- Able to listen, analyze, think clearly and creatively; to work well with people individually as well as in a group.
- Willing to prepare for and attend Leadership Team meetings, to ask questions, and to take responsibility and follow through on a given assignment.
- Possessing honesty, and friendly, responsive, and patient approach; personal integrity; maturity in faith and in mind; community building skills.

### **Pastor Leadership Member**

- The Leadership Team hopes to make at least one pastor a part of its Leadership Team.
- Pastor Leadership Members will not be required to attend all meetings but will be welcome to at any time. Although they may have children in the co-op, it will not be a requirement.
- The purpose of asking a pastor to serve on the Leadership Team is for guidance and accountability, especially for unforeseen difficult situations that require the gentleness and wisdom that a pastor can provide.
- Any pastor chosen to serve on the Leadership Team must possess the qualifications listed above except membership in the co-op for one year.

### **CURRENT LEADERSHIP TEAM**

**Directors:** Jess Lewis, Michelle Subbert, Rachel Wentz

**Board:** President - Alynda Foster, Vice-President - Chelsea Winchester, Treasurer - Julie Perrizo, Secretary/Communications Manager - Ann Pratt

### **COMMITTEES**

The main purpose of the leadership board is to provide vision and direction for Mankato Homeschool Connection. Because of this, committees have been formed to help spread more of the actual logistics and operations of the group around and allow members a chance to have more input in the decisions that impact them the most. There are five committees that work under the direction of the board. Each committee has at least one board member that is part of it and is responsible for reporting back to the entire board.

#### **Thursday Committee**

This committee is responsible for everything related to the co-op day including classes, daily operations, cleaning, supplies, parent connect time, etc. This committee is composed of the directors, the board president, and one general co-op member.

#### **Beyond Thursday Committee**

This committee is responsible for everything that happens with the co-op not related to the actual co-op day. This would include field trips, special events, service projects, mom's nights, etc. This committee is composed of the vice president and several other general co-op members.

**Executive Committee**

This committee is responsible for handling any emergent issues that come up between regular board meetings. This committee is composed of the board president, vice-president, and directors.

**Finance/Fundraising Committee**

This committee is responsible for planning a yearly budget for the board and organizing any fundraising activities through the year. This committee is composed of the treasurer and at least two general co-op members.

**High School Committee**

This committee is responsible for planning special classes for high school students, organizing field trips or special events just for the high schoolers, and helping to grow the high school program. This committee is composed of the president, a director if desired, and several other co-op members.

Any parent desiring to serve on a committee is welcome to express their interest to a board member. The qualifications to serve would be the same for all other leadership positions with the exception of having been a member of Mankato Homeschool Connection for at least one year. New members are welcome to serve as well.

It is hoped that committee members will learn more of the operations required to keep Mankato Homeschool Connection operational and may consider using that knowledge to serve themselves on the leadership team (board or director) down the road.

# **POLICIES**

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

The code of conduct outlines how all members, whether parents or students, are expected to behave. The code of conduct exists to keep the co-op a safe, friendly, and loving environment.

### **Parents and Volunteers (including Leadership Team Members) are expected to:**

- Make Thursday co-op times a priority, which includes regular attendance, arriving on time, and being prepared to assist in whatever way might be needed.
- Support the co-op and what it stands for.
- Support the Leadership Team and the direction it establishes. Any questions or concerns should be brought to the Leadership Team as soon as possible.
- Realize that the Leadership Team takes decision making seriously and will do its best to consider all ideas and all concerns, however, it is impossible to please everyone. Please give grace and be willing to compromise. All decisions made will be what the current team truly and prayerfully believe is best for the co-op and the families in it.
- Always follow and enforce co-op safety rules.
- Communicate with your child(ren)'s teachers if your child has special needs, whether they are physical, emotional, or educational in nature. Be willing to assist those teachers to make this the best experience possible for your child(ren).
- Refrain from gossip and grumbling.
- Show kindness and respect to everyone.
- Handle issues lovingly.
- An adult should never be alone with a child that is not his/her own. Always keep in sight of others.
- Respect the space of others.
- Teachers and helpers should communicate with parents on activities and schedules.
- Avoid cell phones for personal use during co-op hours unless it is absolutely necessary.

### **Students are expected to:**

- Be respectful of all adults, whether a teacher, helper, or other volunteer.
- Disruptive behavior or the use of profanity will not be tolerated.
- Participate in classroom activities and lessons. Please honor our teachers by following this policy.
- Be respectful of the facility and its furnishing and equipment, as well as the personal property of others. Remain within the designated boundaries of the church. Do not use or hang out in areas MHC has not been given permission to utilize.
- Be respectful of your fellow students. Bullying or disrespectful comments to other students will not be tolerated. Treat others as you would like them to treat you.
- Refrain from using or having toys, video games, cell phones or other electronic equipment, knives, and guns during co-op meetings or events. Either leave those at home or leave them with your parents. This is for the protection of all students.
- Always follow co-op safety rules.

- Refrain from teasing, flirting, or having girlfriend/boyfriend type discussions during co-op meetings or events.
- No public displays of affection are permitted between students.
- Students will not be allowed to spend unchaperoned time alone with another student during their time at co-op or any affiliated activity or field trip.
- Walk quietly to class, arrive promptly, and be seated timely. Try to use the restroom before or after classes.
- Always stay in the classroom unless permission is granted to leave.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT VIOLATIONS**

A procedure for handling Code of Conduct violations has been implemented to leave emotions and hurt feelings out as much as possible and replace them with an objective procedure.

### **Parents and Volunteers**

Code of Conduct Violations for parents and volunteers will follow a three-step process to align with the Bible's guidelines for handling disputes set forth in Matthew 18: 15-17. (\*\*EXCEPT in the case of any kind of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, alleged or confirmed – in these situations, the Director and Leadership Team are to follow the policy set forth in the Child, Member, and Volunteer Safety Policy).

1. Parents and volunteers who fail to uphold the above policies will be approached by a board member or a director, and a warning will be given. The rest of the Leadership team is to be informed that this warning was given, and the date and details should be documented by the person giving the warning. If the warning is properly responded to, the matter will end there (Matthew 18:15). If the inappropriate behavior or conduct continues, the process will move to step 2.
2. The violating parent or volunteer will be approached by at least two board members or directors to address the violation again (Matthew 18:16). The date of this meeting and important details should be documented by a board member. If the parent or volunteer continues with inappropriate behavior or conduct, the process will move to step 3.
3. The entire board will meet to go over documentation. The violating parent or volunteer must be informed that this meeting is going to take place and should have the opportunity to attend, however, their attendance is not required for this step to proceed. A vote must be taken to determine if this family is going to be dismissed from the co-op. If the violating member attended this meeting, they will be required to leave the room when the vote is taking place.
  - A. If the outcome of the vote is to dismiss the family from co-op, at least two board members must meet with the parent or volunteer to inform them of this decision.
  - B. If the outcome of the vote is to retain the family, the meeting is to be documented by the board.
  - C. The board should then lay out a plan for how to move forward. Two board members must meet with the parent or volunteer to inform them of this decision and the plan to

move forward. If it was voted to retain the member family, but this plan is not followed, the board should repeat step 3.

Leadership Team Members must handle these situations with grace, love, and self-control. Privacy should be maintained at all times. Leadership Team Members are prohibited from discussing the matter with other co-op members or among themselves outside of board meetings. Written documentation must be kept in a secure place where privacy and confidentiality are expected.

The same process should be followed if the offending member is also a Leadership Team member. If that member is a Director, an interim Director should be selected from among the board until it is decided who a new director will be.

### **Students**

Each teacher and adult helper shall maintain a 1-2-3 policy in their classroom. Teachers and helpers are reminded that one of their responsibilities is to hold students accountable to the code of conduct. If students are talking over you, disrespecting you, disobeying you, etc. – they are violating the code of conduct, and you have a responsibility to them, their parents, and yourself to follow steps to hold the student accountable.

#### **1-2-3 Policy for Classrooms and all Co-op Activities**

1. The student is warned by the teacher or helper that their behavior is inappropriate. If the warning is properly responded to, the matter ends there.
2. If the student continues with disruptive, disobedient, or disrespectful behavior, the teacher or helper is to alert a director. If possible, at least two directors should address the student at this time, firmly, but lovingly. If only one director is available, he or she can address the student in the presence of the teacher or helper from the student's class. The directors will inform parents that this step was reached as soon as possible, but if the student corrects this behavior, the matter ends there.
3. If the student persists in the problem behaviors, the teacher or helper should take the student to their parent for discipline. If possible, the director(s) who addressed the student should be present when explaining what happened. If the parent is teaching, a director will help with running his or her class until the matter is resolved.

Parents are required to encourage their child(ren) to maintain the Code of Conduct, either by giving them positive reinforcement when they have good behavior or discipline when they do not. If the student's conduct continues to be inappropriate, and these steps must be taken regularly, the same steps outlined for code of conduct violations for parents and volunteers will be taken.

## **BULLYING, MALICIOUSNESS, AND/OR HOSTILITY**

We do not expect everyone to “like” each other. Some personality types are compatible with other personality types, while others may clash – and that is okay! God does call us to LOVE one another, regardless of personalities.

Bullying, malicious, or unkind speech, or purposely ostracizing anyone will not be tolerated by any child or adult. This is considered a SERIOUS Code of Conduct violation, and the steps for Code of Conduct violations listed above will be followed immediately.

Adults are strongly discouraged from forming exclusive and unwelcoming cliques that will make others feel unwelcome. While we understand that some people will become closer friends with some more than others, we should always make everyone in a group setting feel welcome to contribute to and feel involved in the conversation

Children are learning about relationships, not only how to make friends, but how to treat others, how to respond if others are unkind, and how to restore relationships. They WILL make mistakes as they learn to navigate relationships, and it is our job as adults to help guide them in a godly direction. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Comforting a child who has been hurt emotionally by another child.
- Lovingly correcting a child (or children) who has been unkind or inconsiderate of another child.
- Discouraging the formation of exclusive and unwelcoming cliques among the children.
- Helping children who have had a misunderstanding restore their relationship whenever possible.
- Using conflicts among children as learning opportunities in the areas of humility, grace, and forgiveness.

Children should be encouraged to seek help from an adult if they are mistreated by another child (or children) at co-op. This is not tattling. Bullying and/or ostracization of a child can have long-term effects if left unchecked. Instead of a learning opportunity, it is harmful, even for the offending child. Children can seek help from:

- Their teachers
  - Teachers should seek to correct the problem immediately by lovingly correcting the child(ren) and comforting the child who came to them. If a teacher or helper is not comfortable dealing with a situation, go to a director. Parents of all children involved and a director (if one did not assist) should be notified by the end of the day.
- A director
  - Directors should seek to correct the problem immediately by lovingly correcting the child(ren) and comforting the child who came to them.
  - Parents of all children involved should be notified by the end of the day.
- Their parent
  - If a child comes to a parent to report a problem with another child, we encourage them to go directly to the other child’s parent so that they can work to resolve the



situation. If they are uncomfortable doing so or a resolution cannot be reached, please seek a director for help.

## **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

If a problem arises involving another member of the co-op, please go directly to that person and discuss the matter with them. This policy is in effect for all Parents, Volunteers, and Leadership Team Members. If the two of you are unable to resolve the matter, then involve one of the members of the Leadership Team to help work through the situation. If the matter cannot be resolved by the mediation of this Leadership Team Member, it is likely due to a Code of Conduct violation by one or both parties. If that is the case, the steps listed under Code of Conduct Violations should be initiated. Conflict Resolution must be driven by policy and a desire to follow Biblical Principles – NOT DRIVEN BY EMOTIONS.

## **ATTENDANCE**

We understand that life happens, and this means that sometimes families cannot make it to co-op. For this reason, we do not expect perfect attendance. However, habitual absence and tardiness negatively affect the entire group. For this reason, the following attendance policy has been put into place:

- 3 tardies = 1 absence
- 3 unexpected absences = Loss of priority registration for the following school year
  - An unexpected absence is an absence where the parent did not give notice before 12:00 pm that the family would be gone that day.

There can be rare exceptions to this policy at the discretion of the Leadership Team. The directors will keep track of all tardies and absences.

If 50% or more families will be absent, the Thursday Committee will meet briefly (does not need to be in person) so that cancellation of co-op for the week can be considered.

## **ABSENCE**

If your family needs to miss co-op for illness, an emergency, or any other reason, please follow this procedure:

- Contact the designated director to let them know you will be absent as soon as possible.
- If you are a teacher, contact your co-teacher and/or helper so that they know they will be teaching the class that day.

## **SUB LIST**

The sub list will be made available to all members each session. Parents will know ahead of time where they are on the list. The list will be made as follows:

- Parents who have already had Parent Connect time another session.
- Parents who are helpers only that session.
- Parents who only co-teach one class that session.
- Parents who co-teach two classes that session.

## **SICKNESS**

You may not attend co-op if you or your children:

- Have a fever, or have had a fever in the last 24 hours
- Are actively coughing
- Have colored drainage
- Have any known contagious illness

While at co-op, students and parents are expected to practice good handwashing and cover coughs and sneezes to reduce the spread of any unknown illness. Toys in the nursery should be sanitized after being played with and the diaper changing area should be sanitized after each use.

Regarding masks and face shields, at the time of this writing, there is no current face mask requirement in Minnesota. Members who feel more comfortable wearing a mask should feel free to do so. Members are not permitted to question, challenge, harass, or shame another member about their personal health decision to wear or not wear face coverings.

## **DRESS CODE**

All co-op participants regardless of age must be dressed modestly and appropriately while attending the co-op. If you are unsure if something is appropriate, it is probably wise to choose another item of clothing.

## **NURSERY**

Nursery care will be provided for infants and toddlers up to preschool age.

- Children can be dropped off in the nursery after prayer and announcement time. Please make sure the nursery helpers are there before you leave.
- Children who are ill (fever, colored drainage, vomiting, croupy cough, etc.) cannot be brought into the nursery.
- Parents should pick up their children promptly after the closing so that the nursery helpers can pick up their own children.

## **SAFETY POLICIES**

The co-op will provide a basic first aid kit. If your child is injured and needs any type of medical attention (minor: band aid or ice pack, or in the unlikely event of a more serious injury), you will be called to tend to these needs.

All medications should be kept with the parent. Medication is to be distributed only by the parent.

Emergency fire evacuation and tornado procedures are listed on the class attendance clipboard. A fire drill will be executed once a year.

## **CLEANING**

All parents, volunteers, and students are expected to assist with cleaning the facility and equipment used. This means returning things to their original state before the co-op began. We want to show our appreciation to Sunrise Church by giving them the utmost respect for their facility and the property in it.

- After classes
  - Teachers and helpers are to pick up their room when their class is over – everything should be returned to the state it was in when you first came into the class.
  - First and second hour teachers: If your lesson was particularly messy that day, please make sure the tables are wiped down and medium to large debris is picked up off the floor. Chairs should be put back to where they were when you got there. Students should help you with this duty.
  - Third hour teachers: Please empty your trash, tie the bag, and set it outside your classroom. Replace the trash liner. Put the chairs and any other furniture back where it belongs. Wipe down tables and pick up any debris too large to vacuum from the floor. Students should help with this duty.
- Nursery and PreK/K teacher/helpers: Please wipe down (or spray) the toys before putting them away.
- After Co-op:
  - We will have families assigned each session to be sure the list of duties is completed. That list will be made available to all families at the beginning of the school year. A list of duties will be available.

## **ORIENTATION AND INTERVIEW**

To become a new member of Mankato Homeschool Connection, a parent (preferably both when possible) will be required to meet with at least two members of leadership for an in person interview. This will be a time for the new members to ask specific questions and for the leadership team to get to know the potential new members better. This will be done in an informal setting. New and existing members will also be asked to either attend an orientation meeting or watch the taped recording of that meeting. The purpose of this is to touch base and give all relevant information for the year.

Orientation night will try to be the third Thursday of August in the evening.

## **ENROLLMENT FOR PUBLIC-SCHOOL-AT-HOME STUDENTS**

Legally homeschooling and doing public school at home (through a program administered by the local school system, K12, Venture Upward, etc.) are not the same. Homeschoolers follow a different law and are not held to the same state standards or testing that public-school-at-home students are held to. Additionally, public-school-at-home students do not have to report annually as homeschoolers do. We will permit public-school-at-home students to join our co-op if they agree to the following:

- They are aware that by using the public-school-at-home method, they are not legally homeschooling

- They are aware that any discussion about the legalities of homeschooling at co-op refers to legally homeschooling families and does not pertain to their situation. Any legal questions regarding their schooling should be directed to the administrator of their public-school program.
- Mankato Homeschool Connection will not be able to change its programming in any way to accommodate a standard or requirement that needs to be fulfilled for the public-school program.

### **FIELD TRIPS AND EXTRA EVENTS**

Only CURRENT members may attend co-op planned field trips and events. That means mom and/or dad of the member family along with their children who are also members of the co-op or those still living with them. Unfortunately, we cannot have grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, family friends, etc. come along in the group (unless it is something that families and friends are invited to because space allows. Leadership will make it clear if there are events family and friends are invited to).

A member parent (or person acting as parent during regular co-op times) MUST attend field trips and events that their child(ren) attend so that each parent is responsible for their own child(ren). Children cannot attend with other adults, even if that adult is also a member of our co-op, unless the field trip or event has designated chaperones.

For a field trip to be co-op-planned (which means planned, organized, and advertised as a co-op field trip or event), at least one leadership member must attend for a group up to 20 people. For 20 or more, at least two leadership members must attend.

If you plan a field trip for your own family where grandparents or family friends are attending and you want to ask members of the co-op to go along, you are welcome to do that. In that case, the field trip is not co-op planned, meaning that the co-op is not responsible for planning or organizing the event – and would also not be responsible to assure that the above rules are followed.

### **POLICY OR HANDBOOK CHANGES**

Should the need to amend this handbook or any policies arise, the Leadership Team Member shall meet in person to go over the proposed changes. The proposed change may be initiated by any board member. After changes have been discussed, a vote is to be cast on the final draft of the changes. The board shall determine when this change is effective, and members should be notified immediately of the change. If the change will not take effect until the following school year, the members may be notified of the changes during the Orientation for the following co-op year.

### **COMMUNICATION**

Our main means of communication is our website, email, and our Facebook group (Mankato Homeschool Connection). Members are welcome to post announcements, questions, and encouragement on the group page. This is a private group, so please do not share information

from that group to anyone not in the co-op. Please check the website or group regularly for co-op communication. Anyone who is not on Facebook will still be able to see updates on our website and through emails.

A member directory will be made available on our website at the beginning of the school year to make contact between families easier. Please do not give out contact information for any co-op member unless that member has given you permission to do so.

## **PHOTOGRAPHS**

All members are given the option when they initially register for permission for photographs or videos of themselves and their children to be used for publicity or educational purposes by Mankato Homeschool Connection. If a member gave their permission but has since changed their mind, they need to notify leadership in writing of the same. In addition, members will often post photos they take during the co-op day on our private Facebook group. Please notify leadership directly if you do not want your or your child(ren)'s photos used in this way.

## **CHILD, MEMBER, AND VOLUNTEER SAFETY POLICY**

The leadership team for Mankato Homeschool Connection desires this to be a safe place for all children and adults who attend co-op or any extra activity. As such, we are putting this Child, Member, and Volunteer Safety Policy in place. This is for the protection of all children and all adults who attend.

## **GENERAL POLICIES**

- Any adult participating in the co-op shall not engage in any form of physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect
- The windows of classroom doors shall remain uncovered to allow a clear view of classroom activities.
- When possible, children are to be encouraged to take care of their own bathroom needs. If assistance is required, another adult who is a member of the co-op should be present.
- All children shall only leave the building with parents, guardians, or the person that the parents have made responsible for their children during co-op.
- Corporal punishment (spanking) of a child that is not your own is strictly prohibited. If a child's behavior is inappropriate and they have not heeded a warning, they are to be taken to their parent(s) for discipline.
- Avoid promises of confidentiality to any child or teen that is not your own. Not only could you have to break this promise if you learn of an abusive situation, but it could also give the appearance of an inappropriate relationship if an adult is sharing secrets with a child or teen that is not their parent.

## **RESPECTING SPACE**

To an adult or child who is upset, a warm hug and kind word can be most comforting. Christian tradition shares love with each other through hugs, placing an arm around another's shoulder, etc. At the same time, it is important that we respect the space of others. If someone is not

comfortable with a hug or other touch that, while appropriate, makes them uncomfortable, respect their space.

### **TWO ADULT POLICY**

Every effort should be made to have two adults present with children at all times. This is for the protection of the children and the adults. If the other adult must step out in a hurry to take a bathroom break or something of that nature, the classroom door is to be left open until a Leadership Team member can enter the classroom.

### **POST-IT NOTE POLICY**

Each classroom bin will have different colored post-it notes in the classroom bin. Leadership will routinely walk the halls checking on classes. Teachers should place a post-it note on their door to alert the Leadership Team that assistance is needed. This system helps us assure that two adults are always in the room. The following color-coding system should be used:

- Yellow = A student needs to be taken to the restroom
- Pink = Discipline issues (Steps 2 or 3 have been reached)
- Green = Other assistance is needed (need supplies, etc.)

### **REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT**

Because we believe that the protection of children must be the most important concern, Mankato Homeschool Connection has adopted the following guidelines for reporting observed or suspected abuse:

1. Upon observing or suspecting abuse, the member or volunteer shall immediately do the following:
  - a. Make sure the child's safety and comfort are secured
  - b. Make sure the suspected abuser is safely away from the children
2. Report the abuse or neglect promptly to a member of the Leadership Team. To preserve confidentiality, it is important to discuss the incident initially only with any of these individuals.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LEADERSHIP TEAM**

1. Take all allegations of child abuse and/or neglect seriously.
2. Document all efforts at handling the incident.
3. Contact the county social service department of the child's residence within 24 hours. Do not attempt an in-depth investigation. This should be left to professionals who are familiar with these cases.
4. Report the incident immediately to the co-op insurance company.
5. Do not try to handle this without professional outside assistance. It is NOT the role of anyone in the co-op to evaluate or investigate allegations.
6. Notify the parents or guardians.
7. Do not prejudge the situation but take the allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Showing care and support will help to prevent further hurt.
8. Do not confront the accused until the safety of the child is secured.

9. Treat the accused with dignity and support. If the accused is a member or volunteer of the co-op, that person should be relieved of his or her duties until the investigation is finished.

## **RELEASE OF LIABILITY**

The following is a copy of the Release of Liability that members must acknowledge and agree to when they register yearly.

I (We) hereby agree to be responsible for the conduct and actions of my child(ren). I understand that accidents and injuries may occur involving my child(ren) or myself, and I agree to release and hold harmless Mankato Homeschool Connection, its leadership team members, volunteers, and fellow parents and students from any liability, claims, or demands for any accidents or injuries which may occur during participation in the co-op or any extra event/field trip held by the group. Furthermore, any medical expenses for my child(ren) or myself incurred due to these incidents would be my responsibility, and I agree not to seek out payment or compensation from Mankato Homeschool Connection. I also agree to release and hold harmless Sunrise Church, its volunteers, and employees from any liability, claims, or demands for any accident or injury occurring while participating in co-op activities on their property.

I understand that, while every effort will be made to avoid any food allergens I have listed in my membership application for my child(ren), accidental exposure may occur because Mankato Homeschool Connection cannot guarantee an allergy free zone in any of our meeting locations. I agree to release and hold harmless the group, its leadership team members, volunteers, and fellow parents and students from any liability, claims, or demands for any injury due to accidental allergen exposure.

I understand that if at any time I feel that a situation or activity at Mankato Homeschool Connection or any extra function is unsafe for my child(ren) for any reason (including, but not limited to, health concerns, physical limitations, emotional limitations, or a general concern for safety) it is my responsibility to remove my child(ren) from that situation.

I understand that, while every effort will be made to lessen the risk of spread of communicable diseases/illnesses, Mankato Homeschool Connection, Sunrise Church, the leadership team, volunteers, and fellow parents cannot be held liable for any illnesses that arise due to exposure at regular co-op times or extra activities. I also understand that because health information is protected, the Organization has no right to question a family's decision to or to not wear masks.

## APPENDIX

### **Bylaws (For Tax-Exempt Status)**

#### **Article 1 – Name, Purpose, Location**

- **Section 1** – The name of this organization shall be Mankato Homeschool Connection.
- **Section 2** – The mission of Mankato Homeschool Connection is to create a supportive community for both parents and students, adding enrichment to the education experience of the homeschooling community.
- **Section 3** – The registered office location of Mankato Homeschool Connection shall be located in Blue Earth County, in the state of Minnesota. The organization may have any number of offices at such places as the Board may determine.

#### **Article 2 – Membership**

- **Section 1** – The qualification for membership in this organization are:
  - Payment of dues/fees
  - Teaching, assisting, or volunteering in some capacity per approval of the board.
- **Section 2** - Membership to the organization is fee-based, requiring dues.
- **Section 3** - Members have no voting rights. All voting rights are given to the board exclusively.

#### **Article 3 – Meetings**

- **Section 1** – Regular meetings of the Board will be held monthly or bi-monthly at such place and time as shall be designated by the standing resolution of the Board.
- **Section 2** – Special meetings may be called by The Board of Directors.
- **Section 3** – Notice of all meetings shall be provided to each voting member, on the website calendar at least 7 days prior to the meeting.



- **Section 4** - Members of the Board may participate in a meeting through use of conference telephone or similar communications equipment, so long as members participating in such meetings can hear one another. Members of the Board may vote by email, text or other electronic means.

#### **Article 4 – Board of Directors**

- **Section 1** – The business of the organization shall be managed by a Board of Directors composed of at least three and no more than seven Board members. The Board is responsible for maintaining the overall policy and direction of the organization. The Board shall delegate responsibility of day-to-day operations to the director(s) and appropriate committees.
- **Section 2** - General Responsibilities of all board members: To attend regular board meetings, attend emergency meetings as needed, set general schedule for co-op year, make policies as needed, oversee and approve structure of co-op day, deal with locations items, approve session classes/schedule, and to fill in for director(s) as needed.
- **Section 3** – The Board shall meet at least six times per year at an agreed upon time and location. Board members shall not miss more than one meeting per year.
- **Section 4** – All board members are encouraged to commit to a minimum of 12 months of service.
- **Section 5** – Any Board member may be removed from office without assigning any cause by the vote of the Board at any meeting of the Board.
- **Section 6** – Any Board member may resign at any time by giving notice to the organization.
- **Section 7** – In the event of a vacancy on the Board (including situations where the number of Board members has been deemed necessary to increase), the Board of directors shall fill the vacancy. Vacancies will be filled through majority board vote.
- **Section 8** – A quorum must be attended by at least 75 percent of the Board members before business can be transacted or motions made or passed.

- **Section 9** - Board members shall receive no compensation (other than reasonable expenses) for their service on the Board.
- **Section 10** - In the event that an issue arises involving a board member or a family member of the board member, that board member will be excused from all discussions and decisions related to the incident.

## **Article 5 – Officers**

- **Section 1** – The officers of the organization shall be President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, and Communications Manager. The Board of Directors shall appoint each of these officers. The Board may also appoint other officers it deems necessary.
- **Section 2** – The Board of Directors shall appoint officers for a term established by the Board.
- **Section 3** – Any officer may be removed from office without assigning any cause by the vote of the Board at any meeting of the Board.
- **Section 4** – Officers of the Board will not be compensated via salary or other benefits for their service as an officer of the Board.
- **Section 5** – President  
The President shall convene regularly scheduled Board meetings and shall preside or arrange for other members of the Executive Committee to preside at each meeting in the following order: Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. The President shall appoint Committee Chairs as necessary. Any new president shall have served in another capacity on the board for at least one year prior to becoming president.
- **Section 6** – Vice President  
The Vice President will chair committees on special subjects as designated by the President. In addition, the Vice President will facilitate meetings in the absence of the Board Chair.
- **Section 7** – Secretary  
The Secretary shall be responsible for keeping records of Board actions, including overseeing the taking of minutes at all board meetings, sending out meeting announcements, distributing copies of minutes and the agenda to each

Board member, counting monies with treasurer, and assuring that corporate records are maintained.

- **Section 8 – Treasurer**

The Treasurer shall make a report at each Board meeting. The treasurer shall assist in the preparation of the budget and make financial information available to Board members and the public. The treasurer shall also make a rough yearly budget, write out checks (do not sign), balance bank statements, and send out invoices.

- **Section 9 - Communications Manager**

The Communications Manager shall be responsible for disseminating information to all members of the co-op that is pertinent to them. This should be done utilizing various formats as appropriate for the current information.

## **Article 6 – Committees**

- **Section 1 –** The Board may create committees as needed, such as the Thursday committee, Executive committee, Beyond Thursday committee, Finance/Fundraising committee, and high school committee. Additional committees can be created as the need arises. The Board will appoint a chairperson for each committee.
- **Section 2 –** No committee shall have any power to: fill vacancies on the Board, adopt, amend or repeal the bylaws, amend or repeal any resolution of the Board, or act on matters committed by the by-laws or resolution of the Board to another committee of the Board.

## **Article 7 - Indemnification**

- **Section 1 –** The organization shall indemnify any agent of the organization including Directors, Board Members, and Volunteers who was or is a party, or is threatened to be made a party to any proceeding, administrative or investigative, as such a person was or is an authorized representative of the organization. This indemnification against expenses, judgments, fines, and amount paid in settlements actually or reasonably incurred by such a representative of the organization is contingent upon the determination that such person acted in good faith and in a manner he/she believed to be in, or not opposed to, the best interests of the organization. With respect to any criminal proceeding,

indemnified persons shall have had no cause to believe that their conduct was unlawful.

- **Section 2** – To satisfy indemnification obligations the organization may maintain insurance, obtain a letter of credit, act as a self-insurer, create a reserve trust, cash collateral, enter into indemnification agreements, or use any other arrangement whatsoever in such amounts, at such costs, and upon other terms and conditions that the Board shall deem appropriate.
- **Section 3** – This indemnification shall be made only if the organization shall be advised by its Board of Directors acting (1) by a quorum consisting of directors who are not parties to such action or proceeding upon a finding that, or (2) if a quorum under is not obtainable with due diligence, upon the opinion in writing of legal counsel that, the director or officer has met the foregoing applicable standard of conduct. If the foregoing determination is to be made by the Board of Directors, it may rely as to all questions of law, on the advice of independent legal counsel.

#### **Article 8 – Amendments**

- **Section 1** – These By-laws may be amended when deemed necessary by a 75 percent majority vote of the Board members. Proposed amendments must be submitted to the Secretary and sent along with regular board meeting notices.

#### **Article 9 - IRC 501 (c)(3) Tax Exemption Provisions**

**a.** Upon the dissolution of Mankato Homeschool Connection, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for public purpose.

**b.** Mankato Homeschool Connection is organized exclusively for charitable, religious, educational, and/or scientific purposes under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. No part of the net earnings shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to its members, directors, officers, or other private persons, except that the organization shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in the purpose clause hereof.

c. No substantial part of the activities of Mankato Homeschool Connection shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the organization shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

d. Notwithstanding any other provision of this document, the organization shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by an organization exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or (b) by an organization, contributions to which are deductible under section 170(c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

### **Conflict of Interest**

- **Section 1** – Whenever a director or officer has a financial or personal interest in any matter coming before the board of directors, the affected person shall a) fully disclose the nature of the interest and b) withdraw from discussion, lobbying, and voting on the matter. Any transaction or vote involving a potential conflict of interest shall be approved only when a majority of disinterested directors determine that it is in the best interest of the corporation to do so. The minutes of meetings at which such votes are taken shall record such disclosure, abstention and rationale for approval.

## **2021-22 Calendar of Co-op Dates and Events**

Sept 9, 16, 23 - Co-op Park Day Meetings

Sept 23 - Annual Family Picnic Supper at McGowan's Farm put on by the board

Sept 30 - Field Trip

Oct 7, 14, 21, 28; Nov 4, 11 - First Session of Co-op at Sunrise Church

Jan 20, 27; Feb 3, 10, 17, 24, - Second Session of Co-op at Sunrise Church

March 3 - Field Trip

March 10 - Third Session of Co-op at Sunrise Church begins (exact dates yet to be determined)

**\*\*More events to be added\*\***