



# HEARTLAND HOMESCHOOL LEARNING CENTER

## Parent/Student Handbook

Knowledge is Infinite



Infinitum de Scientium

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A Non-Profit Children's Charity

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# POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Welcome to the Heartland Homeschool Learning Center. A place where homeschool families from all over the heartland come together in cooperation in order to provide the best learning experience possible for our children. We meet Monday through Thursday and offer a variety of general education and extracurricular classes that both enhance and enrich the traditional homeschool experience. Classes include art, music, PE, cooking, STEM learning, Speech and much more. Here our teachers are the parents and our parents are the teachers so if you can teach it we can offer it!

## **Mission:**

At the Heartland Homeschool Learning Center, or the HHLC, our mission is to "Put the power of education back into the hands of the people", by creating an alternative approach to the current public education system in the United States.

An approach that is both parent and child centered, where the parent is held to the same level of accountability as the teacher, because the parents are the teachers.

Our goal is to centralize the homeschooling operations of the Heartland allowing families to join forces and resources in order to create an atmosphere of innovation, creativity and acceptance that not only facilitates but entices learning on a community level.

## **Not-for-Profit**

We are a not-for-profit, 501 (c) 3 organization. Keeping costs low while offering enriching, well run classes that benefit our children's education is at the highest priority.

## **Diversity**

The Heartland Homeschool Group includes diverse homeschooling families in the Heartland area. We represent the full spectrum of those who would identify themselves as homeschoolers. A wide variety of homeschooling definitions, methodologies, and philosophies are represented. All are welcome and members agree to be tolerant of one another.

## **Non-Discrimination**

The HHLC does not discriminate based upon race, color, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, nor physical or mental disability unrelated to one's ability to work and enjoy the full benefits of our program or facilities.

## **Dress and Decorum**

As our facility is located on the First United Methodist Church grounds, we ask that you dress and act accordingly in a respectful manner.

## **Parent Attendance and Participation**

Parents participate by volunteering in various roles throughout the day. This makes our low-cost membership possible and helps build our co-operative community. A primary care giver or designated responsible party is required to be on site at all times.

This can be another parent or a close friend who has assumed responsibility for another parent's children via check in with an alternative primary care designation form (found in the agreements section of the handbook).

## **Inclement Weather (Delayed Start/ Cancellation)**

The Director will determine if the Learning Center will be closed or delayed due to inclement weather. The decision will be made by 8:00 a.m., and parents will be notified by email through the mailing list or notified via Facebook.

## **Calendar**

A calendar of all scheduled vacations, holidays, session dates, field trips and special events dates will be posted in the Calendar area of the website. The calendar is subject to change with reasonable notice.

## **Membership Fees/ Deposits**

Memberships are on a per family basis instead of a per child basis. There are two membership levels available depending on member involvement within the center.

Teaching Membership: \$50 per month/family

-> member volunteer requirements

Student Membership: \$100 per month/family

-> No member volunteer requirements

There will be 50 Teaching Membership slots available at the reduced teaching membership price. Once the 50 teaching spots are full additional members will be placed in the student membership category and will be put on a waiting list for a teacher membership spot to open up. Each member's prompt payment is vital as we run the Learning Center on a lean budget.

## **Refund Policy**

There will be no refunds for monthly membership fees but you may cancel your membership as you see fit and you will not be billed for the subsequent month. There are only 50 teaching membership slots available, if you forfeit your slot voluntarily or due to lack of payment you lose your spot and go to the end of the waiting list should you choose to rejoin at a later date.

## **Class Arrival**

We look forward to seeing each family as they arrive together. You or an alternate designated primary care giver must accompany your child(ren), regardless of age, into the building. Parents may not drop children off, even briefly.

Please arrive between 10 to 15 minutes early to your child's class and keep your children with you until the instructor is present in the classrooms.

## Leaving the Premises

The Learning Center is designed with the understanding that parents stay on the premises with their children.

If you choose to step out briefly with one of your own children or to run an errand, you need to sign yourself and your child out and designate another parent to be responsible for any child(ren) who will remain at the center, via an alternate primary care designation form (which can be found in the agreements section of the handbook).

## Lunch

**WE ARE A PEANUT and TREE NUT FREE FACILITY.** Due to some children in attendance who are highly allergic to even the smell of peanuts, NO ONE at the center may bring food with peanut butter nor made with peanut products into the building. Thank you for your compliance in this very important matter.

Families are welcome to bring their own lunches and eat in the café or try out one of our local restaurants in the area as there is a scheduled 1-hour lunch break every day. Please bring covered drinking containers to reduce spills.

Children may sit with their parents and/or with other children as they choose or as their parents prefer.

We ask that each person clean up their own lunch supplies and trash, and contribute to the overall clean-up when possible. This involves sweeping the floor, wiping tables, and checking the café to see that everything is clean and back in its place.

## Snacks/Water

Children may bring a healthy snack to eat at their discretion. Please keep snacks to non-messy fruits, veggies, bite-sized crackers such as Goldfish, etc. (**no peanuts, peanut butter or tree nuts**).

## **Health**

Do not bring your children if they are experiencing any symptoms of illness especially COVID-19 related. If found positive for COVID-19 we require a negative test before child can resume classes. In the case of non-COVID related illnesses your child should be fever, diarrhea, medication and vomiting-free for at least 24 hours before coming to the Learning Center. Parents, please follow the same guidelines for yourselves. Masks are recommended but not required.

## **Sick Parent / Sick Child**

In the case where you are sick or you must stay home yourself with a sick child, you may make a private arrangement with someone else who will be staying on the premises throughout the day to bring your other child(ren). In this situation, an alternate primary care designation form must be filled out and signed by both parties. Any child who attends without a parent under these special circumstances must be fully potty trained and able to manage in the bathroom completely independently.

## **Injuries**

The center provides band aids and other basic first aid supplies. If your child is injured and needs any type of medical attention (minor: band aid or icepack, or in the unlikely event of a more serious injury), you will be called upon to tend to these needs. The HHLC is not to be held liable for any injuries that might occur while on the premises as the parents are always considered the primary care givers.

## **Anti-Harassment**

The learning center is committed to maintaining an environment that is free from all forms of harassment by or towards adults or children. Harassment based on race, color, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, physical or mental disability or other legally protected characteristic is prohibited.

Harassment is defined as unwanted physical contact or sexual advances; use of epithets, inappropriate jokes, comments or innuendos; obscene or harassing telephone calls, emails, letters, other forms of communication; and any other conduct which is so severe that it interferes with an individual's performance or creates a hostile environment.

## **Emergency Procedures**

Emergency fire evacuation procedures are posted in each classroom. Staff will be trained in use of these procedures.

## **Grievance Procedures**

Should anyone experience a disagreement within the learning center, please follow these steps for resolving the conflict. Please uphold confidentiality.

1. Go to the person with whom you have a disagreement at a time when you can have a private conversation. Hopefully, most issues can be resolved this way as both parties listen to each other. It may be very helpful to remember that we're all on a team, working together to make co-op the best experience possible for all involved.
2. If the conflict is not resolved, parties involved should meet with the director.
3. If the issue still cannot be resolved, it will be presented to the entire board. The board will make a final decision at their discretion.

## **Youth Volunteers**

Youth Volunteers (Age 12-17) Safety Interview: Any youth volunteering as a youth assistant in classes with younger children will have an interview by a board member to determine that the youth understand the definitions, concepts, and procedures explained in the Handbook and child protection guide as well as the youth's willingness to follow the procedures.

## **Confidentiality**

In all matters regarding children or in matters regarding disagreements or other private matters among adults, we have an understanding of trust and confidentiality.

# GENTLE DISCIPLINE

## Purpose

We believe the best way for all to enjoy their time at The Learning Center is for children to be engaged in inviting activities. So the best “discipline” is a well-run class. However, in the event that a child needs assistance with his or her behavior, we have set these guidelines.

## Guidelines

Leaders have a menu of options to try. They may try other similar ideas, as well, as long as they are in the same spirit of treating children with dignity and respect while guiding them gently towards their best behavior.

1. Leaders are asked to plan their classes well so children are busy (even when self-directed).
2. Leaders are asked to have predictable expectations for behavior and recognizable routines so children know things like when it’s time to listen to someone else talk or when it’s time to clean up and how to help.
3. If after expectations are explained, a child needs help following them, the child may be:

1st, redirected to the appropriate activity.

2nd, asked directly to stop the inappropriate behavior.

3rd, given a logical consequence.

Example: When you behave in this manner you put yourself at risk of...

~We believe that in most cases, this is all that will be necessary.

4. However, if a child escalates the behavior to highly disruptive misbehavior after repeated attempts by the leader or assistants to correct the behavior, the child’s parent will be called to the room to address the behavior.

5. The purpose of the parent intervention is to obtain the parent's assistance in reinforcing that the leader is in charge and that the child must follow the rules. The goal is to convey to the child that the adults, including the parent, are working as a team in supporting the child's ability to use self-control. We ask that the parent convey this if/when they are called to address their child. The parent may need to consider the option of removing the child for a brief time until he or she is ready to participate in class appropriately.
6. If a child engages in bullying or verbal abuse, physical fighting, brings a weapon to the center, engages in theft, or willfully destroys property, the child will be asked to no longer attend classes.

### **Unacceptable Corrective Methods**

Yelling, humiliating, and physical punishment by any adult are unacceptable at The Learning Center.

### **Conclusion**

As children engage in activities that interest them, leaders set up well organized classes, and leaders and assistants use our gentle discipline guidelines if/when necessary, we believe The Learning Center will prove to be a pleasant place to learn, explore, and grow together.

# CLASS GROUPINGS

## Flexible age ranges:

At certain ages, you may consider placing your child in the more appropriate group according to the ages indicated in parenthesis. These decisions should be made primarily based on ages your child is most comfortable with and emotional maturity. Please consider the spirit of these descriptions and place your child where he or she will interact best.

## Explorers: Early Learning

**3-5 Years Old** (6 year olds welcome)

- Enjoys playing with children in this age range
- Can sit quietly and listen while a leader gives instructions
- Can follow age appropriate instructions
- 6 year olds welcome
- *Note: This group will have some free play in their room.*  
Flexible age range: 3-5 (6)

## Discoverers: Level 1

**7-9 Years Old** (6 and 10 year olds welcome)

- Enjoys playing with kids in this age range
- Is ready to participate consistently in structured classes
- Can sit quietly and listen while a leader gives instructions
- Can follow age appropriate instructions fairly independently
- Can be self- directed when given options
- 6 and 10 year olds welcome
- If your child is 6 and socializes best with younger children, feel free to place him/her in the explorers group. **Flexible age range: 6-10**

# Adventurers: Level

## 9-12 Years Old (8 and 13 year olds welcome)

- o Enjoys playing with kids in this age range
- o Moving towards independence and practices good decision-making skills
- o Beginning to consider future careers and occupations
- o The ability to understand complex social issues such as poverty and war
- o Shows the capability for social conscience and abstract thought
- o Able to take on increased responsibility at home and in the classroom
- o 8 and 13 year olds welcome
- o If child is 9 and socializes best with younger children, feel free to place him/her in the Discoverers group. **Flexible age range: 8-13**

# Leaders: Teens

## 12 and Up

- o Enjoys being with kids in this age range
- o The ability to make strategic decisions based on knowledge of options and consequences
- o Has built skills in order to become self-sufficient
- o Have an understanding of their own feelings and the ability to analyze why they feel a certain way.
- o Is ready to take initiative in planning and carrying out their own education
- o Works collaboratively with peers and adult mentors
- o If child is 12 or 13 and socializes best with younger children, feel free to place him/her in the Adventurers group. **Flexible age range (11)12 and up**

Early Learning Explorers: Pre-K & K: 3-5 (or 6) years

Level I Discoverers: Youth ages 6-9 (or 10) years

Level II Adventurers: Pre-teens ages 8 -12 (or 13) years

Leaders: Teens ages 12-18 (or 11) years

# CLASS STRUCTURES

## **Class Structure**

Classes are designed to accommodate a dynamic and multi-faceted approach to group learning which best incorporates the various teaching styles of all families participating at the Learning Center. The classes are intended to be a social, group-oriented, cohesive effort including both free-form or play-based learning models, as well as more structured and formal learning methods. Class instructors and class assistants will work together to determine which style best suits their particular class.

## **Parent Instructors**

Class instructors will devise the planning and implementation of their classes. Each instructor will have their own style and method of teaching and thus classes will be unique. They are tasked with the primary facilitation of the class, the planning of lessons and the creation of a materials list if needed.

## **Class Assistants**

Class Assistants will help the children and the instructor/instructors as needed. If necessary, Class Assistants may be called upon to substitute for a class instructor.

## **Resources**

There will be resources all around you. Thanks to the generosity of our members, community partners and friends we have amassed a beautiful library, full of curriculum and literature, as well as a bunch of various supplies. For additional supplies either a materials list or a materials fee may be applied to specific classes.

## **Special Projects**

On occasion, an Instructor may wish to implement a class activity or project, which takes place at an alternate location, such as a field trip or class outing. This is a matter of personal choice, no one is required to either facilitate or attend an outing. In the event an instructor chooses to implement a Special Project they will be responsible for the planning and safe implementation of the Special Project. This could be as simple or as complex as the Instructor desires, based on his or her personal style.

## **Early Learning Coordinators**

Early Learning Coordinators lead the Early learning Room. They have the responsibility for running the classroom and providing a consistent presence throughout most of the day. They also monitor that it is appropriately staffed and supplied. Coordinators plan hands on learning activities for the children sprinkled throughout the day such as story time, music time, show and tell, arts and crafts, circle time and recess.

## **PE Coordinators**

PE coordinators lead the homeschool physical exercise sessions, taking responsibility for planning and preparing sporting activities, physical games, drills, exercises, stretches, and other physical fitness related projects at their discretion. PE Coordinators also monitor that the gym is appropriately equipped, and that the activities engaged in are safe, fair, and encourage good sportsmanship.

# FIRE EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

## What to Do in Case of Fire

In a fire drill or an actual fire (fire alarm goes off) here's what you do:

### Class Leaders and Assistants

- Stay with your class and lead them out.
- Agree in advance who is to be last to leave —make sure the room is empty of children.
- Exit the church via the closest door in your room.
- If that exit is blocked by fire or smoke, use the next closest exit.
- If on the second floor do not use the elevator, use the stairs.

### Early Learning Rooms

- Same as above.
- Agree in advance which instructor will be the last to leave the room.
- **MAKE SURE EVERY CHILD IS OUT AND ACCOUNTED FOR.** Check any possible hiding places.

### Rules for Everyone

To safely get the littlest children out of the building, we need extra hands.

In the event of a fire drill or fire, EXTRA ADULTS are to remain calm and to assist in escorting children outside.

Escort all children out and stay with them.

LAST PERSON OUT OF THE ROOM: Close doors behind you as you leave.

# AGREEMENTS

In order that everyone understands our commitments, the HHLC has written agreements for students, parents, classroom team members. These are located below, and copies to sign are included in the registration packet.

## **Why Agreements?**

We have written agreements for center participants in their various roles as students, parents, class team members and Instructors. Following are brief descriptions of these agreements. Copies to sign are included in the registration packet.

## **Student Agreement**

The Student Agreement is designed to inform the children as to what their rights, responsibilities, and obligations are to the co-op. It encourages honor, respect, and consideration for others in order to foster a productive learning environment.

## **Parent Agreement**

The Parent Agreement is designed to inform the parents as to what their rights, responsibilities, and obligations are as members of the Learning Center. It encourages honor, respect, and consideration for others, as well as providing their accountability as a primary care giver and their commitments to supervision, safety, and education.

## **Volunteer Teaching and Instructor Agreement**

The Volunteer Class Team Agreement is designed to inform the Class Instructors and Class Assistants as to what their rights, responsibilities, and obligations are to the center, and specifically, to the children in their given class. It encourages honor, respect, and consideration for others, as well as providing accountability on leadership, teamwork, gentle discipline, and organization.

## **An Additional Note to Class Team Members**

We highly recommend that Class Instructors and Assistants communicate openly and honestly with each other about issues that may arise in making their classes work well for everyone. We encourage you to be open to feedback from each other and actively ask for it.

We believe an atmosphere of mutual encouragement, constructive criticism, and positive problem solving will lead to fun and beneficial experience for everyone.

## **Rights and Responsibilities Agreement**

The Rights and Responsibilities Agreement was written by students for students in order to outline what they believe their rights and responsibilities to be.

## **Outside Activities Agreement**

The Outside Activities Agreement governs all activities which occur outside of The Learning Center.

## **Social Media, Photography and Video Imagery**

The Photography, Social Media and Video Releases govern the use of contact information, photographs, video imagery and social media posting for the HHLC.

## **Liability Waivers**

There will be liability waivers for all classes that involve a higher level of possible injury including STEM classes, cooking classes, automotive courses, Sewing and Homeschool PE.

# STUDENT AGREEMENT

**Purpose:** In order that we understand and agree to the same general expectations to help ensure the best experience for us all,

**I agree:**

- o to be honest, courteous and patient with others. I will use respectful and polite language.
- o to honor the time and effort of the class leaders and other class members by giving them my attention and respect.
- o to treat our meeting place with respect at all times.
- o to help clean up in class, after class, and after lunch.
- o to remain with my class, unless I obtain permission from my leader to leave, and to be in the appropriate areas at all times- not roaming the building or property.
- o that if I pack my own lunch or snack, not to bring any food that contains peanuts, tree nuts or peanut butter (due to some children at co-op having severe allergies).
- o not to bring electronic devices of any kind to co-op (music, game boys, etc.) except where such devices relate to a class activity.
- o never to bring weapons, including pocketknives, onto the property.

I understand that the following conduct will not be allowed while participating at The Learning Center and is subject to disciplinary action:

- 1) theft or destruction of public or private property
- 2) physical fighting or other acts of violence
- 3) any form of bullying or verbal abuse

I understand that the purpose of this agreement is to help ensure the best experience for us all at The Learning Center.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# PARENT AGREEMENT

**Purpose:** In order that we understand and agree to the same general expectations to help ensure the best experience for us all,

**I agree:**

- to treat all children with kindness.
- to directly supervise my children during lunch and to participate with my family in clean-up duty.
- to strive to regularly attend classes. I understand that by signing my child up for a class, we are taking a slot for the classes being offered. I understand that the class Instructors have planned for my child with time and in some cases materials and intend to honor their efforts.
- to honor my volunteer commitments. If I must be absent, I will arrange for a substitute for my duties. I agree not to overburden parents by getting substitutes too often. If a long-term situation arises, I will talk to the class coordinator to have my duties temporarily or permanently reassigned.
- not to bring snacks or lunches which contain peanuts tree nuts or peanut butter for me or my family (due to severe peanut allergies of several children).
- o That whenever my children are in the building, I must remain in the building the entire time classes are in session and be responsible for my children regardless of their age. However, in a special circumstance, I may
  - o Send my child(ren) to the Learning Center with another adult who will remain in the building and be responsible for my child(ren). In which case I will fill out and send an alternative primary care designation form.
  - o Sign out one or more of my children and designate another adult who has agreed to be responsible for any remaining children and signed an alternative primary care designation form.
- Neither option can be a regular, ongoing arrangement.
- o I am fully liable for my child's safety, well-being, and behavior.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# VOLUNTEER TEACHING AGREEMENT

Purpose: So that class instructors have a sense of mutual agreement and to help ensure that classes are well-run,

I agree:

o to fulfill the aspects of preparing for and running the class to which I have agreed.

o to use the gentle discipline policy when/if needed.

o to make sure the Learning Center space where I work is left in excellent condition, cleaning up and returning items to their original places or as designated by the facility and, when possible, to have children participate in this duty.

o to provide to parents (and older students) a general plan for the class I will run.

o to prepare a plan for the event of my absence before the session begins and to arrange for and provide my sub with my plans and needed materials.

o to strive to call on substitutes as little as possible so as not to place an undue burden on other parents.

An additional note: We highly recommend that Instructors and assistants communicate openly and honestly with each other about issues that may arise in making their classes work well for everyone. We encourage you to be open to feedback from each other and actively ask for it.

We believe an atmosphere of mutual encouragement, constructive criticism, and positive problem solving will lead to fun and beneficial experience for everyone.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

I have a right to PLAY, and a responsibility to BE KIND when playing.

I have a right to SPEAK, and a responsibility to LISTEN when others wish to speak.

I have a right to SHARE things that are special to me, and a responsibility to RESPECT the things that are special to others.

I have a right to BE CREATIVE, and a responsibility to ENCOURAGE the creativity of others.

I have a right to BE HELPED when I need it, and a responsibility to HELP OTHERS when they need it.

I have a right to USE the space at the Learning Center, and a responsibility to keep the space at the Center CLEAN.

I have a right to be with my FRIENDS at the Learning Center, and a responsibility to BE FRIENDLY with everyone else at the Center around me.

I have a right to my own PERSONAL SPACE when I need it, and a responsibility to respect the PERSONAL SPACE of others when they need it.

I have a right to TAKE A BREAK when I need it, and a responsibility to WORK TOGETHER with the group when I can.

I have a right to CONTRIBUTE to the rules at the Learning Center, and a responsibility to FOLLOW the rules I have been given.

# OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES AGREEMENT

## Outside Activities

Occasionally the HHLC does meet outside of designated Learning Center sessions, in order to socialize and meet informally at various locations in the area. These outside activities are not officially sponsored by the HHLC, do not utilize HHLC funds, and are not covered under the HHLC's insurance policy. Rather, the activities are informal gatherings of like-minded families, designed to allow our families to meet at mutually agreed upon locations outside of our official meeting dates. Therefore, we kindly ask that all families wishing to participate in these activities, review and sign the following release form before attending any of these events.

## Release and Waiver

I am the Head of Household for the family registered for attendance at the Heartland Homeschool Learning Center, and will periodically be attending informal activities organized outside of the standard HHLC meeting dates. I understand that I am taking responsibility for my family and their actions at these activities. This is a liability release statement signed by me as a parent or legal guardian of children under my direction and supervision. I acknowledge this and I take full responsibility for these children and my family members. I understand that I am responsible for my family's actions at these activities and their safety and well-being during the activities should we participate. I also understand that the HHLC, its volunteers, board of directors and its associated parent members are not responsible for my family's safety and well-being while they are attending any informal outside activities. I further understand that if my family chooses to attend any of the given activities planned outside of the Learning Center, they do so under my direction and supervision. Therefore, my family will not hold the HHLC or its volunteers, board of directors or associated member parents liable for any injury these children or family members may incur during these outside activities at any given location and waive any claims to their liability in connection with these activities.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## PHOTOGRAPHY, SOCIAL MEDIA AND VIDEO IMAGERY RELEASE

By registering with The Learning Center, I give the Learning Center permission to use photographs of my child, children, or myself on their website, social media platform or in their printed materials, all of which are available to the general public. I understand that neither my children's names nor my name will be used on the website or in printed materials and that if I do not wish for photos of my family to be used, I will notify the Learning Center in writing asking that my family not be included in such photos.

### **Photo, Media, Video Release:**

This photo release is made effective on \_\_\_\_\_ Day of \_\_\_\_\_ month of \_\_\_\_\_ Year. I \_\_\_\_\_ hereby authorize the Heartland Homeschool Learning Center to make use of any and all photos for social media, marketing and on the HHLC website or any other lawful purpose the HHLC finds useful.

I understand that photos and materials will become property of the HHLC. This release extends to all formats, medial, languages and formats now or hereafter developed.

In addition, I waive the rights to any royalties, or other compensation arising from or related to the use of photography or videography. I hereby release all right, claims, demands or causes to action which I, my heirs, representatives, executives, administrators, and any other person acting on behalf of my estate have or may have by reason of this authorization.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_