

## **Explorers Homeschool Academy Handbook**

Explorers Homeschool Academy is a weekly, Christ centered, inter-denominational cooperative with the purpose of providing quality classes to homeschooling families.

### **Leadership Team:**

The members of the leadership team at Explorers are Melissa Scone, Rachel Danner, Lora Pierce, and Theresa Holritz.

### **Governing Values:**

While member families participating at Explorers are not required to agree with every doctrinal point contained in the following value statements, we do ask that they agree to not dispute, challenge, or debate these governing values during co-op hours.

The actions and decisions of the leadership team at Explorers Homeschool Academy are governed by the following values:

- We believe there is one God, eternally existent in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- We believe Jesus Christ, born of a virgin, is God come in the flesh. His death provides substitutionary atonement for our sins. He literally rose bodily from the dead and will literally come to earth again.
- We believe the Bible in its entirety (all 66 books of the Old and New Testaments) is the infallible, inspired Word of God.
- We believe in, and accept by faith, the Genesis account of creation.
- We believe man is, by nature, sinful and is inherently in need of salvation, which is exclusively found by faith alone in Jesus Christ and His shed blood. Personal salvation comes to mankind by grace through faith.
- We believe in a literal heaven and a literal hell.
- We believe the Bible defines marriage as being between one man and one woman.
- We believe that God created humans as either male or female. No man or woman has the ability to change their sex through declaring a new identity or through surgery and medical intervention.
- We believe that all human life is a sacred gift from God, beginning at conception.

### **Application Process/Financial Responsibilities:**

Each family must complete an application for Explorers, and once accepted, submit a non-refundable \$115 co-op fee. A check for this fee can be made payable to Explorers Homeschool Academy and mailed to Lora Pierce at 8255 Tiber Road Chattanooga, TN. 37421. In addition to this fee, we also ask members to pay a \$100 facility fee. A check for this fee can be made payable to our host church and will be due in August.

Classes will also require a payment of class fees to cover supplies for activities and experiments. The class fees will be listed in the class registration database, for which an ID and password will be provided once your application is accepted. You will be able to see classes and the fees, as well as register your children once your \$115 co-op fee is paid. Payment for class fees will be due at the beginning of the year orientation or before. Some classes may contain a book fee, which will not be included in the class supply fees and which will be due during the summer before classes begin. Student curriculum and books are generally not included in the class supply fee, unless stated otherwise.

A Release of Liability and a Statement of Responsibility must be signed by the parents. In addition, our host church requires both the husband and wife of each family to complete a Volunteer Candidate Authorization Form in order to perform background checks. The Volunteer Authorization Form will be updated every 5 years, following your initial background check. Once accepted to Explorers Homeschool Academy, you will be contacted about completing these forms.

Current Explorers families: All outstanding fees (including fees to any outside instructor) must be paid before you can confirm your involvement for the upcoming school year.

### **Parent Responsibilities:**

The heart of Explorers Homeschool Academy is homeschooling, which necessitates parents' involvement in their children's education, classes, and day-to-day experience to achieve maximum effectiveness. **Therefore, it is our policy that a parent or permanent legal guardian remain on campus the entire time his/her children are at Explorers.** Explorers students benefit immensely from the presence and influence of our dedicated parents on-site each week. **Sitting in a car, dropping off children, or leaving campus during free periods is not allowed.** A teacher, who needs to leave campus to obtain time-sensitive supplies for their class, may do so with permission from the Leadership Team.

Parents assume full responsibility for their children at all times while at Explorers and are expected to enforce co-op rules and expectations. This plays a vital role in ensuring a high standard is maintained for conduct, attitude, and safety at our co-op. Parents will be contacted if disciplinary problems arise.

Everyone's participation is necessary for our co-op to be successful and function smoothly. If a family is consistently absent, the Leadership Team may have to conclude that Explorers is not a good fit for that family and may have to ask the family not to return the following year.

Responsibilities of the parents include, but are not limited to the following:

- Lead teacher, co-teacher, and assistant positions in the classroom
- Set up/tear down of classroom tables and chairs
- Monitoring study halls, play areas, or nursery
- Substituting in other classes experiencing teacher absences
- Completing chore assignments during the co-op day.
- Possibly participating in a scheduled "work day" held during the summer months.

- Being available during each class period they have a child enrolled in a class. Our goal is for the parent to be actively involved in no more than two class periods on a weekly basis, except for occasional substitute needs. This will allow at least one free period to fellowship with other parents or prepare for the classes you lead.
- Regularly check emails and Canvas for homework assignments, special notices, and announcements.
- Be on time for Explorers each week. We recommend arriving at least 10 minutes early.
- Send a “not too messy” snack and lunch with your child each week.
- Make it a priority to attend classes each week. Not only does this ensure that your students are not getting behind in their academic work, but we also depend on parents to be at Explorers to execute their responsibilities faithfully.
- Make every effort to set a good example for cell phone usage. While it can be very helpful for teachers and assistants to utilize technology in the classroom, mindless scrolling or texting by adults is a distraction to students. Please refrain from this behavior.
- Parents of high school students are expected to remain on campus and be involved in the co-op unless special considerations are approved by the Leadership Team.
- Please check several times prior to leaving each week to ensure that you have all of your family’s belongings, including take home papers.
- Enter the building using the door beside the elementary wing. For the sake of security, do not enter through any other door. Please do not prop doors open.
- Set an example to your students, both in your attitude toward teachers and other members and in how you handle conflict. It is expected that every member strives for peace and kindness in all interactions with the leadership team and other members. Gossip and disrespectful speech will not be tolerated. Please refer to our conflict resolution section on how to handle disagreements in a way that lines up what has been given to us through scripture.

### **Student Responsibilities:**

All elementary students grade 8 and younger should be enrolled in classes while they are on campus. Students grade 9 and older need to be in a study hall in the event they are not enrolled in a class. High school students must be enrolled in a minimum of two classes. Some teens may be considered for volunteer positions in a classroom or nursery.

High school students might be asked to assist in setting up classrooms and returning them to their original state at the end of co-op, as well as other assigned chores. They should allow an extra 20 minutes for this. Parents of high schoolers are responsible for making sure these responsibilities are carried out.

All Rules and Expectations for students at Explorers Homeschool Academy fall under the following three principles:

- 1. Respect God**
- 2. Respect Others**
- 3. Respect Property**

## Respect God:

- All students are expected to behave in a way that brings honor to the Lord. This may include the following:
  - **Dressing modestly**- If you are not sure if your attire is appropriate, please do not wear it to Explorers. Refrain from wearing clothing that might be too revealing. Clothing that has inappropriate language or design is not allowed.
  - **Purpling/PDA**-Students are expected to show good taste and conduct themselves respectfully at all times. Inappropriate displays of affection will not be tolerated. Male and female students are not allowed to be in rooms alone.
  - **Honesty**- Honesty is expected at all times. This includes honesty in things you may say about situations or people. In addition, the expectation for honesty also reaches into assignments, projects, quizzes, and tests. Cheating is considered a serious matter. If it is determined that a student has cheated on an exam or written assignment, the Leadership Team will determine the consequences, which could result in the student being asked to leave Explorers.
  - **Language toward other people**- We believe that people are made in God's image. Therefore, we honor God by speaking kindly to the teachers and students at Explorers. Gossip or disrespectful speech of any kind will not be tolerated. Depending on the severity of this kind of speech, the Leadership Team may determine consequences.

## Respect Others:

- It is the expectation of Explorers that students treat everyone respectfully. This includes teachers, co-teachers, assistants, substitutes, and other students. Respecting others includes the following:
  - **Distracting behavior in class**- please refrain from any activity that is a distraction to the teacher or fellow students. Examples of such activities include talking during instruction time, blurting out answers instead of waiting to be called upon, playing with toys or other items from home, or use of electronic devices. **\*The use of electronic devices during co-op hours is not allowed unless the classroom teacher specifically gives permission for use in class. If a child must have a phone in his/her possession, it should be muted and not used unless there is an emergency. If a student is using an electronic device in class without permission from the teacher, the adults in the classroom will ask the student to put the device away. If the behavior persists, the teacher may collect the device and hold for the parent to pick up after class. \***

- **Listen when others are speaking-** When there is instruction happening in the classroom, students should aim to listen and pay attention. This also applies to other students, who may be presenting, asking a question, or giving requested feedback to the teacher. In order to show respect, please raise your hand and wait to be called upon before speaking.
- **Keep hands and feet to yourself-** Show kindness to others by respecting personal boundaries.
- **Be prepared for class-** Explorers Homeschool Academy is NOT an enrichment co-op; it IS an academic co-op. As such, there will be homework and study requirements for each student. Students are required to complete class requirements and cooperate with teachers at all times. Due to the nature of the “once a week” classes, it is imperative that students stay current with their assignments. Students are also responsible for class material missed in the event of an absence. It is the responsibility of the student and/or parent to contact teachers in the event of a sudden absence to find out about any material missed and catch up with missed material prior to the next meeting date. Most of this information will be available on Canvas. Late or missing assignments put extra burdens on the teachers, allow the student to fall behind, and are an inefficient use of the time and energy for both the student and teacher. Every student should bring any needed supplies to co-op. If a student or family is consistently unprepared and not participating in class, they will be dealt with according to the guidelines under “Conflict Resolution.” If the situation remains unresolved, the Leadership Team will meet with the family. Continued involvement at Explorers will be at the discretion of the Leadership Team.
- **Conflict Resolution-** If an issue arises with a teacher or another student, first go directly to the person, keeping the goal of peace in mind. If unresolvable, the leadership may be contacted for arbitration. We seek to follow Matthew 18:15-17 as we seek to be at peace with one another.
- **Science labs-** Students must follow the procedures as outlined in the lab safety handout. With science experiments, it is especially important that students listen carefully to instructions and follow them with no horseplay. Be respectful of other members of lab groups.

### **Respect Property:**

- It is the expectation that every member of Explorers Homeschool Academy show respect toward the property that we are being permitted to use. If property or equipment becomes damaged intentionally or unintentionally, parents will be held financially responsible for any repair or replacement of such damaged property and/or equipment.
- This principle also includes respecting the property of teachers and other students.

- No running, yelling, or horseplay is allowed inside the building, except for the scheduled times that students are in the gym. Please refrain from rowdy and loud behavior in classrooms, restrooms, and hallways.
- No chewing gum is allowed in the building.
- All food is to be kept in the designated areas and consumed during the scheduled snack and lunch times. Do not walk around the building while eating food.
- Respect the tables, chairs, walls, and floors of our host church. Writing or coloring on their property and general misuse of items belonging to them is not allowed. Clean up any accidental messes thoroughly and immediately. If damage due to misuse or carelessness should occur, the Leadership Team reserves the right to consider appropriate consequences.
- Respect the tables, equipment, and supplies belonging to Explorers Homeschool Academy. If damage due to misuse or carelessness should occur, the Leadership Team reserves the right to consider appropriate consequences.
- Do not wander into any areas that Explorers has not been given permission to use. This includes the sanctuary, closed rooms, offices, and the youth loft. In addition to these areas, students are not allowed to be outside the building at any time other than arrival, departure, and organized class activities with their teachers.
- Please do not touch any electronic equipment or musical instruments belonging to our host church.
- Respect the belongings of your teachers and other students. Do not intentionally damage items that do not belong to you. Do not take items that do not belong to you. In the event that you accidentally cause damage to an item that doesn't belong to you, offer an apology and then plan to correct the situation as best you can.

### **Teacher Responsibilities:**

Lead teachers, co-teachers, and assistants should finalize curriculum choices by June 10<sup>th</sup>.

A semester or yearly syllabus should be posted to Canvas no later than the first day of classes. Please plan on utilizing Canvas in your classrooms to post assignments, communicate with your students and their parents, and post quizzes and tests.

Both lead teachers and assistants should have an active role in teaching the class they are assigned. The assistants should communicate with the lead teacher about the ways in which they can actively help. Assistants must be present during the entire class. The lead teacher and

assistant may decide to be co-teachers and switch days of lead teaching or divide the class time each week. Substitutes will be contacted by the lead teacher or assistant whenever one of them is absent, so that the substitute may step in and assist. Please see “Absentee Policy” in this handbook for processes to follow when absent.

If a teacher has a discipline problem with a student in their class, they should follow the procedures outlined under “Maintaining Control of the Classroom: in the Conflict Resolution area of this handbook.

Please do not hang materials on the walls of your classroom without the permission of the Leadership Team.

### **Restroom and Diapering Policy:**

#### **For 3rd grade and below:**

- Teachers should plan class-wide restroom breaks throughout the day. During these breaks, either the lead teacher or assistant should be present in the hallway between the restrooms to monitor the number of students in the restroom and assure that student behaviors are appropriate. Please do not send students to the restroom without an adult in the hallway to monitor.
- Teachers will not be entering the restrooms to assist students with toilet procedures unless there is an absolute emergency. Parents should prepare and encourage their students to be independent in the restroom.
- If a situation arises where a student truly does need assistance, the parent will be pulled from class to handle this.

#### **For Nursery/Preschool Classrooms:**

- Due to the nature of toilet-training children, it will be necessary for teachers to assist in restroom procedures. If at all possible, encourage independence in the restroom for preschool students. Verbal guidance can go a long way in assisting a student in this situation, but it may become necessary for you to physically assist the child. All members have been thoroughly background checked, so this should not be a problem. Additionally, the preschool restroom is attached to the classroom and there are always at least 2 adults in that classroom for accountability. If you have a student who does not want you to assist them, contact a parent to come help.
- While we may have a lead nursery person for each class block, it is the job of both scheduled members to handle diaper changes. Please make sure that diapers are being checked each block and changed regularly. Since everyone has been background checked and there are 2 adults in the room, this should not be an issue.
- We will be providing disposable gloves in the nursery for diaper changes. Please do not take gloves from the science cabinets in the supply room.

## **Illness/Allergy Policy:**

If you or anyone in your household has displayed any of these symptoms within the past 24 hours, please stay home:

- Fever (100 degrees or more)
- Flu or COVID symptoms
- Nausea, diarrhea, or vomiting
- Persistent cough/sneezing
- Red or seeping eyes
- Colored nasal discharge
- Any communicable disease resulting in a rash or breakout.

If a member displays any of these symptoms during a co-op day, families will be requested to immediately leave co-op for the remainder of the day. Members may return to co-op when they have been symptom free without the aid of medication for 24 hours, on antibiotics for 24 hours, or diagnosed by a doctor as not contagious.

## **Absences (Student and Parent):**

Absences are discouraged, as classes are built sequentially on the previous week's material. If a child must be absent, please make arrangements for make-up work (reading assignments, handouts, homework, and tests) with that child's instructor prior to the absence if at all possible.

When the parent is absent, follow these steps:

1. Please notify your co-teacher/assistant before the beginning of the school day. In case of an absence, the assistant should be prepared to step in as lead teacher that day. Lead teachers must provide a quality substitute lesson plan in the event of a planned absence.
2. Find someone to cover your position. As stated above, if the lead teacher is absent, the assigned assistant for that class automatically moves into the lead teacher's position. However, the lead teacher must contact a substitute to assist in the missed class. If the assistant teacher will be absent, the assistant must find a substitute to fill that role in the missed class.
3. If there is an assigned second assistant in a class, they are the automatic first choice for a substitute (this does not apply to "split classes"). **\*Please verify that the second assistant will be in class the day you need to miss. It is imperative that we always have AT LEAST 2 adults to every classroom for the safety of our students. \***
4. If the missed class does not have an assigned second assistant, the absent teacher must pick from the substitute availability list that is provided in the orientation packet.
5. Find someone to cover your assigned chore. It is very important that we make sure we are leaving our host church's facility in the best condition possible at the end of the day.

6. Text your huddle leader to inform them of your absence. You will be asked to provide the names of the people who are covering your responsibilities. Again, this is to ensure that the day runs smoothly and safely.
7. Inform your child's teachers that your child will be absent.

In a situation when the parent will need to be absent, permission may be requested from the Leadership Team to send students 6<sup>th</sup> grade and older to co-op under the care of another responsible adult. Please contact your huddle leader to receive permission in these instances.

### **Communications:**

Throughout the year, there may be several different ways that information is communicated to you. Common modes of communication include:

1. **Canvas-** Messages can be sent and received from teachers. This is also where student assignments will be posted. Be sure to check Canvas for yourself and monitor that your students are checking Canvas several times each week. Homework for the week should be posted in each class under "assignments" no later than the day following class (Wednesdays).
2. **Huddle Text Messages-** General announcements and information about cancellations for inclement weather will be communicated through a text message sent to your huddle from a member of the Leadership Team. Please make every effort to keep these huddle text threads for that information only.
3. **Explorers Facebook Group-** announcements for field trips, moms' nights, and other co-op wide announcements and reminders will be posted in our members only Facebook group. Please let a member of the Leadership Team know if you aren't a member of this group yet.
4. **Email-** For those families who do not participate in social media, all information that is posted on Facebook will also be emailed out. Our email address is [explorershomeschoolacademy@gmail.com](mailto:explorershomeschoolacademy@gmail.com).
5. **Remind-** For certain drills or in the event of an actual emergency. The leadership team will send out a co-op wide message through the Remind app. You will be added at the beginning of the school year. There is no need to download this app. The notification will come to your phone as a text message.
6. **Communication Box-** Please check your folder in the communication box each week.

### **Money Matters:**

Lora Pierce is the treasurer for Explorers Homeschool Academy. When paying fees, you will turn in checks and money to her. To mail fees to Lora, send a check to **8255 Tiber Road Chattanooga, TN. 37421** or you may place payments made by check in her folder of the communication box. If you are paying with cash, a receipt will be written for documentation. Please do not give cash to Lora outside of the designated payment times on Tuesdays. Do not hand loose money to Lora or any other Leadership Team member during a co-op day.

- **Reimbursements:** Class fees are collected from each student at the beginning of the year. These fees are used to cover the cost of supplies and activities for a specific class. To use the money that was collected for the class you are lead teaching, you will purchase materials out of pocket, and then turn in receipts of those purchases to be reimbursed. The IRS requires Explorers to initially retain all collected class fee monies in the co-op checking account. Teachers should retain receipts for any expenditures made. Once a teacher has accumulated receipts totaling \$25 or more, a picture of the receipts should be sent to the treasurer email at [explorersha.treasurer@gmail.com](mailto:explorersha.treasurer@gmail.com). The class name should be included in the email.
  - **Curriculum purchased with class fees:** Any non-consumable curriculum, such as teacher's manuals and DVDS purchased with class fees is considered property of Explorers Homeschool Academy. At the end of the school year, teachers should turn in the curriculum to their huddle leader so that it can be added to the Explorers Library and be used again in subsequent years.
  - **Unused Class Fees:** At the end of the school year, any unused class fees will be used in one of three ways as determined by the Leadership Team: 1) held for future classes 2) used to purchase equipment for the classroom (e.g., microscopes) or 3) refunded to the parents.

### **Inclement Weather Policy:**

The Leadership Team will make determinations about closings due to weather conditions by 8:00 AM on co-op days. Communications for closures will primarily happen via huddle text messages. Please check your text messages, email, and the Explorers Facebook page on co-op days for any special notices about bad weather.

### **Bounced Check Policy:**

In the event that a check written to Explorers Homeschool Academy bounces, we ask that members be willing to pay the amount of the check in addition to any fees incurred. We understand that this can happen from time to time, but it is important to do our part to avoid it and make it right if it should occur. If there is financial hardship, please communicate needs with your huddle leader.

### **Conflict Resolution Policy:**

### **Maintaining Control of the Classroom**

It is our intention to educate and cultivate the character of our students within the community of Explorers Homeschool Academy. As we aim to carry this out, we may find that we are coming from differing family cultures with differing ideas and disciplinary methods. It is important that we maintain consistent expectations for how classrooms should be managed, while still allowing for each member to fully bring their gifting to the table. As you teach the lessons and plan activities for the students in your classroom, please keep the following in mind: We want the students at Explorers Homeschool Academy to SOAR!

**Safe-** ensure that any game or activity you plan is safe for all involved. Maintain control of the classroom to foster an environment that promotes safety (do not allow rough play during class time).

**Organized-** Have a plan! Structure during class builds the safe environment you are aiming for. Come to class prepared with a plan to keep your students engaged and connected to the material.

**Accountable-** Stay accountable to the expectations given in this handbook. It is your responsibility as the teacher to hold your students accountable in Respecting God, Respecting Others, and Respecting Property.

**Respectful-** As you focus on those three areas of respect, make it your aim to create an overall atmosphere of respect. When teachers feel respected, they are free to give more to their students. When students feel respected, learning takes flight.

- In the event that you have done all of the above and you notice behavior issues with a student in your class, proceed with the following procedures:
  1. Ask the student to refrain from the disruptive/unnecessary behavior. This is warning one. Make sure you are being clear with this warning. For younger students, it may be appropriate to get down on their level (kneel down, sit in a chair, etc. to be eye level with the student.)
  2. If the student ignores your warning, you may continue to give two more warnings. Again, be clear on what the consequences could be if their behavior persists.
  3. If all three warnings are ignored, the teacher may have the assistant take the child to their parent for the remainder of the class.
  4. Communicate with the parents concerning this behavior by the end of the day (either in person or a phone call).
  5. If these behavior problems persist, all parties should come before at least two members of the leadership team for arbitration.

### **Conflict Arising with Your Child's Teacher**

Before involving the Leadership Team, you must first talk to your child's teacher about any issue you or your student has, including questions about curriculum and grading. If your concerns are not addressed to your satisfaction, contact your huddle leader. The Leadership Team will not get involved unless you have followed proper procedure and already approached the teacher yourself concerning the issue.

If you wish to change your child's class for any reason, you must talk to the Leadership Team, and they will decide if this is possible.

### **Reminding Another Parent about Policies and Procedures**

1. Remind them in person, with an email, or on the phone.
2. If a disagreement begins that is not quickly resolved, stop the communication. Acknowledge that the situation needs arbitration.

### **Arbitration:**

1. Have at least two members of the Leadership Team present.
2. Begin with prayer.
3. Read Matthew 18: 15-17
4. Have each person involved tell their story uninterrupted.
5. Allow the Leadership Team members to facilitate a compromise/solution to the problem and encourage forgiveness.
6. Remind everyone involved that the matter is resolved and behind the group.
7. Read Ephesians 4: 31
8. End with prayer.

## Explorers Homeschool Academy Handbook 2025/2026

I have read the attached handbook and agree to abide by the rules and procedures contained therein.

---

Parent Name (Please Print)

---

Parent Signature

---

Date

*It is the responsibility of parents to adhere to these policies and enforce them with their children. The Explorers Leadership Team reserves the right to deny participation to any family or student. Failure to comply with these policies will jeopardize your family's privilege to participate in this cooperative.*

