



TEXAS HOME SCHOOL COALITION

Keeping Texas Families Free

TEXAS HOME SCHOOL COALITION LEADER'S GUIDE

THSC has developed this Texas-specific guide for groups, to be a help and support for the work they do, hopefully cutting down on “reinventing the wheel” by sharing information gathered from homeschool groups and their leaders from across the state.

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Chapter 1 – Basic Organization

If you are homeschooling, see a need for a homeschool group, and feel up to the challenge, you should consider a few things before committing. Ask yourself these questions:

- What effect would it have on your family?
 - If your own homeschool would not be enhanced or would be adversely affected as you minister to other families, this is probably not something you should do.
- What is your motivation?
 - Do you have a servant's heart, or are you seeking recognition?
- How does your spouse feel about your desire to start a homeschool group?
 - Does he or she understand? Do you have his or her support? Is he or she willing to watch the kids while you are involved with the new homeschool group?
- Does the fact that there is a need mean that you are the one to start a group?

The first step is to find more information on starting a homeschool group: how to organize meetings, establish the rules and governing documents for your organization, and how to lead a homeschool group well.

THSC has assembled a checklist to help you get started submitting documents to the Secretary of State, IRS, and the State Comptroller. These entities often have changes and updates, therefore this checklist is intended as a guide to help you complete the steps and search for the documents that need to be submitted for your group. [Access the Checklist for Starting a Homeschool Group](#).

THSC hopes the information and sample documents it has collected will help you get started.

Once your group is established:

- Get connected to a [THSC Regional Group](#)—if one is available in your area
- [Find groups near you](#).

Homeschool group leaders can find resources and support:

- For their member families on the [THSC Homeschool Group page](#)
- For their leadership board on the [THSC Homeschool Group Leader Support page](#)
- Through becoming a THSC Partner Group by [adding or updating your group](#) (updates due annually)
- Accessible [leader resources](#)
- Exclusive [benefits available to THSC Partner Groups](#)
- Send questions related to group leadership directly to the THSC leadership support team: leaders@thsc.org.

1.1 Starting a Group

If you have determined that starting a homeschool group is what you are to do, gather some like-minded friends for a brainstorming session. Discuss what the vision for the group is—what type of group should it be, what is its purpose, what are its goals.

Type, Purpose and Goals

Carefully define your group early in its existence. Many groups have made the mistake of waiting until many families were involved before they saw the need to define their group. Something happens (usually something negative), and then it becomes apparent that the group needs to be better defined. The more families that are involved, the harder it is to come to an agreement regarding the goals and purposes of the group. Too many times this has produced hurt feelings and hurt relationships. It is much better to hammer out who you are with a small group of like-minded people first. Then you can “hang out your shingle,” letting people know who the group is; then they can decide to join or not join based on that information.

At this point, the leadership will probably want to draft some governing documents. Additionally, you may want to use the [Checklist for Starting a Homeschool Group](#) as a helpful guide.

Type

Will it be exclusive or inclusive? Is it only for a select group (church members, Christian, Catholic, secular, etc.), or is it open to any homeschool family?

Will the group be Christian or secular? If Christian, will it have Christian leadership with open membership or exclusive membership?

If you choose to have a distinctively Christian group, your name should reflect that. You will probably need a statement of faith. You should have a measure of accountability to a church or an advisory board.

How big will your group be? The size of your group will determine the type and scope of many of the activities. It is very difficult to limit membership after a size problem arises or to split a group that has become too large.

Purpose and Goals

In determining the purpose of your group, decide what the principle purpose of your group will be. There are three basic goals for homeschool groups:

- Provide activities for students
- Co-op classes
- Support for teachers and parents.

Activities Group

If your focus is on student activities, i.e. field trips, bike rodeo, symphony, etc., your group might grow at an astonishing rate. Be prepared! This will be a high-intensity, rewarding group.

Everyone needs to have a job, or those in leadership will burn out fast. The contact person may be overwhelmed with phone calls or emails. It will be best to meet in a supportive church with lots of space and flexibility.

A sample group:

- Meets in a church and has full use of the facilities
- Schedules monthly field trips, science fairs, bike rodeos, symphony, theater, Christmas party, show and tell, etc.
- Establishes a phone or email chain (website, email list)
- Distributes a yearly calendar in early fall
- Has monthly meetings to improve communication
- Establishes a responsibility for every mother—large or small
- Publishes a newsletter three times a year, possibly written by the older students.

Co-op Classes

Starting a co-op is complicated and tricky. It requires a good organizer. You will need to locate adequate meeting rooms and decide whether the teachers will be paid or volunteer. (If the teachers are volunteers, will the teachers' children get first pick of classes? Will child care be provided for their younger children?)

Lower grades can have rotating topics—each mother taking responsibility for a month or two—to provide classes in art, science, geography, physical education or another elective. Upper grades may need more structure in order to count as a credit on a transcript.

Sample small co-op:

- Meets in a church building 9:30a.m.-2:30p.m. every Friday
- Has about 8-10 member families
- Conducts moms meetings in the summer to plan the year
- Rotates the teaching—one mom with 3rd-4th; one with 5th-7th, other moms with a “day off”
- Rotates subjects, allowing each mom to have a session as teacher for a couple of months
- Holds science classes in the morning, then a sack lunch, with art, geography, organized games or study hall in the afternoon
- Pays teachers to teach older students (8th-12th grade)—literature in the morning and science in the afternoon
- Has debate or sports teams, choir and band.

Support for Teachers

If your purpose is to provide information for the parents with informative programs or speakers, your group will attract brand-new homeschoolers, and the experienced ones will be feeding them. ([See Appendix](#) for information on the *Smoothing the Way* program. We highly recommend this program as a way to keep from “reinventing the wheel.” Topics for meetings might be *How to Homeschool*, *How to Teach Math*, etc.)

Providing information for the parents is very time consuming but greatly needed. It must be viewed as a ministry.

If the purpose of your group is to provide fellowship and encouragement to the mothers, your group will probably remain small. Moms need this kind of group the most, but they tend to give it low priority. This group is easiest without children present unless you are meeting in a park as a playgroup.

A sample group:

- Meets in a church in the evening
- Consists of mothers only—no child care
- Provides discussion topics or “show-and-tell” of curriculum and good books
- Is led by a committee, involving minimal planning and preparation
- Has no size limit, but an average attendance of 20-25 moms.

Keep in mind that many groups try to meet all of these different purposes, and some do that very successfully. The key to success in reaching any or all of these goals is having leadership that has the heart and the vision for working in these different areas.

1.2 Group Meetings

Most established homeschool groups begin with a group of moms who get together to provide fellowship for themselves and their children. These are the group’s first meetings, and many times the group continues to maintain these “playdate,” informal meetings, where the moms fellowship and the kids play.

However, sooner or later the question will arise about how to plan and conduct group meetings.

How often?

One of the decisions that your homeschool group will need to make about meetings is how often to meet. You may have regular meetings on a monthly, quarterly or as-needed basis. You can even establish general meetings for the whole family, though those are usually held less frequently than specific meetings such as moms’ groups, classes, field trips and park days.

Where to meet?

Once the frequency of the meetings is determined, a location needs to be secured. Libraries often have “community meeting rooms” that can be reserved, usually for a fee. Churches will sometimes work with homeschoolers by making a room available for groups or other homeschool activities, especially if the homeschool group is a branch of the church’s ministry.

Occasionally a school in the community will allow homeschoolers access to their facilities for meetings or other activities. On occasion, the group may want to rent a community center for a meeting or event. Some of these options may require extra research.

What agenda?

Your general meetings will probably follow a set order each time. Most will begin with announcements and news that concerns homeschoolers. There might be prayer requests and a prayer. The president of the group will usually lead the meeting.

If the group has a program planned with a speaker, panel or video, this will be presented after the meeting officially begins. Sometimes groups might bring in speakers from regional groups or other homeschool-related organizations. There may even be times when local “celebrity” homeschoolers are asked to speak.

The leaders will want to plan programs that will meet specific interests or needs for homeschool families. It is wise to seek input from members who might have heard of beneficial information from outside speakers.

Where two or more homeschoolers are gathered, there will be fellowship! Decide whether members will be asked to bring goodies or if there will just be a time of fellowship until it is time to turn out the lights and leave. When homeschoolers secure facilities for meetings, good behavior and respect of property are incumbent on good public relations. If children are present, parents must take responsibility for the behavior of their own children. Sometimes parents can get so involved in their own socialization that it is easy to neglect not only how their children are acting but also their own consideration for the host-facility.

It is a good idea for the group to formulate a list of standards or rules for different meetings or activities. A code of conduct is a good option. The leaders or an appointed committee should brainstorm for topics to be covered in meetings. Some possibilities might be:

- Getting started
- Focus on individual subjects
- Methods of teaching
- Methods of learning
- When to co-op and how (if group does not provide a co-op)
- Discipline.

Other activities are often made available through the local homeschool group. The same

standards should be expected, as applicable, to each of these activities. Following is a list of some of the possibilities and their requirements.

1. Field trips
 - A coordinator is needed to set up the places and to work with the contacts for each location.
 - The coordinator will determine sign-up procedure. Sometimes a deadline will be necessary because of group size constraints.
 - There should be a consistent list of standards or rules to be followed. If there will be consequences for infractions, they should be posted, in advance, to avoid surprises or hurt feelings.
 - The coordinator can get input about what activities would make interesting field trips. Some ideas are a museum, art gallery, zoo, etc.
2. Park days are enjoyable for both moms and students. These days give the children an opportunity to run and play. A lot of tips, ideas and encouragement can be shared among the moms as they keep an eye on their kids.
3. Some groups have a track-and-field day when the weather is nice. You can also set up tables and use this day as a convenient time for families to renew memberships and sign up for the following year's activities. This time helps coaches, co-op leaders, tutors, etc., plan for their year as well.
4. When homeschoolers finish with their books and resources but still need to shop for more, they sometimes want to sell their materials. Some groups have used-curriculum sales. Members can reserve space to lay out their materials so other parents can shop for bargains.
5. If one of your members is qualified to administer standardized tests, such as the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills or SAT test, he or she can set up dates and times to administer such tests to the students in your group. Parents who want their children to participate will need to register in advance.
6. Following is a list of children's activities usually coordinated by members who are not leaders. The local homeschool group is usually comprised of parents with a vast array of strengths and interests.
 - Valentine exchange
 - Book-It
 - Art & Talent show
 - Chess club
 - Sports events
 - Drama club
 - Debate tournament
7. Academic or P.E. co-ops can be invaluable for parents who wonder how in the world they will be able to cover all the subjects to which they want their children exposed. Sometimes a small group of moms might co-op in teaching (from their individual strengths) each other's children, usually in groups.

Larger groups sometimes form co-ops in which parents will pay (through co-op classes) teachers for various subjects. The children will meet in classes that are taught by these instructors.

The options for homeschool group meetings are as independent and individual as the homeschoolers themselves. There are no limits, as long as willing workers keep sharing new ideas.

Child care

Determine what the policy of your group will be concerning child care. This will vary according to the type of group yours is.

If it is a moms' group, members may pay teens to watch the younger children, so the moms will be more able to focus on the meeting topics.

If it is a group where children are the focus, child care may be provided for excluded ages (e.g. infants or toddlers).

If it is decided that child care will not be provided, the policy might be to expect certain behavior from the children attending with their parents, or suggesting leaving them with a babysitter might be in order.

1.3 Establishing Rules

An organization requires certain rules to establish its basic structure, manner of operation, and formally adopted rules of procedure. Some rules should be made more difficult to change—or suspend—than others. The various kinds of rules which an organization may adopt include the following:

Corporate Charter – A legal instrument which sets forth the name and purpose of the organization and whatever else is required for incorporation. This document should be drafted by an attorney.

Constitution or Bylaws – The basic rules relating to the organization itself, rather than the parliamentary procedures it follows, which should:

- Define the primary characteristics of the organization
- Prescribe how the organization functions
- Include all rules that the organization considers so important that they (a) cannot be changed easily and (b) cannot be suspended except by specific provision within the bylaws themselves
- Usually include articles concerning: (a) name of the organization, (b) purpose, (c) members, (d) officers, (e) meetings, (f) executive board (if needed), (g) committees, (h) parliamentary authority and (i) amendment procedures.

Rules of Order – The written rules of parliamentary procedure formally adopted by the organization. A copy of Robert’s Rules of Order is available at <http://www.robertsrules.com>.

Standing Rules – The rules which relate to the details of the administration of an organization rather than parliamentary procedure and which can be adopted or changed upon the same conditions as any ordinary act of the organization.

Organizing your organization

- Agree on a basic purpose
- Select a committee to draft bylaws; if incorporation is desired or necessary, consult an attorney
- Hold a general discussion of the desired content
- Gather and review existing bylaws of similar organizations, if possible
- Make the bylaws no more restrictive or detailed than necessary
- Bylaws should be characterized by "tight" clarity and precision in word choice, sentence structure and punctuation (indisputability of meaning and application is more important than readability)
- Conduct a critical review of the draft once it is finished. After committee approval of the draft, the draft should be presented to the full organization for its approval or recommendations for modification.

“Robert’s Rules of Order” has a comprehensive discussion of these topics and is a must-read for anyone interested in the subject.

Refer to: [Civil Practice & Remedies Code](#)

1.4 Governing Documents

As homeschool groups grow, often leaders begin to recognize a need to develop documents and guidelines, only to run into much resistance from members. Many groups have suffered splits as a result of a lack of governing documents and a poor foundation.

THSC strongly encourages homeschool groups to develop governing documents early on, when it is small and consists of like-minded people. These documents are the foundation of a homeschool group, and it is much easier to loosen the guidelines later on than to tighten them. That is not to say that changes and adjustments may not be made over the years.

The following are the types of governing documents used by many homeschool groups:

1. Statement of Faith or Statement of Purpose

This document best explains your reason for forming a voluntary association. Please be aware that requiring members to sign a Statement of Faith does not necessarily guarantee that they

will agree with every tenet of the document. Neither will it guarantee that the members will always behave in accordance with their stated beliefs.

2. Constitution

This is a written instrument embodying the rules of an organization. According to “Robert’s Rules of Order,” only the following should be included in a constitution:

- Name and object of the society
- Qualification of members
- Officers and their election
- Meetings of the society (including only what is essential, leaving details to the bylaws)
- How to amend the constitution.

3. Bylaws

These are founding or governing documents adopted by the body; rules made by local authority to regulate its own affairs. Many groups combine their constitutions and bylaws into one document.

In general, these examples may be used for the following common group structures:

Example 1: Board must agree with Statement of Faith, members need not agree.

Example 2: Neither board nor members must agree with Statement of Faith.

Example 3: Both board and members must agree with Statement of Faith.

See samples of governing documents.

[Statement of Faith Sample 1](#)

[Sample Constitution 1](#)

[Sample Constitution 2](#)

[Sample Bylaws 1](#)

[Sample Bylaws 2](#)

[Sample Bylaws 3](#)

1.5 Membership Forms, Directories and Handbooks

Once your group has established some governing documents and has begun to develop a networking system, the next step is to gather contact information for each member to ensure that all members are receiving information about group activities.

Exactly what information needs to be included on the membership form will vary depending on the services your group provides. However, keep in mind that it is much easier to have members fill out all the information your group might possibly need when families join than to go back and try to gather more information from members later.

Membership Forms

A membership form should include:

- Name, address, phone number and email address
- Children's names and birthdays
- Date homeschooling began
- Type of curriculum used
- THSC membership status
- Available skills and talents

If this information is stored in a database or on an Excel spreadsheet, it can be used later for mail-merge documents, making it much easier to get information to specific members.

Directory

If a group plans to put together a directory for the use of its members, here are some things to consider:

- A directory should be revised annually
- It should never be used for commercial purposes
- Groups should give people the option of not being listed.

New Member Packets

New member packets can be extremely helpful, particularly for families who are also new to homeschooling. A new member packet might include the following information:

- Purpose and goals of the group and its Statement of Faith
- Governing documents (constitution, bylaws, etc.)
- Guidelines and meeting rules
- Important policies
- Qualifications for leadership roles and job descriptions
- [THSC promotional materials](#).

Chapter 2 – Leadership of a Homeschool Group

Leadership of a homeschool group can be a thankless job. As a wise man once said, "Leading homeschoolers can be like trying to herd cats!"

But for those who endeavor to persevere, THSC hopes the following information will provide encouragement, inspiration, as well as practical tips on distributing the work, building your leadership skills, training your replacement and more.

2.1 Choosing a Leader

Leadership is vital to all groups regardless of size or structure. While every group is unique, there are some common characteristics that are true of all groups.

An excellent place to study leadership is in Exodus. In Exodus 18:13-24, Jethro advises his son-in-law, Moses, to stop trying to do all the work of leading Israel alone, for “Both you and these people who *are* with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing *is* too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself.”

Moses needed to delegate, and so do you. There are many options in leadership, but to be effective for any length of time, leaders need to share the workload with other like-minded individuals.

Organized Leadership

If you have not already done so, it is very important that your group write a mission statement. This is basically the “why we exist” statement for your group. You should refer to this statement frequently to ensure that everything you do falls within the guidelines of your mission statement. To whom are you ministering? In what ways are you planning to minister to them? Once you have answered these types of questions, you can then decide which type of leadership will best fulfill your mission.

Officer Selection or Election

How will the officers be chosen? This is a foundational question that is probably best answered very early in the life of your group. Once this decision is made, it is more difficult to change it later. Some of the most common methods are:

- **Elected Officers** – The members of the group elect their officers from a list of willing candidates. Those interested in running for a particular position submit their names for consideration or nominations are taken from the membership. A vote takes place, and the winner takes office for that term.
- **Appointed Officers** – Leaders are asked to serve in specific positions. Generally a board or the existing leadership reviews the members for qualified individuals. Once a decision is made, the selected individual is asked if he or she would be willing to serve. The members as a whole do not have a voice in this decision. This is also known as a “self-sustaining board,” due to the fact that the board selects its own members with either limited or no input from the general members.
- **Volunteer Leadership** – Leaders volunteer themselves for a position.

Makeup of Your Leadership

Homeschool groups have several types of leadership just as homeschoolers have many methods of teaching their children. Diversity can be seen in every area of home education.

Following are the most common possibilities:

- **Moms only** – Many groups take this option by default. Since it is the moms who are doing the work and moms who are attending the functions, it is the moms who are in leadership. This option has the advantage of more convenience in scheduling meetings and ease in getting volunteers to lead. It is, however, limiting in some ways.
- **Men and women** – This option provides the advantage of utilizing the inherent strengths

of both men and women in leadership. A disadvantage is the fact that it can be more difficult to find men who are willing to serve. This brings us to the advantages of the third option.

- **Couples** – This choice allows all the advantages of having men and women in leadership, but it generally makes finding men who are willing to serve easier because they are serving as a team with their wives.

What Should You Look for in a Leader?

A good start is to seek out those who already feel called to serve in a position. Taking the time to really know your candidates will help you find those called to servant leadership.

Look for people with a particular talent in an area. Allowing people to lead in their area of expertise will make the job more enjoyable for them as well as more effective.

Probably the most important factor in your decision-making process is time. Look for consistent involvement with the group. Has this person demonstrated over time a willingness to lend a hand where needed and are dependable? Do not be in a hurry in this area; don't elect someone you just met just because he or she is willing to do the task.

If you cannot find a good fit right away, just leave the position open until the right person comes along.

Suggested Guidelines for Leaders

Once you have found one, or perhaps a few ready and willing candidates for leadership, you'll want to ensure they meet certain criteria appropriate for your group. You may ask yourself these questions:

- Does this person have a similar vision for home education as the rest of the leadership? This does not mean that he or she necessarily uses the same curriculum or teaching methods.
- Does this person see homeschooling as a serious commitment?
- Is this person committed to the group?
- How long has this person been a member of the group?
- Has this person shown a willingness to help or actively participated?
- Is this person in agreement with the purpose, mission statement and bylaws of the group?
- Does this person know the history of the group and how these things were developed?
- Does this person have a good reputation for service and dependability?
- Does this person demonstrate servant leadership?
- When this person offers an idea, is he or she willing to take responsibility for making things happen and, when needed, impart the vision and share the responsibilities with others?
- If this is a Christian group, is this person a born-again Christian, and does he or she belong to an organized fellowship of believers? Is this person educating his or her

children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?”

- Has this person counted the cost of serving? The decision to accept or pursue a position of leadership should be made with the knowledge that this is a position of giving and serving—not a place to be seen.
- Has this person been homeschooling at least one year, or is he or she a “completed” homeschooler (not a dropout)? Very new homeschoolers are usually very enthusiastic but have not yet been seasoned. Wisdom comes both from experience and from observing veteran homeschoolers and leaders.

A list of typical homeschool group offices and jobs: (Remember, many hands make light work!)

1. President
2. Secretary
3. Treasurer
4. Membership coordinator
5. Public relations coordinator
6. Field trip coordinator
7. Librarian
8. Greeter/hostess
9. Phone network coordinator
10. Program director
11. Jobs coordinator
12. Newsletter editor
13. Activity coordinators
 - Science fair
 - Spelling bee
 - Talent night
 - Sports events
 - Graduation

The key is not to try to fill every one of these positions but rather to find the right people to fill the positions in which they are called to serve.

Philosophies on Filling Positions

Determine what factors are most important for your group in filling leadership positions. This is best determined in the formative stages of your homeschool group to avoid future misunderstandings.

- Position first
 - *We have a position open, and we need to find the right person to fill it.* This approach is useful for positions which are necessary to the organization—the office of president for example. Carefully and quickly find someone within the group who meets the appropriate guidelines and can perform the duties required

of the position.

- *What if nobody wants this particular position?* Unless it is one of the must-fill jobs, either leave it vacant until somebody steps forward, or just work around it. It is always better to leave an opening unfilled than to fill it with the wrong person.
- Personality first
 - *We have a person who has the ability and calling to serve in a particular area.* The possibilities here are endless. Create a position centered on this individual's interests. Even if the position is not filled again after this person leaves, you have the opportunity to utilize his or her services while he or she is in office.

Terms of Office

The terms of office, or how long officers serve in their position, should be detailed in the bylaws of the group. Your homeschool group should decide on an appropriate length of time for each position of leadership. After observing how the positions work for a while, you may wish to change the length of terms to better serve the needs of your group.

A good idea is to view each position independently, as each position presents its own challenges and responsibilities. When considering each term, you may ask yourself these questions:

- How long should a person be asked to serve in this position before changing positions or rotating out of leadership? Do not expect anyone to be a permanent fixture. A burned-out officer is not as effective as one who is allowed to leave when it is time.
 - It is wise to stagger terms of office so that the leadership team is not starting over every time members rotate off. This allows continuity in leadership, because as long as the current or past officers have input, the original vision will be preserved, even if it looks a little different.
 - Also, have continuity folders for each position so future officers can learn from past experiences.
- How much turnover can the leadership team have and still function effectively? It is wise to appoint those who are willing to commit more than one year to the position—and to prepare someone to fill their place at the end of their term.
- How much time does it take a person to learn the position and then serve effectively? Some groups have elections and allow some time for the outgoing officers to work alongside the newly-elected officers to ease them into the responsibilities.

Advisory Boards

Often in homeschool groups, the officers could benefit from the input of an advisory board. This allows the officers to seek guidance, prayer and support from a group of individuals not involved

in the day-to-day operation of the group. Some common types of advisory boards include:

- **Veterans Advisory Board** – Past leaders of your or another group provide an excellent source of support for your current leadership. It is unfortunate when the folks who were leaders in the formative years of a group are discounted as a source of knowledge and insights. They have been there, done that—sometimes before the current officers were even homeschooling. Their wisdom and advice can be invaluable.
- **Members Advisory Board** - Group of members who oversee various projects and give input and advice to the board. These advisors will obviously be more involved with the day-to-day life of the group.

Supervisory Boards

Sometimes, a homeschool group functions well without a group of advisors, yet could benefit from a group of people merely overseeing their decisions and offering advice when needed.

- **Advisory Board of Dads** – God has blessed men and women with very different strengths. By setting up a board consisting of dads to oversee the big picture, the moms of the group are free to run the day-to-day operations, but still rely on a man's perspective when needed. This also ensures that dads stay involved with the group.
- **Church Leadership** – For a group functioning as a ministry of a local church, the church leadership will dictate how the homeschool group functions under their authority. The church can dictate the makeup of the membership and the leadership. If the church is over the group, the church leadership will have spiritual input for the group.

Encouraging Participation by Veterans

Leadership veterans, including graduated homeschoolers, have much to offer those currently in leadership. Their presence on advisory committees (if bylaws permit those not actively homeschooling to serve) or just as informal advisors allows continuity of vision as well as a wealth of experience. This also allows them to stay involved without all the demands of active leadership.

Encouraging Participation by Members

Consider making it a requirement of membership that each person has a job. The key to this requirement is not overloading anyone. You do not want to discourage potential members by pressing them to do too much too fast. In particular, new homeschoolers should be given very light duty. They have enough to do just getting started. Remember, you are in existence to support—not burn out—your members.

Consider rotating those responsibilities which do not require too much continuity. Monthly meetings and field trips are two areas where different people could take responsibility each month. Editing the newsletter, on the other hand, is probably not a good task to rotate monthly.

Lastly, if no one volunteers for an activity, drop it. Do not fall into the trap of requiring that if nobody else will lead it, the president or the officers do it. This only leads to burnout.

Leader Resources

[THSC offers many resources for leaders!](#)

Check with your [regional organization](#) for additional resources, if you have one near you.

It is also a very good idea to obtain a copy of [Robert's Rules of Order](#) and run your meetings by that to facilitate more efficient meetings.

Finally, never forget that you are working with fellow homeschoolers. Homeschoolers are by necessity an independently-minded group. Pray much, do not rely solely on yourself, and stay focused on your mission. Homeschool leadership can be both a fun and rewarding experience.

2.2 Job Descriptions of Homeschool Group Leaders

Officers

As discussed in [2.1 Choosing a Leader](#), there are three primary types of officers: elected officers, appointed officers and volunteer officers. How officers are selected is best determined early in the life of the group.

The executive board—whether elected or appointed—is usually made up of: president, vice president(s), treasurer, secretary and sometimes the past two presidential pairs.

- **President** – Oversees all of the coordinators, has final say over policies (along with the executive board), selects speakers for meetings, and has control over what information is passed through phone tree (or email network).
- **Vice President** – Assists the president, authorizes phone tree messages when the president is unavailable, is in charge of the P.O. Box, takes applications and stores information in group computers for mailing labels and fellowship lists, mails fellowship lists once or twice a year, receives all information from members for newsletter sent once a month, purchases postage, and answers phone calls concerning the homeschool group.
- **Treasurer** – Keeps all checks arriving and deposits in bank account, pays any fees incurred, balances checkbook, and does financial analysis from past year to update expenses for the coming year. Must be a disciplined and responsible person who is capable of accurate record-keeping.
- **Secretary** – Takes notes at meetings, types them and mails to the president, vice president(s) and coordinators, sends thank-you notes for group, sends applications to assist the vice president(s), and answers calls requesting information about the homeschool group.

Committees and Committee Chairmen

Depending on the size of your group, there are many other leadership positions available. These positions may be filled by committees or individual members. It is helpful for each position or committee to have a chairman who attends board meetings and reports to the board. The following are a few examples:

- **Newsletter, E-group moderator, website manager** – It is helpful to have three members in each correspondence category.
- **Calendar Committee** – Keeps a monthly calendar for the group. Members must call or email to schedule dates.
- **Social, Legal and Political Issues Chairman** – This person or committee is responsible for keeping the group informed of any issues concerning families. They also have informative meetings to share how members can become more politically involved (write and call congressmen, etc).
- **Teen Group Leader** – Provides list for parents to sign up their teens for activities, heads the teen section of the group's newsletter, helps plan and coordinate teen group activities together with parents. This leader answers to the president and executive board and reports any problems in his or her area of responsibility.

Coordinators

A homeschool group could choose to have coordinators as another leadership option. Each of these positions oversees the chairmen under them and makes sure articles and dates are submitted to the newsletter on time. If a chairman is ill, the coordinator helps do that job. All chairmen are responsible to write and submit their own newsletter articles. Coordinators make sure their chairmen know to clear dates with them and post them on the calendar.

Since activities are such a vital function of a homeschool group, there should be several members involved in planning events for the group. Following are some examples of how activities may be categorized.

Activity I Coordinator (Over these Chairmen)

- **Roller Skating Chairman** – Sets up year's skating schedule with selected roller rink and keeps group informed of skating dates and times through the newsletter. Is also responsible for providing appropriate music for rink.
- **Ice Skating Chairman** – Same as Roller Skating Chairman, but with ice skating rink.
- **Bowling Chairman** – Sets up monthly schedule and is liaison between homeschool group and bowling alley.
- **Stock Show Chairman** – Secures group rate and informs group of time and date through newsletter. This is a field trip to a rodeo event.
- **State Fair Tickets** – Secures tickets at group rate for teachers (parents) and children. Some groups go on private school day. This is a field trip to a state fair.
- **Babysitting Co-op Chairman** – In charge of setting up babysitting service with coupons for homeschool moms to keep each other's children.

Activity II Coordinator – (Over these Chairmen)

- **Community Events Chairman** – Responsible for drama club, plays or community events. Secures group rates, dates, times and a list of plays or events for the year. Chairman informs group through the newsletter.
- **Moms' Night Out Chairman** – Responsible for reserving a location. The chairman lists the times and dates on the calendar and in the newsletter.
- **Spelling Bee Chairman** – Arranges event for children to encourage better spelling. Awards are given to all participating children. Responsible for submitting a date, time and location to the newsletter.
- **School Pictures Chairman** – Secures a photographer and arranges a time and place for pictures. Is responsible for posting picture information in the newsletter.
- **Library Leafing Chairman** – This chairman needs to be an avid reader. Upon reading books, he or she writes review of each one for the newsletter. The article usually includes books that would be good for young children and adults as well.
- **Getting Started Workshops** – A member (and experienced homeschool teacher) teaches this workshop from his or her homeschooling experience of at least five years. New members have found it invaluable and most helpful in getting started.

Activity III Coordinator (Over these Chairmen)

- **Book-It Chairman** – Book-It is a national reading program for children sponsored through Pizza Hut. The chairman requests the offered, free enrollment materials via [website](#). The chairman provides the group the needed information through the newsletter. Groups sign up in April for the new school year.
- **Picnics Chairman** – Selects playground areas and theme ideas. A few theme ideas have included Costume Day in October, Fly-A-Kite Day in March, and Pet Show Day in June. Times, dates and locations secured on calendar along with directions and themes in newsletter.
- **Geography Club Chairman** – Sets up location and time for club to meet every other week in September through February. (Sponsored by National Geographic World, Dept 00490, 17th & M St., Washington, D.C. 20036.)
- **P.E. Club Chairman** – This person is in charge of physical education for the children. He or she secures times, dates and locations and posts on calendar. Games with other homeschool associations are done through this chairman.
- **YMCA Sports Chairman** – Calls the YMCA and secures appropriate sports information. Informs families through newsletter how to have their homeschooled children on same teams for their age level.
- **Chess Club Chairman** – Schedules monthly meetings and posts them in the newsletter.

Other coordinator positions could include:

- **Program Coordinator** – This coordinator has special responsibilities on meeting days. He or she must check with the key/sound system chairman and guest speaker chairman plus the hospitality coordinator ensure that everything is ready for the meeting. The following chairmen are under this coordinator:

- **Key/Sound System Chairman** – Needs to be a homeschool father who is a member of the church where the meeting is held. Opens church and operates sound systems during meetings. Closes church after the meeting ends.
- **Child Care Chairman** – Secures child care workers for the homeschool meetings and collects money from the parents to pay the sitters. Arrange payment beforehand. Oversees the child care area but has a paid supervisor in the area so the chairman can attend most of the meetings. Reservations are initiated through the newsletter either before meetings or on a permanent list.
- **Assistant Child Care Chairman** – Helps in any way needed by child care chairman.
- **Art Fair Chairman** – Decides with the president whether to have just an exhibit or to sell crafts as well. Provides dates and information in the newsletter two or three months ahead of time. Art fair is usually held in November if choosing to sell crafts.
- **Science Fair Chairman** – Places date and other information in newsletter three months ahead of time to give children ample time to work on projects. Provides in newsletter ideas and tips on setting up display. Sets up tables and name cards for projects and secures judges. Ribbons are given to all participants, plus first, second and third place ribbons to winners in each category.
- **Awards and Recognition Chairman** – Works with program coordinator to plan a meaningful service. Information needs to be in the newsletter ahead of time depending on the type of meeting being planned.
- **Guest Speaker Chairman** – Must be a person who is intelligent, outgoing and enthusiastic to represent your group to any speakers chosen to come to your meetings. This chairman must be willing to work closely with program coordinator and president in getting speakers. The president has the final say on the selection of speakers. The chairman does the footwork of contacting the speaker and keeping that person informed of necessary details. He or she represents the association to the speaker and writes the thank you note to the guest speaker after the meeting.

Hospitality Coordinator – (Over these chairmen)

- **Hostess Chairman** – Needs to be at meetings 15-30 minutes early. Ascertain that name tags are set up, refreshments brought and child care workers ready and available for children. When people begin arriving, this chairman cheerfully greets them at the door.
- **Assistant Hostess Chairman** – Helps hostess chairman greet people and with any other job the chairman assigns.
- **Name Tags Chairman** – Purchases name tags and has them available at meetings, field trips, picnics, etc.
- **Refreshments Chairman** – Ensures there are plenty of cookies, tea, coffee, etc., for adult fellowship after meetings and also refreshments for child care area. One week prior to meetings, assigns families to bring refreshments. Can enlist help on making the calls.
- **Assistant Refreshment Chairman** – Helps make calls for refreshments to be brought to meetings and helps chairman with any job requested.

- **Clean-Up Chairman** – Following meetings, ensures that everything is picked up and vacuumed. Calls those families that signed up at the first yearly meeting to bring their vacuums as a reminder. Be certain that they stay to clean; if not, chairman must stay to clean. The chairman should only have to clean one time each year.

Special Events Coordinator – (Over these Chairmen)

- **Moms' Retreat Chairman** – Contacts motels/retreat grounds seeking reduced group rate. Plans ideas for retreat with special events coordinator. Submits information to appear in newsletter three months prior to retreat in order to start collecting room money and making room assignments.
- **Valentine Party Chairman** – Plans party, purchases supplies and informs families of details. Posts articles in January and February newsletters. Secures church and entertainment in December. The children bring decorated boxes and valentines to give to the children seated at their tables. All the mothers must sign up to bring food items and to work at the party.
- **Workshops Chairman** – Plans workshops for the year with president and special events coordinator; also submits newsletter articles on any workshops available through other homeschool groups in the area.
- **Newcomer Buddies Chairman** – Through information in the newsletter and especially the first meeting of the year, matches a new homeschool mom with a more experienced mom to offer encouragement and help getting started.
- **Small Neighborhood Support Groups Chairman** – Through newsletter, helps those families who would like to be a part of a small group of homeschool friends to start meeting together.
- **Family Profiles Chairman** – Interviews a different family each month and writes article to publish in newsletter. Should include how long the family has homeschooled, helpful ideas that work for them, why they chose to homeschool, etc.

Service & Community Involvement Coordinator – (Over these Chairmen)

- **Loaves and Fishes Chairman** – Puts in newsletter information and times to be involved in a service ministry. This is for the children to help at an organization that gives food to the needy. There should be such organizations in your city.
- **Cub/Boy/Girl Scouts Chairman** – Puts dates and times on calendar for their group.
- **Trail Life/American Heritage Girls Chairman** – Same as above.
- **Campfire Girls Chairman** – Same as above

Field Trips Coordinator – (Over these Chairmen)

Ascertain that the appropriate newsletter information from the chairman is submitted on time.

- **Elementary School-age Chairman** – In charge of setting up field trips for kids in kindergarten through sixth grade. At the first meeting, a sign-up sheet should be available so mothers can commit to set up a field trip in a particular month.
- **Preschool Chairman** – Same as above, but for children ages four and under.

- **Wholesome Happenings Chairman** – Keeps group informed of news in the city or local churches in which group members might be interested. Submits information to newsletter.
- **Holiday Happenings Chairman** – Plans the event for the November meeting with the approval of the president and program coordinator. Theme ideas include a banquet with guest speakers (for parents only) and also a meeting with the children performing a Christmas play.
- **Camping Trip Chairman** – Through newsletter, sets up weekend camping trips with homeschool families. Includes and submits appropriate information.
- **Summer Activities Chairman** – Plans events and dates for the summer and submits the information for the May newsletter. Ideas include swim days at local pool, picnics, and outings at Burgers Lake.

This list of job descriptions is reprinted by permission of Richard Driggers, past president of SFWCHE (South Fort Worth Christian Home Educators).

2.3 Training Your Replacement

When you're selecting people for your board, keep in mind that it is all about the vision. Not everyone is going to agree with your vision. That does not mean they are wrong, but it may mean that they are not the right person for the job.

As you put people on the board or you bring people in to replace you, they have to buy into what you are doing. They have to agree that this is where your group needs to go and this is what must be done. If you have someone with a different vision, it steals momentum. Not that differing opinions are not appreciated, but when it comes to the vision, everybody needs be marching in the same direction.

Potential leaders are going to be motivated based on your ability as a leader to impart that vision.

The following are some of the most important things you will ever do as you start trying to find someone to train to replace you.

Pray

As a leader, pray all the time for the leaders with whom you are working and for the leaders God is preparing, and be patient. Sometimes God may show you someone you never expected, and other times He may take some time to work in the life of someone who has never considered leading.

Remember the Vision

Constantly remind the people with whom you serve and the folks in your organization about the

vision. It is crucial that everyone understands and supports the vision of the group. Why are we doing what we are doing? What is our desired end result? What are we trying to accomplish? What is our long-term goal? What are our short-term goals? Your group should be able to answer these questions and more when asked.

Identifying Leadership Qualities

Look for someone who does not need constant praise—it's not going to happen! This is service—unfortunately often without recognition or thanks. Welcome to ministry! As you look for someone to replace you, one of the attributes you need to find is someone who is a little thick-skinned and can face some opposition.

Develop descriptions of different jobs that are involved in running your group. The leadership team is the support structure of the group, so make each job description as detailed as you can. It really boils down to basic people skills and understanding personality types, and then matching those with the job.

In addition, as you are wooing someone in to take your place, you do not want any miscommunication; you do not want them to feel misled. Be brutally honest with people—you owe it to them. It prevents burnout and prevents them from getting frustrated.

Your homeschool group and your board are no different in their needs and structure than any other organization. Whether it is a field trip, co-op or a company, people are equipped to do certain jobs, and you need to find the right people to do those jobs.

Your replacement needs to be a mature, homeschool veteran—not necessarily in tenure, but in experience, devotion and commitment to what he or she is doing; he or she is not just trying this thing out. It's a lifestyle, and you need folks who are committed to it.

Find Somebody Better, Faster and Smarter

Keeping in mind the vision of the group, look for someone who can truly do a better job of executing and taking it to the next level than you can. If an organization is alive, it is going to grow. If it is going to grow, it is going to change, and you need someone who can take it to that next level.

Training

Once you have identified your potential replacement, what do you do? Simply see how it works out. See how willing this person is to jump in and take on the work and all else the job title comes with.

One way to train officers is to stagger board positions. Then there will never be a time in which a whole new group of officers will come in and serve. What would happen to leadership, direction and momentum if every eighteen to twenty-four months everyone in charge steps out? It is gone; it all goes back to that vision. If everyone leaves at the same time, nobody has a clue as

to where you have come from or where you are going.

If Nobody Wants to do a Job, Maybe it Does not Need to be Done.

What happens if no one steps up to take a job? You need to seriously consider that perhaps that job does not need to be done. Perhaps you can leave it as a job opening until someone is ready and willing to fill it.

Learn to Delegate

Dealing with obstacles to get the ultimate goal taken care of is probably an issue of delegating authority to others in order to accomplish tasks. The mark of a good leader is that he or she can turn a job over to someone else and let it go. You may have to follow up with the person, especially if that person has no prior experience with such tasks.

Sometimes the best intentions do not always equate to the greatest execution. You are dealing with a volunteer army, and you cannot dock their pay, as much as you would like to. What are you going to do? To get through these things, as a team you commit early on in the process that you are going to operate in grace. You need to decide early on that you are going to get through this together, you are going to find the right people, and you are not going to do this on your own.

Isaiah 40:31 says, “But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

What a perfect scripture for board structure—not doing things in the flesh, and not doing things out of your own desires and your own sense of what needs to be done! Let God direct your steps to the right people; He knows what is going on, and He will bring you the right people.

2.4 Change in Leadership?

Has your group recently experienced a change in leadership, or will spring elections bring new leaders onboard? Now is the time to update your homeschool group information.

[Add/Update Your Group](#)

One of the most difficult jobs we have here at THSC is keeping homeschool group information up-to-date. Every day we receive calls from homeschool families all across the state looking to connect with other homeschool families. We want to be sure that the information we give them is current and accurate. [THSC requires groups to update their group information annually](#). Your [Leader Resources](#) password is emailed upon completion of the annual update.

Check out the [valuable benefits available to THSC Partner Groups](#). Don't miss out on your benefits; [add or update your group today](#).

Chapter 3 – Finances and Insurance

3.1 How do we Open a Bank Account?

When a group seeks to open a bank account, one of the first questions most banks will ask is, “What is your taxpayer ID number?” To avoid problems, groups should apply for a taxpayer ID number. Although it may seem complicated, it is fairly simple:

1. Fill out an IRS form SS4. This can be done online.
2. In the place where it says “type of entity,” check “Other non-profit organizations” and put “association” in the blank. This tells the IRS that you are a loosely affiliated association of individuals doing some financial activity.
3. You will get a letter from the IRS assigning your group a number.
4. You might also get some payroll tax information and even a first quarter payroll tax report that asks you to file the payroll taxes for all of your employees. If you get this letter, do not throw it away, but complete it, putting zeros in the blanks. Mark that you do not have any employees and you do not expect to have any. At that point, you have given the IRS enough information to understand that your organization and its financial activity are not of interest, along with all the other hundreds of thousands of small associations.
5. Regarding what signatures to require on the account, most groups will want at least two people on the signature card, to provide accountability. However, this requirement may become cumbersome when trying to do business. Remember that the signatures will have to be changed as the group changes leadership.
6. Many banks have specific requirements, including a copy of your minutes showing your group formation information and the state certificate of formation. [View the checklist found in chapter one for more details.](#)

3.2 Money Management for Homeschool Organizations

Visit HomeschoolCPA.com for valuable resources related to money management.

3.3 Accidental Medical and General Liability Insurance Program

Responding to groups from across the state that have expressed a need and having had difficulties fulfilling that need, THSC has worked with strong, experienced insurance companies to set up a program for accident medical and general liability coverage for Texas homeschool groups. In today’s litigious society, homeschool groups and their leaders are wise to be sure that they have this type of coverage “just in case ...”

THSC now has an umbrella for partner groups. To qualify for this insurance, the group must be a [THSC Partner Group](#). Learn more in [Leader Resources](#) (must be logged in to access benefits). [View the benefits available and read terms.](#)

[Apply or update your group today as a THSC Partner Group](#)

Chapter 4 – Homeschool Group Communication

Homeschool group communications have changed dramatically since the modern homeschool movement began in the 1980s. Gone are the days of telephone trees and mailing lists, as websites, blogs, e-newsletters and social networking now provide groups with a variety of ways to connect with their members.

4.1 Types of Communication

Years ago, for homeschool families to connect, they simply exchanged phone numbers to schedule park days, meetings, field trips or organize group classes. Today there are many ways that groups communicate and connect.

Mailing List

Suggestions for starting and maintaining a homeschool group mailing list are:

- Offer a public website to learn about your group before subscribing to become a member
- Provide a contact method for prospective members; be sure you check with your communications team
- Have prospective members subscribe to join your list
- Keep member information private.

Public Website

A website is a very good way to provide outsiders with basic information about your group, and also to provide members with an all-inclusive archive of past and current events.

Note: When choosing servers for your homeschool group list, be sure to check the terms of service when you register and check it monthly. Other tips include:

- Keep it updated
- Keep basic info about your group on homepage for guest viewers
- Provide contact info for new families to request more information about your group
- Keep posts available only to members
- Keep archives private by allowing only members to have access to files, calendars, databases and messages.

Group Chat

Here is a short, non-exhaustive list of possible group chats:

- [Homeschool-Life](#) (fee based, created specifically for homeschool groups)
- [GroupMe](#)
- [Slack](#) (can also double as an online task manager for members)
- [FaceBook](#), [Twitter](#), or other social media outlets
- [Remind.com](#).

Blogging

Blogging is a great way to keep the members of your group updated about recent happenings, offer tips learned from other homeschoolers, or simply share new ideas and resources.

Select a member of your group who is capable of and willing to write the blog, or several people who can rotate posts. Decide up-front what type of content you want posted and how frequently. These details can be changed later, but it's helpful to have firm guidelines when you first begin.

There are several free blog publishers available—Blogger, Wordpress, TypePad and LiveJournal, just to name a few. Pick the one which best suits your group (and the author's technical skills), set up an account and get started!

First, you will need to choose a template. Start by looking at the templates offered by your publisher. Look at the columns and header sizes; then go to some of the blogs you like and study their headers and columns. Do you want three columns or two? How big would you like your header to be? If you don't like any of the choices, you can do a search for free layouts or templates on the internet. You can even hire a blog designer if you want something completely original.

After establishing an account with a blog publisher and choosing a template, the next step is to name your blog. Naming a blog can be a challenge. Just remember, this is your brand, and it will stick with you, so decide carefully. Consider asking your entire group for suggestions and voting on it. The more people you have weighing in, the more ideas you'll have to choose from!

Once you have an account, a template and a name, you're in. You will have lots of options, such as widgets, stat counters and add-ons, but the basic blog setup is done.

To bring traffic to your blog, there are a few simple things you can do. Put a link to the blog on your homeschool group's webpage. Visit blogs you like and leave comments; the authors will often come back to visit yours. Also, you can post polls or host a weekly feature or giveaway. Put pictures on your blog; people love pictures.

A great schedule technique is to post a new blog at least once a week or you will start to lose

readers. In most blog platforms, you can write a post ahead of time, then schedule it to send later.

This process is just the beginning. You can get as creative as you want. It takes a little time to get the hang of it, but once you do, it'll grow!

Phone Trees

Before the days of widespread internet and email use, phone trees were usually the first step in a network. If your group is still small and using a phone tree, here is a list of things to consider:

- If the phone is your primary means of communication, determine whether the group will use a phone chain or a phone tree. Phone chains depend on the next person to keep the message going. With a phone tree, designated leaders will take responsibility for their branch of the tree.
- Leaders must determine what type of messages will justify activating the phone system, and a willing member should be delegated the responsibility of starting the message. A group officer should be responsible for making the decision to activate this tool. Be sure the end of the phone chain returns to the originator of the call, to determine if the information is disseminated and accurate.
- Another option is an auto-dial system. Weigh the pros and cons of an auto-dial system. One pro is that it eliminates the chance of being a prisoner to the person on the other end. However, some people will hang up on an automated call. Make it clear to the membership if this is the method you choose.

Newsletters

Once a group's members have moved beyond the early stages of a play group, they will likely discover the need for an organized method of communication, and thus, the newsletter is born. Before internet access was so widely available, most newsletters were sent via the post office. Today there are many options available to homeschool groups.

The following is a list of questions and things to consider when planning a newsletter:

- How often will the newsletter be sent? Will it be used to make announcements about the coming month's activities? Will activities be planned yearly, or quarterly, thus requiring fewer issues? Is it practical to mail a newsletter or send it by email, or would it be simpler to post it on a website?
- How many pages? How much information will be in the newsletter? Will it be a calendar alone, or will there be articles to encourage members?
- How are costs covered if it is mailed? Will the cost be covered by members' dues? Will advertising be sold to cover the costs? Will fundraising activities be held?
- What content should be included? Some possible suggestions: group activities, meeting info (locations and times), legislative info, articles or book reviews from members,

student submissions, students' achievements, graduate updates, summaries of last meeting's topics, large events needing advance notice (such as book fairs, science fairs, graduations, etc.).

- Another consideration is, how long does it take to put together a newsletter?
 - 50% of time is spent gathering and organizing
 - 20% of time is spent on first draft
 - 30% of time is spent rewriting and proofing
- Deadlines and submission requirements: ENFORCE YOUR DEADLINE! If you start making exceptions, everyone will feel entitled to BE an exception. Then you could either lose control or lose friends.
- Copyrights and reprints: determine your policy for allowing reprints and do not break any copyright laws by reprinting without permission.

Email Networking

Using email for support group communications is more reliable and easier to maintain than any of the telephone options or the paper versions of a newsletter. When members move, their email address usually moves with them.

This method is also easier to track. When an email communication is sent, there is a record on the sender's computer of the messages sent and to whom they were sent.

Anonymity is easier to maintain with email. When someone requests homeschooling information by email there is not the personal contact that might make that person uncomfortable.

Also, the person giving the information is free to take as much or as little time as desired to answer questions. Be sure to use blind carbon copy when sending out group emails to keep email addresses confidential.

If you are using an email network, here are a few things to consider:

- A monthly or even weekly newsletter can be sent without expense via email
- An email network must have a contact person who is responsible for forwarding communication to the rest of the group.
- Many groups use e-groups, Yahoo! Groups or other internet lists.

Chapter 5 – Public Relations

5.1 Network to Strengthen Homeschool Group Leadership

Advertising events, sending press releases and maintaining good public relations can benefit both your group and the homeschool community in your area.

As a leader, you are called to maintain your group's vitality; to look for ways to refresh yourself, motivate your volunteers and breathe new life into activities. Networking, instructional workshops, research and relaxation—yes, even relaxation—are all ways to strengthen your group—not to mention yourself.

Leadership skills, finances, activity ideas, insurance, school and balancing family life are all things that leaders struggle with. Our networking time allows leaders to exchange ideas, talk about ways they have managed struggles, and discuss the changing face of home education.

[Log into Leader Resources to learn more](#) (must be an active [THSC Partner Group](#)).

5.2 Advertising Your Homeschool Group

You've organized your group, you have your governing documents and leadership in place, and you are serving the local home educators whom you have located or who have found you. Now you need to decide how big your "tent" will be and how broad your service.

Do you want to bring in all the homeschoolers you can? Do you want to constantly be training up others to serve?

Are there folks in your community who still think you are not doing the right thing by keeping your children isolated and missing out on socialization and other important things the "traditional" classroom affords?

Advertising

The solution to both of these situations is to get the word out! Word-of-mouth will only reach so far; try boldly proclaiming your existence! There are several ways that this can be accomplished at little or no cost:

- [Apply to be added as a THSC Partner Group](#). Applying is easy and free. THSC is committed to [educating and supporting homeschool leadership at all levels in the state](#). We provide [valuable resources & benefits](#) to THSC Partner Groups. [Apply today!](#)
- Libraries are always pleased to find new patrons, and homeschoolers are usually frequent visitors, developing relationships with the librarians. Ask your local librarian if you can leave informational materials for other patrons to pick up.
- A church that homeschoolers attend might be willing to announce homeschool group events or even allow meetings and events at its facility. If those meetings are free, television or radio stations may advertise the events for free if they regularly have

community calendar announcements.

- Community centers and some book stores also often post notices concerning free informational classes or meetings. Ask the manager of the facility.
- Ask regional or state organizations to announce or publish your presence and willingness to serve. You can also network with groups in your area. If you are in a sparsely-populated area, sometimes this can mean the difference between a small event and an impressive one.
- If you have newsletters or brochures and can afford the extra expense, offer to leave samples at different contact locations. Each contact you make will be publicity for homeschooling and your group—make a good impression!

Brochures

If you choose to print brochures, here are some tips:

- Make sure you have current information about homeschooling in Texas. Be realistic and truthful about the challenge of homeschooling. It is good to encourage people that this is something that they can do; however, make it clear that homeschooling should be a commitment and that it is hard work.
- Give your group's contact information and a statement about who you are and what you do. Let folks know that you are a credible source of information.
- Just as with contacts, you need to make a good impression! Your brochure should look planned—not thrown together.

A Few More Ideas

- Showcase students through sports and talent activities.
- TV coverage—have someone prepared to be interviewed whenever local stations are looking for a homeschool slant (these interviews are especially common at the beginning of the school year). This person should be someone who is informed, experienced and well-versed (in order to make a good impression!).

If the mission of your homeschool group is to serve the homeschool community, then it is your responsibility to make sure the homeschool community knows you exist and that you are available.

5.3 Media Releases

One of the most effective ways homeschool groups can help create and maintain a positive image for homeschoolers is to issue a press release for newsworthy events.

Consider reaching potential homeschool families or publicizing some of the benefits and advantages of homeschooling by using media releases to promote a positive image of homeschoolers.

Ask to place information in:

- Local libraries
- Community calendars
- Social media sites
- Local newspapers
- Local radio stations or news outlets.

Be sure to:

- Include a headline to grab the attention of the reader/listener
- Explain the who, what, where, why and how EARLY in your story
- Stick to one subject
- Highlight any points of interest
- Keep the story brief
- Stick to the facts
- Write in the way you want to see your story reported
- Keep main points clear and easy to find
 - Don't forget location and times for events
 - Dates and deadlines for registration
 - Contact information for questions
- Use clear language, keep it simple
- Maintain strong, positive words and avoid focus on the negative
- Check and double-check your article
- Include clear contact information for the media outlet to reach you.

THSC can help your group get the word out. THSC Partner Groups have multiple benefits to help with networking both with homeschool families and with each other. [Find out more about THSC Partner Groups.](#)

Popular benefits include:

- [Interactive map for families and group leaders to find THSC Partner Groups](#)
- [Leader Resources page to obtain group leader benefits](#)
- [THSC speakers available to present to your homeschool group.](#)

5.4 Permissible Activities of PACs

Become familiar with political activities that are allowed through the THSC PAC.

[Download Permissible Political Activities of PACs and Nonprofit Organizations Under Federal Campaign Finance and Tax Laws](#), Prepared by Public Citizen's Congress Watch (December 18, 2002).

5.5 Winning the Public Relations Battle

We live in a democratic republic in which the people choose their leaders to govern them. Thus, the opinion of the majority of the public often becomes public policy, which illustrates the need for homeschoolers to promote positive public relations at the local, state and national levels.

We must be actively involved in shaping public opinion about homeschooling and the issues that could affect the homeschool community.

In view of that, each homeschool group should prepare in advance for adverse situations by having a public relations officer designated for the group. This person should be responsible for publicizing the newsworthy events of the group and fielding any calls from the media for information or reports on homeschooling.

This officer should have media packets, information for officials and reporters, or a resource such as the THSC website to refer reporters to in order to give out accurate information quickly.

Stick to the facts:

- [THSC - History of Home Education](#)
- [THSC - Media & Officials](#)
- [THSC - Press Releases](#)
- [THSC - Homeschool Advocacy and News](#)
- [THSC - Fight for Free Speech](#)
- [NHERI Research](#).

Members of your group should be aware of the officer to whom they should refer such calls. When dealing with members of the press please ensure that the information you share is accurate. Verify your facts prior to an interview if you are unsure of yourself. THSC will be glad to help you on such issues.

First impressions are often lasting impressions. In fact, we read in 1 Samuel that while God looks on the heart, man looks on the outward appearance. We are often judged by our appearance. Therefore, when dealing with members of the press or elected officials be careful to dress appropriately. It is advisable to dress in business attire and make every effort to be well-groomed.

Give the Right Message

When dealing with reporters be careful to keep your message simple and straightforward. In a press release or written statement, make your most important point first and move on from there. If the message is edited, you will then be more likely to get the most important points into the interview.

If you are working with radio or TV reporters, be sure to speak in short statements that are easily understood. Most reporters will only use a few seconds or minutes of an interview. Try to repeat your main points in several ways, with statements that will easily get your message across. Be wary of long, rambling interviews that may be used to deliver a message that you did not intend. Keep your message simple and repeat it often in the interview to enhance your chances that it will be picked up for the story that will be published or aired.

As you speak, be careful not to attack public education or public school teachers. We are trying to promote home education, and the best way to do that is to deliver the positive message about what we are doing with our children and the result of our choice, not to point out the shortcomings of public schools.

Try to work in the following points about home education:

- It is the tutorial method of education, and as such, the low teacher to student ratios allow much one-on-one attention.
- This method results in great time management, in which a great deal can be accomplished in a few hours instead of the entire day it takes in a traditional classroom setting.
- Studies continue to show that homeschoolers do very well on standardized achievement tests when compared to their classroom counterparts; in fact, homeschool students generally score about 30% above the national average on these tests.
- Because of the low teacher to student ratio, homeschoolers accomplish their academic work in a shorter time and have extra time to pursue enrichment activities such as music lessons, sports and other activities, all of which almost always allow for social interaction with others. Thus, we deal with the socialization questions.
- Finally, while homeschooling may not be right for everyone, it should be available to anyone.

Delivering the Messages

Your public relations officer should be sensitive to every newsworthy event that your organization does and should make plans to contact the media to promote that event in particular and homeschooling in general.

Contact TV stations, radio stations and newspapers in advance. Start two weeks prior to the event and follow up several days before the actual date of the event. You should issue a press release to announce to the media the activities you would like them to publicize or report on.

The following rules should apply to each press release:

- Only one event should be announced per release, and the length of the release should be one page
- The organization sponsoring the event should be listed at the top of the page, along with the date, time and place of the event
- A contact person and phone number or email address should also be listed.

Be positive when you deal with reporters and stay on point. Be prepared for questions. You might want others to help you by practicing with questions you might anticipate so that you have responses that are well thought out.

Finally, don't forget your children—they are often our best weapon in the public relations wars. However, be careful not to allow them to be asked questions that are inappropriate. Don't be afraid to tell the reporter that the question is not appropriate and to redirect the conversation.

Practice makes perfect, and the more you do these kinds of public relations efforts, the better you and your group will become at it and the more positive the public will feel about home education.

Chapter 6 – Co-ops

Homeschool co-ops are a viable choice for homeschoolers. They can provide immense support, as well as hold many group activities. However, be cautioned; it may not be the best option for you.

6.1 Co-op Cautions

Public School vs. Homeschool

Dr. Brian Ray, president and founder of National Home Educators Research Institute (NHERI), emphasized that the school model is doomed to fail. Don't copy it.

When presented with the question, to co-op or not to co-op, Dr. Ray quickly clarified that he saw

a place for co-ops in the lives of Christian homeschoolers. He mentioned many of the reasons that make homeschooling successful:

- Small classrooms
- Protected environment
- Customized curriculum
- Lack of distractions
- Sensitivity to life opportunities
- Teachable moments
- Individualized attention
- Small student to teacher ratio, combined with the added advantage that the teacher loves and really knows each child.

However, continued Dr. Ray, when you set up a co-op and one-by-one pull out the elements that make homeschooling successful, you may end up with the very product that you fled from.

Motivation

Before choosing to co-op, parents should carefully consider their motivations and desires. Avoid those that have vain or humanistic motives.

- Are you starting a co-op because there are no others in the area?
- Are you reverting to the school model of teaching, because that is what is familiar to most of us?
- Are you bending to homeschool peer pressure?
- Do you want social experiences for your children, or are you primarily looking for some assistance with difficult classes?

Pray about this decision. You should also carefully consider what you expect to gain from the co-op experience. Unmet expectations are the number one complaint of co-op members. Many homeschool parents like the idea of someone else taking the responsibility of a difficult subject, yet they are not always willing to surrender control and accept that someone else may teach a little differently than they would.

Socialization

Many parents join co-ops to provide their children with social opportunities. While parents and children alike can build positive friendships in a co-op, negative socialization still exists, even among like-minded families.

You should also carefully and prayerfully consider the ages of your children and the effects of socialization. While all children must face society at some point, are you prepared to discuss the issues that might arise with your children and are they old enough and mature enough to handle the peer pressure?

Counting the Cost

Depending on the co-op, you will be required to invest time or money (or both).

Co-ops that require all parents to participate require a certain time commitment. Are you willing to meet that commitment? You must be willing to give up a little of the flexibility that makes homeschooling so attractive to some families.

Almost all co-ops have some fee, whether it is just enough to cover building costs and supplies, or a fee for hired teachers. Consider the cost and whether it is an affordable option for your family.

6.2 Are Co-ops a Viable Choice for Christian Homeschool Families?

THSC believes that it is, and has always been, the responsibility of parents to make wise and informed decisions concerning the best way to educate their children. In the state of Texas, our state legislature gives the parents the right to use anything and anyone to help them accomplish this goal while remaining in compliance with state law.

Participating in a co-op with other families is a legal option for homeschooling families. Knowing that it is legal, the Christian parents must decide if they feel that they would have the liberty in Christ to participate in a co-op and if the Bible has anything to say on this issue. We believe it does, and feel that there is scriptural support for those wishing to proceed down that path.

Parents are called by God – “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.” (Deuteronomy 6:7) Parents are specifically instructed by God to teach their children.

Parents are equipped by God – “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 1:6) You have been thoroughly furnished by God with every skill that you will need to accomplish what God has called you to do. BUT, just because you CAN do it all by yourself, does not mean that it is God’s will for you to do everything on your own. That is a humanistic worldview. Seek the Lord and His continual leading. Do not depend on your own strength.

God’s provision for His plan – God will not command you to do something that He is not going to provide for. Don’t lock the Lord in a box. He may send someone else to teach that complicated subject that He is impressing on you to provide for your children.

God’s example through scripture – “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2) Our example is that God trusted faithful men with a good witness to teach. Our most convincing example is the fact that we would all agree that if someone could write a book all by himself, surely God could, yet He chose to use some forty-plus men to pen this eternal classic. Again, the example is that we have a choice, even if we have the ability to do great things on our own.

Co-op Philosophy – “Give *instruction* to a wise *man*, and he will be still wiser; Teach a just *man*, and he will increase in learning. The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One *is* understanding.” (Proverbs 9:9-10)
It is clear that God approves teaching and learning between people, not necessarily in the same family. The formula for successful learning is putting prominence to good clear Christian teaching.

Co-op Purpose – “These things command and teach. Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.” (1 Timothy 4:11-13) In this scripture, we have an active participation of study, one that includes teaching, showing examples to others, command of language, public speaking, loving pure interactions with others, with specific direction to focus on reading, teaching others and instruction in developing a Christian Worldview.

Co-op Vision – “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” (Proverbs 22:6) We are to be busy teaching and training children to have an impact on the world for Christ—they are our future leaders. We need to use whatever we can to accomplish this command.

Co-op Quality – “Caught vs. Taught” is a very common idea that many homeschool families may rely on a little too much. “Caught vs. Taught” It is a fact that more learning is caught rather than taught, but for subjects that require in-depth study, “taught” is the better choice. Parents may want to choose to have certain subjects taught by a Christian whom they trust. Their child’s educational training will definitely suffer if they are depending on that information being “caught.”

The primary purpose for starting a co-op should be to provide additional options for parents as they continue to seek the Lord for His provision for their children’s education. It should also give an opportunity for members of the body of Christ to make their gifts and talents available to others.

A co-op should never be designed to undermine the authority or confidence of parents in any way. Participating in a good co-op can be a tremendous blessing to the families involved. The co-op experience should be encouraging to one another through Christian fellowship while learning in a protected environment that is designed to honor the Lord.

6.3 Models and Types of Co-ops

The following three co-op models are the most common among homeschooling organizations. Typically made up of families with common standards and goals, these co-ops usually offer menu-style classes. There are several types of co-ops within each of these models.

Academic or Service Model Co-op – This co-op is designed as a service for homeschooling families in the area. It is organized primarily to meet the needs of older students, with classes like chemistry, calculus, physics, public speaking, drama, foreign language, etc. However, it is best if a variety of classes are offered for all ages so that younger children are occupied while older siblings are in class.

This type of co-op usually meets once a week. A paid co-op director is often needed to orchestrate schedules and handle general operations. There are several ways this type of co-op may be funded. Some options include:

- Parents pay a registration fee that covers the facility, paid staff and expenses
- Parents pay a basic family fee to cover facility costs and also pay the instructors of the classes that they choose for their children
- The facility is available without a fee. Classes are free, and teachers are unpaid parents who are chosen for their skill.

Some of the types of co-ops that fall within this model are:

- **Educational Theme or Subject Co-op** – Usually these co-ops have a common theme or focus. Examples might be scientific studies, like entomology or Bible Science. Others may be focused on history. Parents sometimes divide the research projects and select a rotating teaching schedule.
- **Curriculum Co-op** – Participants must be pursuing the same curriculum and committed to keeping up with a predetermined pace. Parents are not paid, and they share in the division of the lesson preparation, projects and field trips. Examples may include classical curriculum or KONOS unit studies.
- **Mentor Co-op** – This co-op is designed to make use of retired professionals, teachers and other parents and adults in the business industry. They volunteer their time to teach once a week in the area of their expertise. They usually like to divert from the usual curriculum and thereby make for a very effective day of instruction. The co-op director (usually a parent) screens the instructors, and parents are required to attend with their children if possible.

Enrichment or Relationship Model Co-op – This co-op is designed to build a strong homeschool community. Families will need to be like-minded, because all classes and duties are shared by parents. By including parents as volunteer teachers and helpers and establishing a range of ages in the classes, the children come together in a community, rather than in the isolated peer group of a traditional classroom. The children enjoy same-age friendships as well as friendships with children and adults who are years younger or older.

Parents can barter with fees. This is best set up in a facility that is free of charge, such as a church or community center. Like the academic co-op, there are several types of co-ops that fall within this model:

- **Both Educational Theme or Subject Co-ops and Curriculum Co-ops** – Can also be

included in the enrichment model co-op, depending on how they are used. Enrichment co-ops expect that the parents will teach the core elements of the class (at home) and that the co-op will provide the hands-on projects to enrich or enhance the student's studies.

- **Time-out Co-op** – These co-ops usually have a common association, family, neighborhood, church or friend group and function more like a moms' day out. The parents select a regular day to trade off teaching and supervising the children. While one parent takes his or her turn with the kids, the others have a time-out, much like the mothers'-day-out program for small children. In this co-op, the children bring their own assignments with them, along with a written schedule from their mothers. All children work on their own projects. The parent in charge is not paid, because this is handled like time bartering.
- **Church Co-op** – This co-op is usually limited to members of the hosting church. Projects may focus on outreach projects, regular ministry or missions. Academics are usually not part of this type of co-op. Project fees are covered by parents. Facility fees are covered by the church as an outreach.

6.4 Forms for Co-ops

Groups and co-ops might utilize various types of forms. [View samples in this guide.](#)

- Co-op Teacher Assistant Application
- Child Protection Policies (see [Leader Resources](#) for child protection training to use in your group)
- Liability Release Form

6.5 Should a Co-op be Licensed for Child Care?

THSC has had this issue arise several times. Many co-ops should be exempt from state licensing of child care under the following statutes for educational programs:

[TAC Section 745.119\(5\)](#)

(5) Private Educational Facility, Including an Educational Facility that is Religious in Nature

(A) The educational facility offers an educational program;

(B) If the educational facility is located in a county that has a population of less than 25,000, all children in the program are at least four-years old; or if the educational facility is located in a county that has a population of 25,000 or more, all children in the program are at least kindergarten age;

(C) No more than two hours total of child day care is provided before or after the customary school day in the community; and

(D) It operates one or more of the following:

(i) Preschool or kindergarten through at least grade three;

(ii) Grades 9 through 12; or

(iii) The same pattern of public school grade clustering as the local school district elementary grades (1 through 6)."

[HRC Section 42.041\(b\)\(11\)](#)

11) "subject to Subsection (b-1), an educational facility that is integral to and inseparable from its sponsoring religious organization or an educational facility both of which do not provide custodial care for more than two hours maximum per day, and that offers educational programs for children age four and above in one or more of the following: preschool, kindergarten through at least grade three, elementary, or secondary grades;"

Based on criteria specified in [TAC 745.119\(5\)](#), a co-op or homeschool group might be exempt from state regulation by the Department of Family and Protective Services. Co-ops and homeschool groups are not automatically exempt, and if they do not meet criteria for exemption, they must be licensed. THSC has no authority to determine if a co-op or homeschool group meets the criteria for exemption. Furthermore, we cannot assist any group in meeting that criteria. THSC neither encourages nor condones efforts to avoid regulation.

6.6 Co-op Policies and Contracts

At THSC, we feel that leaders and groups can greatly benefit from the advice and experience of others. We also feel that by providing groups with sample documents from other groups, we can prevent the need for others to "reinvent the wheel."

Homeschool organizations are run by fallible people, and governing documents and written agreements can help prevent conflict and confusion. Whether your co-op is just beginning or has been in service for years, these sample documents may be just the thing to get your co-op off to a great start or the answer to a perplexing issue.

Samples of governing documents, such as bylaws, constitutions and statements of faith, are contained in this guide. You can also find samples online or contact THSC at leaders@thsc.org, for more ideas. See samples to follow.

6.7 Co-op Student/Parent Covenant (sourced from FEAST)

CO-OP STUDENT/PARENT COVENANT YEAR ___/___

I, _____ and my parents, _____ understand that I desire to attend classes with the FEAST Co-op under the terms of this covenant.

I, _____ along with my parents, _____ will display a Christ-like attitude and manners in all my interactions with students, teachers, Co-op staff members and devotion volunteers. I will not at any time speak disrespectfully or unkind about FEAST as an organization or its standards.

Specifically, I, _____ will immediately follow-through with the request of a teacher and complete tasks in a timely manner without causing a distraction or problem.

I, _____ will focus my attention on academics and complete all class and homework assignments to the best of my abilities without hesitation or redirection.

I, _____ will follow the FEAST Co-op Guidelines and Rules at all times. I understand that a breach of this covenant will result in the submission of an Incident Report that will be reviewed by the FEAST Co-op Staff or by the FEAST Incident Committee.

I, _____ will comply with the FEAST Co-op Guidelines for Dress Code and will encourage those around me to do the same.

I, _____ desire that FEAST provide a Christian learning environment that is in keeping with the mission and educational goals of the organization.

The parents of _____ agree to support and work of the FEAST Co-op as partners in this educational co-op process by participating and helping with special co-op events and fundraisers.

The Parents of _____ agree to pay all teachers on the designated day and understand that I will pay a late fee after that date.

The parents of _____ agree that it is the responsibility of the homeschooling parent to verify that their child is homeschooling in a bona fide manner and fulfils the duties of this covenant.

In the event that any of the covenant terms are broken, _____ will not be allowed to continue participation in the FEAST Co-op, however, the parents are financially responsible for payment of all contracted class fees for the entire school year regardless of circumstances that may prohibit their child's attendance.

Student Signature	Email	Date
Parent Signature	Email	Date
Office Phone (include extension)	Home Phone	Cell Phone

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” II Timothy 2:15

RP Documents, Co-op, co-op student covenant 6/18/09

6.8 Child Protection Policies for Co-ops

THSC Child Protection Training is offered as a benefit to [THSC Partner Groups](#). This one-of-a-kind training program meets standard state requirements for all of your teachers, assistants and coaches. THSC Partner Group leaders, use your [Leader Resource login](#) information to access this benefit.

Suggestions for Staff and Volunteers Who Work With Children and Youth

The following guidelines are provided to create an awareness of vulnerability to civil and criminal liability as well as to instill the need to protect children:

DO

- Meet in public places when meeting with minors
- Always have another adult present when counseling minors
- Advise other staff members of activities away from the group regarding where, when and with whom you meet
- Always have two adults taking younger children to the bathroom
- Keep physical contact public and minimal; simple “hello” hugs are permissible, for example
- Always have a minimum of two unrelated adults on field trips, especially overnight trips
- Keep groups together, perhaps using a buddy system
- Be willing to be cheerfully accountable to parents and staff members.

DON'T

- Meet one-on-one with minors behind closed doors
- Have secret meetings with minors

- Meet alone with minors, especially of the opposite gender
- Check a minor for injuries under clothing without another adult present except in serious emergencies
- Exchange kisses with children or youth
- Allow older children to take younger children to the bathroom alone
- Transport a child or youth alone except for real emergencies.

Chapter 7 – Field Trips

7.1 Why Field Trips are Important

Homeschooling parents have the opportunity to provide the very best educational experience for their children through the use of field trips.

Field trips are a unique way to provide a learning experience for every child, no matter what his or her learning style might be. There can be a variety of learning styles in one family. One child may be a hands-on, kinesthetic learner; another may be a visual learner; and yet another may be an auditory learner. Some children may have a creative or artistic bent, and there may even be a child or two with special needs.

Adding a fun and exciting field trip that includes hearing, seeing, touching, talking, doing and experiencing real life may be just the thing you need to keep learning exciting. No matter what the educational needs of your children, the multi-sensory experience of a field trip will usually yield a profitable learning experience.

7.2 Making the Most of Your Field Trip

Plan Ahead

Ensure that the field trip becomes a vital part of your child's learning experiences instead of a disappointing distraction to your school day. Request study packets from potential field trip offices. Take time to look at a map, research some history, watch a movie, read a book or peruse a brochure about your field trip to wet your child's appetite for this very special time.

Coordinate With Studies

Scheduling field trips to enrich the subjects that your children are studying can reinforce the principles outlined in their curriculum. A visit to a farm can be a real-life example of sowing and reaping. Seeing people working together in a factory may emphasize the importance of working together as a team. A trip to the zoo may encourage a love for animals and the importance of caring for them.

A field trip can also be used to reinforce the areas where children have weaknesses. If your child is having trouble understanding our planet or universe, take a field trip to the planetarium. Young adults who are struggling to understand the branches of government will benefit from a civics field trip; set one up with a local politician, or visit the state capital. Focus on the needed area of study by intentionally scheduling a field trip that meets your child's specific academic needs.

Inspire Diligence

Field trips can be used to encourage your children to strive for a higher level of achievement. Visiting a museum and reading about a great hero who came from a humble past, yet persevered to make a difference in our world, may inspire your child to reach for a higher goal.

Through field trips that explain great accomplishments in science, literature, medicine or maybe industry, your children gain a great appreciation for those who have contributed to making our lives better or our work easier and more efficient. Your child will gain an understanding of what great things can be accomplished by mankind.

Christian families will want to point out specific indications of God's leadership in a famous person's life, such as the testimony of George Washington Carver or any one of the godly quotes by Sergeant York. This exercise may start their creative juices flowing; you may be raising tomorrow's next great scientist or inventor!

Expand Horizons

Scheduling field trips to art expos, museums or guild meetings can increase your child's cultural literacy. Exposing your children to a wide variety of arts through field trips will expand their frame of cultural reference as well as equip them to understand the variety of gifts and talents that God provides to each of us.

Field trips such as these can provide an opportunity for parents to observe their children's responses during field trip demonstrations. Parents can then start to draw out the creativity within their children by allowing them to express themselves through hands-on experimentation with the arts that they have observed.

Hands-on Experience

Take the time to incorporate a wide variety of activities into every field trip experience. If the tour has a film, watch it. Read every sign. If there are ranger lectures at the site, make sure your schedule incorporates time to enjoy them. If there is an interactive section for children, take the whole family through it. Touching, trying, smelling, etc. will increase your child's learning experience.

Socialization

Homeschoolers are often accused of sheltering their children from the world. Field trips are a

good way to expose your children to the world and increase their social skills.

Take a few minutes before a field trip to review the behavior guidelines that you have taught your children at home. Simple things such as standing in line, waiting your turn for something, or raising their hand when they would like to ask a question are skills that must be implemented on a field trip with a group.

Also, proper etiquette such as boys opening doors for the women in the group, younger children staying with their mother, and that as a group we respect others by not crowding, shoving or walking too closely to one another are things that need to be remembered.

Young ladies can exercise selflessness by extending a hand to help a young mother with several small children while on a tour. Seeing your children in action on a field trip can reveal what a parent needs to cover at the dinner table or during school time tomorrow.

Remember to Follow Up

Field trips provide a great time to communicate with your children on a tutorial level. Asking questions about what the child has seen, read, touched, etc. can be a comprehensive exercise that will grow with each subsequent field trip. Eventually the child will subconsciously listen and observe more intently if he or she knows that the parent will probably discuss the field trip information later.

Parents with children who have special needs such as ADD can increase the value of the field trip information by encouraging their child to tell back their experience. Parents can remind children of things that they may have forgotten, thereby supplementing the gaps in their observations. Even small children can exercise their recall skills by drawing a picture of what they saw or experienced.

As a homeschool parent, you choose the right experiences and the right time for your own children to learn about the world. Homeschool children are the leaders of tomorrow; prepare them well for the honor and glory of the Lord. After all, isn't that just one more reason why we homeschool?

7.3 Planning Your Field Trip

Planning a group field trip doesn't have to be a daunting task. "Many hands make light work." Delegating the many responsibilities involved will make for a much easier workload for everyone.

Temporary Field Trip Coordinator

If possible, your homeschool group should select a temporary field trip coordinator to begin the process of building a solid plan for field trips for the year. The goal of the temporary field trip

coordinator is to train and select the volunteers to coordinate and organize the many details associated with group field trips.

Temporary Field Trip Coordinator Responsibilities:

- Design a field trip survey, then print, distribute and compile results
- Set an agenda time at the next group meeting to address field trip issues
- Conduct interviews for a permanent field trip coordinator
- Present candidates for vote at the group meeting or introduce the permanent field trip coordinator that the group officers have selected
- Assist the permanent field trip coordinator until all major details have been handled.

The Survey

Begin the process with a field trip survey. The survey will be given to each member of your group and can be as long or as detailed as needed. Include space for:

- Basic contact info
- Field trip suggestions
 - With locations, drive times, etc.
 - With probable interest groups (teens, young children, girls, boys, etc.)
- Desired standards for behaviour and dress code
- Soliciting assistance from parents

You will want to include space for the members to list three to four field trips that they think would be fun, educational and would fit the dynamics of your specific group. Include space for field trip locations (in town/driving distance), and some indication as to whether this is a family field trip or one that would be geared to a specific gender, age, or interest group.

Include questions on desired standards of conduct or dress code guideline suggestions. This is also a good place to solicit your field trip leader with a few simple questions such as, "Would you be willing to organize all or even one of our field trips this school year?"

The temporary field trip coordinator should then organize and compile the information from the group surveys. This can be done loosely or electronically depending on the ability of the coordinator. A report with the survey findings should be submitted to the group's board for review.

Time

Agenda time should be scheduled to address issues or answer questions about field trips and to present candidates for a vote or introduce the new field trip coordinator who has been selected.

Also, at this meeting a sign-up sheet should be provided for all of those who are interested in assisting the field trip coordinator with the many details required in organizing and facilitating field trips.

This position can be manned by one person for a specific length of time, such as a semester or calendar school year, or by several people who each volunteer to organize one of the many field trips for your group. Report your recommendations for permanent field trip coordinator for final selection by the board or for a vote at the next group meeting.

Field Trip Coordinator Search

The temporary field trip coordinator should discuss potential candidates for the position of permanent field trip coordinator with your group's board members, revealing any particular leadership qualities in members he or she has observed during the survey process.

Next, the temporary field trip coordinator can compile a list of individuals to be interviewed, call and conduct informal interviews with potential candidates, and report findings to the board.

Transfer of Responsibility

The temporary field trip coordinator should train or help transition the permanent field trip coordinator. This can be as simple as being available by phone or can be ongoing by serving as an assistant when needed.

Permanent Field Trip Coordinator Responsibilities:

- Select a field trip committee
- Host a planning meeting for field trips and guidelines
- Compile a suggested field trip calendar and field trip guidelines on behavioral standards and dress codes
- Present calendar and guidelines to the group board for approval.

Field Trip Committee

The field trip coordinator should select two or three people to work on details of the group's field trips for the year. These can be taken from the names given on the sign-up sheet from the last meeting, or they can be hand-selected by the field trip coordinator, with permission from the group's board. This threefold cord principle will ensure that none of the details for a successful field trip will go unhandled.

Field Trip Planning Meeting

The field trip coordinator should host a planning meeting for your group. The meeting should include the development of behavior and dress standards to be followed during all group field trips, rough draft lists of the best times specific field trips can be planned, how many field trips are to be planned for the year, whether there will be separate field trips for teens (or whether all of the field trips will be family-oriented), and any specific challenges or decisions that need to be made.

The committee will present all this information to the group for approval. If approved, each family attending agrees to the field trip format as well as agrees to abide by the adopted behavior and dress standards during field trip participation.

[Sample Field Trip Behavioral Guidelines](#)

The committee should set up separate files by title of each field trip. Any information previously gathered should be placed in these files. A “needs list” should also be compiled for each field trip, e.g., who will collect the fees, who will handle RSVPs, etc.

The committee may want to design a field trip host form to be used for each event. A space for members to sign their name as coordinator should appear at the top of the form just under the title of the field trip.

Presentation of the Field Trip Host Forms, Calendar, and Behavioral and Dress Standards

The field trip committee will prepare the host forms, calendar, and behavioral and dress standards for the next group meeting.

An individual field trip host form should be made for each field trip selected for the year. At the meeting, they should be placed on a table so the members can select the field trip of their choice to host.

The field trip coordinator should announce that if no one steps up to organize and host any particular field trip within two months of it being presented, that field trip will be dropped from the schedule.

If desired, the coordinator may want to open the floor for alternative field trip suggestions. Suggestions should only be taken from those who are willing to host their own suggestion. After two or three suggestions have been taken, a simple show of hands could indicate which field trips would be well-attended. A field trip form should be prepared for the new event.

Compile a Suggested Field Trip Calendar

Once the committee has a well-thought-through selection of field trips, a field trip calendar should be composed.

Give special considerations to major city-wide events as well as other annual homeschool-related events such as book fairs, speech tournaments and sports tournaments. Major holidays and potential travel during spring and summer breaks should also be considered. Avoid planning activities that will conflict with traditional worship times such as on Sundays and also Wednesday evening church services.

A completed calendar should be submitted to the group for approval and each member (or member family) should receive a copy of the guidelines and field trip calendar.

Hosting a Field Trip

Hosting a field trip for your group begins with a phone call to the field trip coordinator or the

designated committee member. Any specific details that have already been gathered for that event should be copied and placed in the event field trip file and turned over to the host. As the host gathers new details, those should be added to the file for future reference.

Information Needed for Hosting a Field Trip

- Name of the business or attraction
- Desired date and time of the field trip
- Contact names and numbers
- Who should attend (family, specific ages, boys or girls only, etc.)
- Required number of adult supervisors
- Maximum and minimum number of attendees to qualify for discounts
- Admission fee(s)
- Deadline to book event or field trip
- Location, driving directions and parking instructions
- Family sign-up sheet for participants
- Report to be given at the group meeting with any specific field trip details or needs, such as items to bring (pen and paper for notes, bag lunch for picnic, money for concessions and gift shop, etc.), dress code restrictions, shoe restrictions, no cameras allowed, etc.
- Host of the event.

Field Trip Sign-up Sheet

The host for each event should prepare a family sign-up sheet for the group meeting two months prior to the field trip (earlier if reservation deadlines are required by the business or attraction that you will be attending). The sheet should include the name of each person attending, their phone number and a space to check off “paid fee,” if fees must be collected in advance.

Sign-up should be first-come, first-served until all spaces are filled. Additional names should be kept on a waiting list to replace those who may drop off your list due to emergencies or last minute schedule changes. Refunds should not be given. Unused funds should be deposited to the group account by the treasurer.

Responsibilities of Host

- Booking the event
- Coordinating travel arrangements (carpooling, personal vehicles, etc.)
- Ensuring schedule adherence
- Prearranging meal plans (food court, picnic area, etc.)
- Appointing parents as spotters for the group
- Appointing one parent to take pictures of the event
 - These photos can be shared with the group either free of charge or for a fee. Two or three selected photos should be given to the host to place in the field trip file as an archive. Some photos may also be posted to the group website to promote events.

- Writing a short review of the field trip for the group's newsletter
- Sending a thank you note to the contact person at the business or attraction toured
- Compiling details, suggestions or any problems encountered and placing them in the field trip file for future reference.
 - The file and its contents should be returned to the field trip coordinator at the next scheduled group meeting.

Destination Suggestions

There are many resources available to help find a good field trip destination. The internet is an excellent tool in your search. The great state of Texas has resources that every homeschooling family should have:

- The Texas Travel Guide is available at your local visitor center and is a wealth of information on most cities in Texas.
- Texas Parks and Wildlife is a tremendously useful resource for trips and their online publications are often free. Take some time to explore their websites!
- Texas Events Calendar; call 800-452-9292 to receive a print copy.

Other resources include local businesses and restaurants, factory tours, agricultural operations and specialty crafting groups like embroiderers, potters and the like. The [Field Trip Factory](#) may have a trip to suit your needs as well.

7.4 Field Trip Forms

Groups may want to have field trip forms including:

- Field Trip Permission Form
- Policy for Field Trips and Social Functions

Sample Field Trip Behavioral Guidelines

Guidelines Sample 1

Field Trip Rules

As members of _____, we are planning a number of field trips throughout this year for current members only. In order to have them done in an orderly fashion and to bring glory to our Lord, we have set up some rules. Please do not have your children participate in these field trips if you and they do not agree with each stipulation set forth below.

1. Please arrive 15 minutes early, unless otherwise stated.
2. Students should always be responsive, obedient and respectful.
3. Every parent must attend the field trip with their children and be responsible for their own

children. If there is a good reason why you cannot attend, please contact another parent who will agree to be responsible for your children. The name of the other parent should be given to the committee member in charge of that field trip. Do not just "drop off" children at the field trip.

4. Touch exhibits only when permitted. Pet or feed animals only when permitted.
5. Students should raise their hand if asking a question in a group. There should not be excessive noise. Please have your children give their attention to the speaker. This person is giving their time and resources for us.
6. There should be self-discipline practiced by each student participating. If a child continues to be disruptive, it should be brought to the attention of the parent in charge in an appropriate manner. Only one warning will be given to the child and parent. If the child disrupts again, during the same field trip or another field trip during the same semester, the child will lose the privilege of going on another field trip that semester.
7. Parents: Please stay with your children. Avoid the temptation to hang back and visit with others during the tour or presentation. Arrange with another adult to watch your child for a minute if you must attend to the needs of another child. Enjoy the educational opportunity and time with your children by participating actively in what is going on.
8. Clothing for the outing should be clean, neat and appropriate for the outing. Proper attire at each field trip will ensure safety as well as our homeschooling influence.
9. Everyone should wear a nametag. Have your children design a tag for all of your family members so that they can be worn on each field trip.
10. The host of the field trip is responsible for writing an official thank you note on behalf of the group. Children, however, are encouraged to write individual thank you notes to each of the places they visit. The name and address will be given to you at some point during the field trip if you wish to write individual thank you notes. If the information is not available on the trip, please call the committee member to obtain such.
11. **When you decide to attend a certain field trip, make sure that you RSVP to the field trip host listed with all of the information requested by the deadline date.**

***If you need to cancel after you have RSVP'd, please call the field trip host at least 24 hours before the field trip so that someone on the waiting list can take your place. In some cases children wake up sick or get sick; if this happens, please call the field trip host immediately so others on the waiting list can attend.

***Anyone who misses a field trip for which they have previously signed up for without calling to cancel will be excluded from field trips for three months following the "no-show" date.

***Each field trip has a starting time. If you are late, whether the field trip has started or not, it will have the same consequences as a "no-show"—exclusion from field trips for 3 months from the late arrival date.

If you attend any field trip, it shows that you agree with the rules listed previously. Please plan for you and your children to abide by these rules.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Guidelines Sample 2

Guidelines for Field Trips and/or Social Functions

We have a wonderful, friendly homeschool group that loves each other and loves the Lord. We represent Christ and in so doing, we must always strive to teach our children to behave in a manner that honors the Lord. Our reputation as Home Educators and as Christians is very important. With this in mind the following guidelines for all _____ social functions have been adopted by the _____ leadership.

1. When attending field trips please make sure that your children are dressed appropriately for the event. On all occasions, however, please make sure that parents and children are dressed in a modest, conservative and neat manner. The following are considered examples of inappropriate attire:
 - Short shorts or skirts
 - Halter tops or bare midriff
 - Low-cut necklines
 - Fish-net or see-through clothing
 - Obscene or otherwise distasteful logos
2. Since field trips take much effort to schedule and plan, it is very important that everyone be on time for all events.
3. Anytime there is a speaker at a field trip, the children are to be quiet and attentive. Parents, please save fellowship with each other for afterwards—don't miss teachable moments with your children.
4. Children may not run inside any buildings or make noise disturbing to others. This rule applies to our meetings and all group activities.
5. Children should show respect for property, for all adults and for each other. Every child must attend with an adult to whom he or she is accountable.
6. On field trips, all family units and anyone who has come with that family should stay together.
7. If you sign up to attend a field trip and find that you are unable to attend, please call the field trip host to cancel.
8. Any parent may verbally correct and guide a child who is not complying with these guidelines—provided the child's parent is not nearby. Please speak to the parent first before correcting the child, if he or she is nearby. Parents should report repeat offenders to the host of the field trip, who will then:
 - Call the parents to discuss the problem behavior. The parents are expected to correct the behavior at this point.
 - If the problem behavior continues, a letter detailing the behavior will be sent by the host to the parents, with a copy to be sent to the board of directors.

- If the problem continues to persist, the child will be excluded from participating from _____ field trips until a conference has been conducted to resolve the issue.

***Please keep these guidelines on file for future reference.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Chapter 8 – Teens and the Homeschool Group

Need some inspiration on how your group can continue to serve those older students and their families, or perhaps just some practical ideas on conducting teen activities or planning a graduation? Here are some practical tips and sample forms for teen activities.

8.1 Meeting the Needs of High School Students

How many high school students are involved in activities with your local homeschool group?
How often is there an activity offered by your group which is geared to them specifically?

Consider This First

If you are currently part of a homeschool group made up primarily of toddlers and elementary-age students, pray about whether or not your group should try to build a program that offers activities geared to older students, as turning your support group into a community that ministers to older students can be fraught with problems. This needs to be discussed openly among the entire support group.

When children are younger, it is easy to determine the guidelines for activities because you are usually in a group of like-minded people. You are all likely to agree that field trips to the museum, holiday parties and park days are good activities for your family to participate in.

However, as children mature, you will find that topics of conversation will change. Once, you were discussing which phonics program is best and how to homeschool with toddlers underfoot. Suddenly, your children reach the pre-teen years, and you are discussing subjects like courtship vs. dating, college vs. apprenticeship and many more issues that you never considered before. As you can imagine, the opportunity for disagreement increases significantly.

All the families are trying to raise godly children but may disagree on the methods by which this is best accomplished. So without consensus on the methods for setting guidelines for the teenager activities, your group could end up in conflict.

Two Possible Methods for Developing Group Guidelines

There are two ways to help reduce potential conflict should your homeschool group decide to

offer activities for the older students. As with any suggestions, these are certainly not foolproof, and could never remove all potential for conflict.

Method #1

One method for setting up a high school program is to have guidelines for all activities clearly defined from the beginning. The homeschool group leaders are responsible for determining the guidelines for the group, and such guidelines may be changed only by the group leaders. The leaders may choose to outline a code of conduct including things like dress code and rules of behavior. The group leaders also determine what type of activities can and cannot be offered to the group at large.

The guidelines are usually written down and communicated to the group through some sort of handbook. This method provides clear definition to the group and may work well for larger homeschool groups.

Method #2

Another way of determining the operating guidelines for a high school program is setting the guidelines for each activity individually. While the homeschool group has bylaws that outline the group's purpose and intent, the board of directors is not responsible for providing activities for the group nor for setting up rules of conduct and behavior for the group at large. Instead, any family within the support group may offer an activity or program to the rest of the group. This family then sets all the rules and behavior guidelines for that specific event.

This means that certain rules and guidelines may apply for one event but not another. For example, one family may offer a field trip to the city government offices and feel that it would be appropriate for the young ladies to wear dresses and the young men to wear ties. Another family may offer a field trip to the zoo and not feel that it is necessary to set a dress code for such an event.

By having the sponsoring families set the guidelines for all events and programs, it allows for flexibility within the group. It also provides a wide variety of activities for families from which to pick and choose. This method can work well for smaller groups but can be frustrating to those families who want specific and unchanging guidelines.

Regardless of whether you decide to follow method #1 or #2, or even create a new method, make sure that your philosophy is communicated to the entire group. You need to decide up front whether the group leaders or individual families will determine the types of activities that will be offered and who will determine the guidelines and code of conduct for activities and events.

Activities

You should not set up a totally separate group from your current homeschool group because the older students and their parents could become too disconnected from the families with younger

children. Those mothers with younger children need to have access to the mothers with years of homeschooling experience under their belts. Also, many families have children ranging in age from infant through high school, and it would not be practical for them to belong to two separate groups.

With that in mind, here are some ideas for teen activities for your group:

- PSAT/SAT/ACT prep classes
- Volunteer work at a nursing home, crisis pregnancy center or soup kitchen
- Drama class
- Creative writing class
- Running a newspaper or newsletter (can be very useful to your homeschool group)
- Game night
- Devotional/Bible study night
- Fundraising (for either your group or a charitable cause)
- Formal dinner or dance
- Field trip to a local activity (movies, escape room, lake, etc.)
- Field trip to a museum more appropriate for older students (for example, the Holocaust Museum)

Start Small

These are only a few of the ways that your group can offer activities for the older students. The possibilities are limited only by your imagination and by the amount of time you are willing to commit to the group.

Keep in mind that it can take years to develop a full-scale program of classes and activities for high school students. Do not let the size of the task overwhelm you. Start small—offer a weekly Bible study or some other activity that meets on a weekly basis. You also might want to offer at least one special monthly or yearly event.

Once the word gets out that you are offering even one regularly scheduled activity for homeschooled junior high or high school students, it won't be long before your group can be sponsoring a variety of activities geared to meet the needs of high school students.

8.2 Planning a Graduation

Do you have high school seniors in your group planning to graduate this spring? Many families honor their graduates with individual graduation ceremonies. These can be very beautiful and touching, but perhaps you have a group of students who have enjoyed participating in homeschool activities together for a while and would like to share a graduation ceremony. If so, now is the time to start preparing.

Before getting the information out, your group will need to determine whether the ceremony will be for members only, or if they will open it up to anyone. For example, some local homeschool

groups, after having to deal with this issue, determine that the family must be a member of the group and that the student must have been homeschooled for at least one full school year.

The first step is to submit an announcement of graduation plans at your group's next meeting. Then get a ballpark figure of how many graduates will participate. Some of your other decisions will be determined by how many will be sharing in the cost. Even if you decide to adopt a one-price-fits-all policy, it is good stewardship to have a plan. **Set a payment deadline as soon as you settle on the graduation date.**

Next, announce a graduation planning meeting. Start your list of graduates, parents, contact information and any deposits or payments toward the cost. Have this ready before the first meeting, and have copies available to all participants. This is just the beginning; additions can be made up until the sign-up deadline. At the first meeting determine who will be the "keeper of the purse" to be certain that everyone who will participate pays on time as agreed.

The following is a list of things to be considered:

- Facility
 - Number of graduates to share the stage
 - Potential number of attendees (seating capacity)
 - Reception area
 - Cost for use of facility, maintenance/cleaning
- Date and Time
 - Avoid conflicts with other group events
 - Avoid conflicts with major community events
 - Availability of potential facilities
 - Possibility of sharing speaker costs with another event
 - Schedule of the desired commencement speaker
- Speaker - Someone who will speak exhortation and encouragement to homeschool graduates
 - Availability during the desired time frame
 - Expenses – gratuity, lodging and travel
- Caps and Gowns – Either by vote or by executive decision (on colors), caps and gowns need to be secured. While the actual mortarboards and gowns can be reused, the tassels with the year of graduation will have to be purchased new each year.
 - Sizes
 - Color(s) should be decided early in the process
 - Purchase new or recycle from past years
 - From where to purchase—compare prices
- Things to print and where to have them printed
 - Diplomas
 - Parents provide diplomas for students
 - THSC members have an electronic diploma template as a [membership benefit](#)

- Invitations
 - Order as a group
 - Order individually
- Programs for ceremony—wording and choice of printer
- Pictures – Set a convenient time for grads to get together for a group picture. If desired, each family can take this opportunity to have individual photos made.
 - Locate photographer
 - Secure a location
 - Schedule a time
- Powerpoint presentations or Blessing presentations – Some groups have an annual audiovisual presentation in which each family is able to share photos, life verses, music and a blessing and exhortation for their graduating child. If the graduation is small enough, the parents or graduate might use a separate time for diploma presentations and speeches.
 - Plan order of ceremony—suggested order
 - Welcome and prayer
 - Speaker
 - PowerPoint presentations of graduates (Blessing presentation)
 - Diploma presentations
 - Closing prayer
 - Reception.

Once the date, time, location and speaker have been determined there are then other considerations. Some groups appoint committees to handle these decisions.

The following is a list of possible committees and their tasks:

- Commencement Committee
 - Commencement ceremony—order/procedures
 - Someone has to be in charge—tell grads when and how to walk
 - Diplomas ([free benefit](#) to THSC member families)
 - Seating plans for grads and families
 - Invocation/benediction
 - Music
 - Recording of ceremony
 - Video/PowerPoint (blessing) presentation
 - Pictures—schedule a due date
 - Scripting—schedule a recording time
- Public Relations Committee - Publicizing the event
 - Homeschool group website or newsletter
 - Press release for media outlets
 - Newspaper
 - Radio stations

- TV stations
- Reception Committee
 - Refreshments—graduates’ families or other homeschoolers
 - Cookies
 - Cake
 - Punch
 - Paper goods
 - Hosts/Hostesses
 - Juniors serve
 - Homeschool group adult volunteers
- Serving Tables
 - Number
 - Covers for tables
 - Decorations
 - Arrangement
- Graduates’ Tables
 - Furnished by facility, borrow or rent
 - Table covers—color, price
 - Personalized by the graduates—limited or free rein?
 - Arrangement
- Clean-up Crew
 - Grad families
 - Other volunteers

Just as every homeschool family is unique, every homeschool graduation is unique. Homeschool group leaders should be aware that each family may have a slightly different idea about what to include in a graduation ceremony. Leaders should ask families to list the things that they feel strongly about incorporating into the ceremony and the areas in which they would be willing to compromise. Any graduation ceremony involving more than one student will involve a certain amount of compromise.

Chapter 9 - Sports and the Homeschool Group

As homeschooling parents we are continually challenged to find ways to stretch the talents of our sons and daughters during different stages of their lives. As the teenage years approach, we are challenged to find non-academic outlets for their talents and interests. For many, that outlet is sports. Of course, the obvious question is: “How do we get involved with sports?”—especially when considering traditional team sports (basketball, soccer, volleyball, baseball, softball and football).

9.1 How to Get Started in Sports

Organizing Sports Within Your Group

First, set up a board. Without a doubt one of the most important steps is to gather a like-minded group of adults to provide the needed oversight, guidance and supervision.

Establish a written set of guidelines (the rules of the sport are already in place); your guidelines should focus on character and behavior. The vast majority of issues and concerns which will arise will NOT be related to playing the game, but rather what image is projected to others.

Set up a timeline with milestones. Nothing encourages progress better than a good old fashioned list with dates and responsibilities, and nothing defeats a sports program quicker than the failure to take this step. Anticipate needing at least six months of lead time before fielding a team.

Get coaches on board; no new program can survive without a committed coach or coaches to put a face to the program. Do not proceed without a coach!

Get help! No longer is it necessary for homeschoolers to try to reinvent the wheel when it comes to developing a sports program. There is plenty of help available and any group wishing to get started should take full advantage of those who have gone before them. THSC, among others (FEAST and BVCHEA for example) can put you in touch with several sources.

How to Get Players and Who to Play

The first step is to measure interest. Most often this can be accomplished with a camp or “pick-up” league. Find out who is interested, and that will determine how big or small a team you can have. You may even be able to have several teams, divided into separate age groups.

Limit your season schedule. Finding public or private schools to play against is not as difficult as it may seem. More important is trying not to over schedule your team the first couple of years. Do not make the mistake of assuming your program must start off with a full-blown season to be a success. Baby steps in the beginning are great for learning how to run a sports program and for not burning out players, parents and volunteers.

Build relationships with outside teams. If other homeschooled teams are not available, most private schools welcome the opportunity to play against a group of Christian homeschoolers. Public schools often will also be willing to let you help them fill out their schedule. There is currently no UIL rule violation against playing a homeschooled team.

Lists of teams and contacts can be obtained from several places online, including the Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools (TAPPS), Texas Christian Athletic Fellowship (TCAF), Texas Christian Athletic League (TCAL), the University Interscholastic League (UIL) and the YMCA.

Managing the Cost

Being able to estimate program costs is very important. Homeschool programs must be funded by the players or through sponsorships. A well-developed budget is essential. Determine what costs are covered by families (for example shoes, travel and meals), and which costs to include in the fees (field or gym rental, officials, players' uniforms and team equipment).

Many homeschool teams obtain local sponsorships to defer some of the team-related costs. Others organize fundraising activities (car washes, flower sales, etc.). Whatever you do use the funds generated to lower program fees. Do not anticipate raising funds and then have to raise your program fee later to cover a shortfall.

Chapter 10 – Serving New Homeschoolers

Decades ago there was little information and only a few books on homeschooling. Today, there is a tremendous number of choices that families have concerning curricula, homeschool co-ops, support groups and tutoring services—not to mention books and publications that address virtually every practical aspect of home education.

10.1 Why Share the Vision?

Numerous speakers and authors are veteran homeschoolers with years of experience who are eager to share their insights and opinions about the best methods and materials. However, as many families ask those homeschool veterans for information, the focus tends to be on the how-to.

Consequently, they very often fail to give prospective homeschool families a vision for teaching their children at home. They tell them how to get started and what the law requires, but they do not explain the incredible benefits that come with homeschooling—academic and otherwise. They talk to them about phonics, learning styles and curriculum choices but fail to explain the joy that comes with seeing our children become mature and spiritual men and women.

Failing to share a vision for homeschooling that goes beyond academics makes it easy to abandon the course. It is vital for the homeschool community to share a complete vision for homeschooling. As veterans and homeschool leaders, we must share a vision of home education that will inspire families to homeschool when things become difficult. We must be there to encourage and support them along the way.

10.2 Getting Started Orientation

Sample Presentation: Order of Discussion

Introduction:

1. Introduce host group and explain a little about your homeschool group and the group activities available
2. Explain group website or newsletter
3. Explain what your group offers:
 - Classes (academic, extracurricular)
 - Field trips
 - Clubs
 - Parties
 - Moms' night
 - Teen events
 - Prom
 - Graduation
4. Introduce families to the Texas Home School Coalition
 - Share the [7 Easy Steps to Begin](#) from THSC; slideshow is shown on page
5. Recommend membership with THSC
 - [Find member benefits, including our legal assistance and advocacy](#)
 - Share your group discount code (available on the [Leader Resources benefit page](#) for updated THSC Partner groups)
 - Need to update? [THSC.org/Register](#)
 - Share the membership form with families with this easy-to-remember link: [THSC.org/keepfamiliesfree](#)

Texas Laws:

1. [Texas requirements](#)
2. Review the rights of homeschoolers in Texas and explain the [THSC definition of a homeschooled student](#)
 - Families are responsible to oversee education, determine a child's progress, select curriculum and issue a child's transcript and diploma
 - Families can use other sources to teach (like groups, tutors, etc.), but those sources do not circumvent the role of overseeing the education
3. [Withdrawal information \(if family has not done so\)](#)
 - Ensure they understand the Texas Education Agency (TEA) policy is part of the THSC withdrawal letter and letter of assurance to help them know that the school district should not require them to appear in school, sign school forms, or submit curriculum for review, etc.
 - School can ask for assurances from family, which can require family to physically sign the letter and provide date of withdrawal/beginning homeschool, but does not require they make an appearance at school
 - [Review current TEA Commissioner's letter.](#)

Curriculum and Beginning Basics:

1. [Homeschool transcript requirements in Texas](#)
2. Various curriculum and teaching styles
 - [A Spectrum of Schooling Options](#)
 - [Learning Styles](#)
 - [8 Styles of Homeschooling](#)
3. [Where to obtain curriculum](#)
4. Follow the presentation with a question and answer session.

10.3 Hosting Getting-Started Workshops

Providing information to those who are researching the idea of educating their children at home is among the most important duties of a homeschool group. The best protection against loss of homeschool freedom is to ensure that those who adopt this lifestyle have the information and resources they need to be successful. Holding getting-started workshops will play an important part in helping these new homeschoolers (refer to section 10.2 for an outline of how your event might be organized).

When offering an informational meeting for those just getting started, remember that their two greatest needs are information and connection. Provide enough information to get them off to a good start without overloading them to the point of distraction. Provide information about not only activities for their children but also activities and support opportunities for the homeschool teacher.

They will be more successful if they seek ongoing support, and your workshop may be your only chance to convey the importance of this fact.

Where should you hold these workshops?

Availability of free meeting places in your community will have a large bearing on your options. The public library is usually an excellent choice, as it is one of the first places people approach when researching the idea of home education.

A local church that is homeschool-friendly is another option, but you will want to consider your audience. Even if your organization is Christian in focus, your informational meetings will most likely be open to the public. While a church might be appropriate for your regular homeschool group meetings, when trying to reach a broader audience, you should consider the possibility that some information seekers will not be comfortable in that venue.

Choosing a more open location will convey the idea that the meeting is about home education and is not an attempt to proselytize. Therefore libraries, community centers and bookstores are usually better choices.

How often should your group offer getting started workshops?

The population of your community will be a determining factor. In a smaller city, quarterly or bi-annual meetings will most likely be adequate. A larger city might warrant monthly meetings—possibly at more than one location each month.

How should you promote the workshops?

It is important to remember that the people who are seeking information on homeschooling are probably not currently receiving your regular publications. Consider where they will go to seek information on the idea of home education.

As mentioned previously, the public library is often the first point of contact. Christian bookstores also report a large number of requests for information. Teacher supply stores are excellent places to publicize your workshops.

Depending on your organization's resources, you might be able to use local newspapers, radio or even television. If your organization has 501(c)3 status (or sometimes if there is no admission charge), you might be allowed to post notices on community calendars through your local radio and TV news stations.

What type of format should you use for these workshops?

Developing a standardized format will allow you to offer a solid information base without overloading your veteran volunteers. It will also guarantee that all pertinent points are covered each time.

While you do not want the meeting to appear scripted, you do want to follow an outline that covers all of the most important information in a logical and sequential order.

A lecture format is recommended to allow for the most productive time management. Ask attendees to hold questions until the end. When you have finished your outline, spend the rest of the meeting time in a question-and-answer session, which will allow you to address the individual needs of attendees.

Who will speak?

When seeking volunteers, it is imperative that you look for veteran homeschoolers who genuinely have a heart for ministering to those just getting started. The people attending these workshops are often unsure of their ability to teach their children and are fearful of taking the first steps. A veteran who is intuitive and has a warm personality will make the attendees feel comfortable enough to discuss their fears.

You will want to avoid someone who is a "homeschool cheerleader." Homeschooling truly is not the right choice for everyone. The goal of your veteran leader is not to talk the attendees into

homeschooling, but rather to present information to help each family consider whether it would work for them.

If at all possible, ask a married couple to lead your meetings. Often you will have dads in attendance at these meetings, and a homeschooling dad will be the best one to convey the vision of this lifestyle and will be uniquely qualified to address the specific concerns of other dads.

What materials should you make available?

While your attendees might take notes throughout your presentation, it is still helpful to have handouts that cover some of the material you are presenting. This is especially true in regard to the homeschooling laws in Texas.

You certainly want to provide information about your organization, but you may also wish to make available information on other groups in your area. Showing that there are many options available for academic enhancement, sports participation and social interaction will go a long way toward reassuring the potential homeschooler that this is a mainstream educational choice.

Encourage anyone in your area who offers classes or activities for homeschoolers to provide brochures or flyers that you can display. Consider offering a variety of catalogs from homeschool publishers. While this definitely adds to the workload of the veteran leaders, it is a great way to equip new homeschoolers, who have so many decisions to make.

If you are not able to offer catalogs, you will at least want to provide a list of the major curriculum publishers so the attendees can begin to acquire catalogs and materials on their own.

What information should you provide?

In determining the actual content of your meeting, you will certainly need to consider your time limitations. Remember that you need to allow adequate time for questions and open discussion. Following are some of the most important topics to cover:

- **State laws** – This is perhaps the most important topic to cover. It is extremely important that each attendee leaves the meeting with a solid understanding of what Texas law requires. Covering the state law also gives you an opportunity to cover the history of homeschooling in Texas. Most new homeschoolers do not understand the battles that have been fought to give them the freedom to teach their children at home. You will also want to explain the process of withdrawing a child from public school.
- **Advantages of homeschooling** – Often those attending a getting-started workshop still harbor uncertainty about the validity of this educational choice. A short discussion of the advantages of homeschooling will help those who are still a bit skeptical.

- **Socialization** – Of course, no homeschooling meeting would be complete without a discussion of socialization! It is important not to be condescending in your treatment of this issue. While this is not the huge consideration it once was, there are still many people for whom this is an enormous concern. Treat these concerns with respect, dispelling with examples and statistics the notion that homeschooled children are social misfits.
- **Resources** – As mentioned above, you will want to provide your attendees with resources. This will include book lists, information on activities and names of curriculum suppliers. A handout with a list of books to read about homeschooling should always be included as a resource. Remember, it is not possible to tell people everything there is to know about homeschooling, nor should you try. Point them in the right direction and encourage them to research on their own.
- **Special needs** – More and more people are choosing to homeschool their children because their children have special needs that are not being adequately met by public or private schools. These parents need everything that you are providing at this meeting, plus more. Include information on books and organizations that would be helpful for them in your resources. [SPED Homeschool](#) is a great resource for special needs parents. They also have a virtual support group for parents.
- **Learning styles** – While you might not always be able to include a detailed description of learning styles, it is still possible to explain the basic idea. Your attendees have a better chance of success if they understand from the beginning that children learn in different ways. So many times, new homeschoolers see every instance of resistance as personal failure and feel that they are not able to teach their children. If they have older children whom they are removing from a public or private school, this idea also gives them insight into why that type of school was not working for their children. Remind them that duplicating that system at home will not solve the problem. Encourage them to research the idea of learning styles so they can make more informed choices about curriculum and teaching methodology.
- **Curriculum choices** – This is something that can overwhelm even the most seasoned veteran homeschooler. Imagine how the new homeschooler must feel upon discovering the vast amount of material available! If time allows, cover the basic techniques of homeschooling and mention examples of each method (textbooks, unit studies, living books, and the classical and principal approaches as well). Again, if you cannot have catalogs from homeschool publishers, provide a list of these publishers and encourage your attendees to research websites and request catalogs.
- **Making the most of a book fair** – The new or potential homeschooler has probably never attended a homeschool book fair or convention. Provide information about where and how often book fairs occur in your area. Depending on the time of year, you may

even be able to provide registration forms for upcoming book fairs or conventions. Strongly encourage your audience to attend at least one each year. Many of today's potential homeschoolers will rely on the internet for much of their information. Be enthusiastic in your description of the benefits of attending a book fair or convention and getting information in person. If you know what speakers will be available at the next event, mention their area of specialty or any books that they have written. Share about encouragement that you have received through listening to workshop speakers. Explain that when choosing curriculum, it is vitally important to look through the material.

- **Basic supplies needed** – Many new homeschoolers will gravitate toward imitating the public school model. Provide a short list of basic supplies needed, including a globe or maps, reference books or software, etc. Help them consider the needs of their children. For instance, remind them that when teaching young children to write, it is important that the children's feet reach the floor. Tell them that it is also helpful to provide colorful posters. If there are space limitations for the school area, parents can be creative; posters can be mounted onto foam board, then stored behind furniture when not in use.

Should you have items for sale at your getting-started workshops?

This question is often determined by the restrictions of your location. Some facilities will have rules about selling items. If this is the case, you might consider providing an order form that attendees can take with them. If it is possible to sell items, consider offering a few of the most important books on the resource list you are providing.

What about questions?

Allow at least 30 minutes at the end of your workshop for questions and open discussion. This will give you an opportunity to ascertain whether attendees have understood the material you presented and to address their individual needs as well.

What about breakout groups?

If your getting-started workshops are well-attended, you might consider offering breakout groups in addition to, or in place of, a question-and-answer session. Suggestions for topics are *special needs, older students, preschoolers, teaching multiple grades, etc.*

A Few things to remember

A getting-started meeting is not a presentation of the benefits of homeschooling. We assume those in attendance have already made up their minds to homeschool, but if they haven't, our job is to answer questions they may have. It is also not a public school bashing session. Stop all public education bashing type discussion as quickly and firmly as possible.

A well-run getting-started workshop will benefit not only the new homeschooler but also your larger homeschool group. Seeing to the needs of the new homeschooler outside of the regular monthly meeting will allow for a meeting that ministers to all of the home educators in your community—new and veteran.

10.4 Curriculum Information for Orientation Meetings

The following curricula can be categorized into traditional, classical, unit, self-paced or a combination. There is a great difference between the workings of these kinds. Remember this is just a sampling of curricula, and host groups should feel free to add to this list as they have knowledge and experience using various types of curriculum.

The prices listed here were the prices of various curriculum choices at the time this information was compiled; host groups should research pricing information before presenting information to make sure pricing information is current.

Bob Jones Publication

Bob Jones is a structured curriculum formatted with individual textbooks. The main source of information includes student notebooks or worksheets, the written assignments and activities, test packets and optional extra resources. For the teacher there is an answer key to the student's notebooks, answer keys to the tests, and the main teacher's guide for the subject. The teacher's guide will include the student's information, required additional discussion, research information and teaching instructions, answers to chapter questions, and a timetable for the lesson plans.

In meeting the required subjects, parents will need to purchase the student's Phonics & Reading (K4-1st), Reading (2nd-6th), Grammar & Writing (2nd-12th), Handwriting, Spelling, Vocabulary (lower grades through 7th) and Literature (7th-12th). All are administered in individual subject textbooks.

Bob Jones is generally advanced compared to public school education. Using Bob Jones will require more teacher interaction with students than curricula that are self-paced. Bob Jones will run between \$400 and \$600 or more per grade, depending on grade level and course choices. The purchase of teacher materials is mandatory for the success of this curriculum.

School of Tomorrow, or A.C.E. Paces

A.C.E is a self-paced curriculum. It is formatted using workbooks called PACEs. There are 12 PACEs per year, per grade. These 12 are equivalent to one textbook. Each student workbook is all-inclusive. Unlike Bob Jones, in which the parent can use different resources, the PACE workbook contains the student's information lesson, written activities, quizzes (check-ups) and tests (PACE tests). The teacher has an answer key for grading purposes.

A.C.E. was designed to be used by the student working independently. There is very little teacher involvement (except in the case of first or second graders if necessary). This is evident in the Pace workbook as the student is instructed to check his or her own work. It is also clear in the fact that the teacher does not have any instructions for teaching the lessons. The teacher

key contains only the answers to the written assignments.

The information taught to the students through the lessons is very clear and thorough. The lesson is made basic for understanding, and repetitive reviewing is seen throughout the program. A.C.E. is written at the recreational reading level, yet presenting at-grade-level material. Therefore students will not have a stressful time doing their work and will still test well on standardized tests.

Note: The recreational reading-level is usually one or two years below the instructional reading level. We recommend selecting reading and literature books and study guides to complement this curriculum.

Note about required subjects: In A.C.E., the student's reading and grammar are together in the English subject. The student's spelling and vocabulary are in the Word Building/Etymology books (up through 9th grade).

Along with the requirements, A.C.E. carries a variety of electives and subjects from which to choose.

The current costs for A.C.E are available online. Each teacher's answer key contains the answers for 3 books at a time, and cost the same amount as the student's book. The family can choose to purchase either the whole year at one time or "as they go." We strongly advise the parents to purchase 3 books at a time (to correspond with the answer keys), and to buy their next set when on the second book of their current set. This eliminates the possibility of having to wait to continue their next book if ordering is needed.

Alpha Omega Publications

Alpha Omega Publications (AOP) is a self-paced program with teacher interaction. AOP offers four different types of curriculum in itself, including digital, student-paced, teacher-led and unit studies.

AOP is written using the mastery system, which means that the most important facts are repeated enough to insure mastery of the subject. Self-paced curriculums usually leave out the "fluff." Therefore the program may not be as interesting, but will consume less time.

Note about assignments: The student's work assignments contain questions that develop analytical skills through brief answers, essay questions and "put into your own words" assignments.

Note about required subjects: In Alpha Omega, the student's reading, grammar and spelling are together in the Language Arts subject. There are many electives to choose from in addition to the basic requirements.

Each teacher's answer key contains the answers for 3 books at a time, and costs the same amount as the student's book. The family can choose either to purchase the whole year at one time or "as they go." We strongly advise the parents to purchase 2 books at a time. They will then need to buy their next set when starting on their second book. This eliminates the possibility of having to wait to continue their next book if ordering is needed.

Putting together your own curriculum program: Writing your own curriculum is a great responsibility and needs to be well organized. A program is designed by using information gathered from published material. The parent should be organized, planning at least half a year of studies with the materials they are to use. A "how to" reference book, such as Ruth Beechick's or "Teaching the Trivium," should be used. A classical curriculum book is a good resource for this method. The name and publisher of each book used must be recorded. If a family is interested in this method, they might need to speak to someone with a few years experience for more information.

Foreign language, physical education and science are all electives that Texas law does not require for homeschoolers. We highly recommend teaching science for all students, and foreign language for high school students especially. This helps maintain a well-rounded education. Most new homeschoolers will start by teaching the basic requirements, then they will acquire the other subjects after they have become familiar with the homeschool lifestyle, schedule and teaching.

Unit Study Curriculum

Example: "Life in America" series by Ellen Gardner. This program meets all national standards.

This unit study covers history, English, geography, Bible, science (earth, biology, chemistry), physics, astronomy and botany. This program also teaches students in the area of character, art, communication skills, finances and library skills. It does not cover math, phonics and certain grammar skills. Extra material, books and educational software are required to complete this program.

This curriculum comes divided into time periods for each book. Each book is a complete year's study for lower grades, and two books cover a school year for a high school student. One book can be used for several students in multi-level grades. Each lesson will be modified according to the learning level of each student.

Included in each book are the teacher information (lesson plans, schedule and record keeping) and the student's information. Each book is divided into six sections that are to be covered over three weeks each.

Each section will contain several lessons. Each lesson is divided into several steps, covering several subjects. Each step must be covered to complete each lesson. One lesson may take

from several days to a little over a week. There are four steps to each lesson, which shadow a learning style: *Interest, Inform, Dig Deeper* and *Create*. At least two activity steps should be completed per lesson. For high school students, two lessons per week are recommended.

10.5 Frequently Asked Questions at Orientation Meetings

Kindergarten

Kindergarten education mostly consists of learning coordination, numbers, letters and phonics. There are some curricula that offer science, history and foreign language courses for this level as well.

The early years of school build the foundation for a student's education. The child's readiness level will determine the type of program used to teach and will even affect your daily schedule. Some students, like those with high activity levels, may need to have shorter lessons presented several times throughout the day.

Programs might be textbook work or be formatted with colorful worksheets, activities and games. At this age, a child's learning ability will go from concrete to abstract, so hands-on work and manipulatives are very effective. Understanding the child's learning level and style will help in choosing the best program.

It is best for the host of the orientation to become familiar with the different styles of phonetic programs. Some include:

- Pathways
- AOP Horizons
- AOP LifePacs
- BJU
- Sing, Spell, Read and Write
- Explode the Code series
- Saxon Phonics
- The Gift of Reading
- Christian Liberty Press
- The Writing Road to Reading
- Rod and Staff.

There are many resources that may be used in addition to a curriculum, such as coloring books, flashcards and educational computer games.

Parents may think that Kindergarten work is simple enough to exclude the use of curriculum and teacher's guides. However, there are certain cautions with this due to the intricate details of learning a specific concept.

As an example, a parent can look at a page with work for the letter “A.” The parent can explain the use of the “A” and the sounds of “A,” but may not know the phonetic rules of when to apply a certain pronunciation for certain words. Therefore, teacher’s guides help in outlining the important aspects of each concept and will suggest what areas to emphasize as they teach. We would strongly suggest the parent preview the teacher’s materials before making the decision to omit their use.

Testing

The majority of all-inclusive curriculum programs come with the quizzes and tests for the students to take at the appropriate time. The state of Texas does not require registered testing.

Standardized testing, such as the Iowa, Stanford and California Achievement Tests are often offered by homeschool groups. These tests, which are administered by certified individuals, score and compare the student on a national scoring level. These tests are beneficial in evaluating a student's progress and education level.

While it is not legally mandatory according to Texas law, they can be taken periodically if a family desires. If a family does take this kind of test, it is not required for them to register it with any institution or organization.

Note: If the family is in a situation involving the court, and the court requests these records, the family is required to comply.

It is not required for high school students to take a test to graduate, but it is wise to complete the PSAT, SAT or ACT.

Days and Hours Required

Although there are no state requirements on the number of days or hours a student must attend class, families will find that homeschooling requires a major time commitment on the part of the parents.

Extracurricular Activities

The flexibility of homeschooling grants many opportunities to be involved in a variety of activities. There are many organizations that a family can join to complement their homeschooling goals. Many families are involved in church activities, missions, programs like the YMCA or sports leagues. They can participate in sports clubs, 4-H, craft classes and gymnastics.

Older students also have the opportunity for apprenticeship work in businesses and firms. Homeschool groups also provide many organized activities through co-ops, competitive sports programs, educational camps, parent training, educational workshops and more.

High School and Dual Credit

Homeschooling through high school can be a very rewarding experience for students and parents if a solid foundation for education has been established. Many students are able to work fairly independently and at a much faster rate than in a traditional school. Dual credit is an option that can be explored for high school students who wish to take college courses at a local community college while still in high school. Homeschool students can graduate as early as 14 years old, and may begin college work with special permission from parents and college officials.

Homeschool students may choose from the curriculum format that will best meet their learning style. Many families choose a group setting for subjects like drama and public speaking. A co-op situation may be chosen for advanced subjects like chemistry or physics.

When planning your high school student's curriculum, we recommend preparing for college even if this has not been an expressed interest. If he or she decides not to go on to college, you can rest assured that your student will leave high school with a well-rounded education, prepared for college entrance if needed in the future to meet his or her life calling.

Homeschool students will be expected to have their records completed and summarized on a transcript. A transcript is a list of classes taken and grades earned. For college admission, a transcript is what makes a diploma valid. You should keep a copy of your student's transcript at home and additional copies will need to be notarized and sent off with scholarship applications and college admissions. Diplomas may be acquired through homeschool organizations like THSC and FEAST, or may be generated on the computer by the family.

Curfew Law

It is important to abide by any local or city ordinances of curfew that may apply to your homeschooled high school student. Many cities have daytime curfews from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. This gives police the authority to stop any young person unaccompanied by an adult or parent, and question the student as to why he or she is not in school. The parent, as the school official, may give the student permission to be out and about for activities such as library research, co-op, tutor class attendance or sport events. If the student is stopped, he or she will need to inform the officer that he or she is homeschooled and has parental permission to be out at that time. The officer will call to verify the fact with the parent. The parent will be required to know the exact whereabouts of the child or will be fined. We suggest the student carry a student ID card, which can be acquired from THSC in case the officer cannot contact the parent. The student can then present the card if the officer is intent on taking the student for violation of curfew. The student would be held in custody and released to the school official (parent). He or she would then be required to go to juvenile court to be fined for being in violation of the daytime curfew. Students that are homeschooled and carry a THSC Student ID are usually considered okay by the police and are not detained.

Graduation

Graduation is determined by the parent (official) of the private homeschool. There is not an accredited or official state test to graduate the student. Each curriculum program will contain tests that the student takes periodically throughout the semester.

The parent and student should beforehand outline their goals in achieving satisfactory grades for lesson tests, along with their desired semester and yearly grades. Accomplishing the desired grades throughout the year will confirm that the student comprehends the lessons, and is succeeding in educational goals to pass from grade to grade, and ultimately graduate.

It is the family's preference whether or not to have a commencement ceremony for the graduate. They can plan the ceremony for their student individually, or they can join a graduation group formed by other homeschool graduates in their area.

Graduation groups are usually formed with students that have been involved in activities together in church, co-op classes, sports or social groups (such as homeschool groups). There are also individual families who will announce upcoming graduation groups for seniors to join.

Differences Between Private Homeschools and Public Schools

The homeschool parent must understand that they are carrying the title of administrator of a private school. Therefore, as mentioned before, the homeschool needs to be conducted in a "bona fide manner." This is accomplished by following very closely to the recommendation of the chosen curriculum publisher (i.e. four pages a day, one lesson a day, however many chapters, etc.) The homeschool family is now a private school, making the parents or guardians not only responsible as teachers, but also as principles, administrators and superintendents of their school. This responsibility includes setting the standards and requirements for the student(s) (i.e. schedule, lessons and passing grades), and making sure the work is being completed. Remember, an adult should be in the home when a student is doing schoolwork.

What are the differences in the way homeschooling works compared to public schools?

What kinds of things are homeschools exempt from?

The public schools are required to have 180 days of school, while homeschoolers may wish to conduct schooling year-round. There is no specific number of days required, because the schooling is conducted at the student's pace of learning. One can do as much school as desired, just not as little. Homeschool students are expected to go by the published curriculum recommendation of work per week. This will keep them on track to complete their quota for that subject year. Be aware that an extreme number of exceptions to their schedule will hinder them from meeting their educational goals for that year.

You will find that the number of hours of actual teaching will be very different from the standard 8 a.m.-3 p.m. public school hours. The important goal is not the time spent doing school, but completing the work required in each subject. It may take 45 minutes for math, but an hour and 30 minutes for history. It is possible in homeschooling to catch up if needed or even to move

ahead.

Other differences concerning requirements for public school students vs. those not required for homeschooled students are taking the TAASP or TASK test and certain public school subject requirements like health, foreign language, physical education, etc.

In addition, the homeschool is not regulated by the public school. For example, the public school would not direct the homeschool studies or schedule. The public school does not give scheduled visits to the family's home, neither do the families report to the public school. Just as any other institutional private school is not evaluated or regulated by the school districts, neither is the homeschool.

One can also name their homeschool if they so choose. They can use this in various ways such as indicating that name on the graduation diploma. When they do name their school, it does not need to be registered.

Withdrawal From Public School

It is best for the family to receive all their information for homeschooling before venturing to withdraw a student. Parents of older children should look at the long-term educational goals of their child. An immediate continuance of education needs to take place once the student has been withdrawn during the school season.

Some schools will stipulate a maximum of three days leeway for the student to be placed in an education program, but the state requires immediate placement. After the amount of time regulated is completed and the student is not in a program, the parents/guardians will be found in violation of state law and fined with a fee up to \$500.00 per day.

It is therefore wise to acquire the student materials—if not for the whole year at least the start of the grade that is needed. Testing for placement is acceptable as indication for starting the educational program.

Since the student has been in the public school system, written withdrawal out of that system is needed. This is necessary for the parents or guardians to fulfill so that the student is not viewed as truant or missing.

If a preschool student attended any kind of half-day programs, or head start programs with the public school system, withdrawal is still necessary even if the child is under the compulsory attendance law age.

To withdraw, follow [steps for withdrawing from the school district on the THSC website](#).

Re-entering Public School

Be prepared to have a copy of your student's records (transcripts and maybe even daily

records) as to what the student completed in his or her homeschooling year(s). Each school district, even each individual school, handles re-entering homeschoolers in different ways.

The way the school counselor or official handles the situation is a matter of whether or not they understand homeschooling and Texas law. Some individuals that understand the homeschool process will create a smooth transition for the entering student. On the other hand, an individual who does not have much knowledge or has some prejudices, may make the process tedious.

The best thing to do is to call the school district or school and ask to see a written copy of the school's enrollment policy for non-accredited private school students. The school will often administer a placement test. If not, we highly recommended that the parents ask the school to test the student for proper placement if the school threatens to hold the student back a grade. They should have this service available since the state has provided funds for testing students.

On average, there are seldom any hindrances to re-entering. There is certainly no law that prevents a homeschooler from re-entering public school. The principal or administrator of each school has a right to ask whatever he or she wants in order to place the student in the school. If the parents feel the school official is being unfair or prejudiced against the student, they should feel free to question the official's motives. The parents should place the student at the level they feel the student should be in to receive the proper level of instruction. The parents should not feel belittled or made to feel ashamed of their decision to have homeschooled.

Remember, the state of Texas gives the parents the right to homeschool whenever they choose to do so.

If the family does not choose to homeschool any particular year, the state of Texas guarantees their child an education within the public school system. The public school and its teachers work for the parents. If any difficulties do occur, the parents should record the individual's name, what was said by them, school phone number and district information. This information can then be provided to THSC.

Chapter 11 – Dealing With Problems

Unfortunately, conflicts are not uncommon within homeschool groups, and peacemaking skills are vital for homeschool group leaders to help groups endure those rough seasons that come to all.

11.1 Preparing Homeschool Groups for Conflict

Establish a Code of Conduct

By Ashley Lawson

Discipline policies or a code of conduct are vital to your group. It is important to have them defined and firmly in place before any problems arise; don't make them up as you go.

Be general enough to deal with the vastness of human error. You can find no better policies than those already written in Scripture:

- *“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.” (Matthew 18:15-17)*
- *“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” (Ephesians 4:29)*
- *“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” (Philippians 4:8)*

Establish some consequences for when verbal warnings are not working. Have a plan for when these consequences don't work, or when the offense is extreme.

Sometimes, what is best for the group is difficult because it means a family needs to leave the group. You and your board need to be brave and make those tough decisions.

Resolving Conflict

Angry members sometimes come to leaders with their problems. When conflicts are between families and they are not really a group issue, be very careful about your group's involvement in the issue itself. When problems do arise, and you need to mediate:

- Don't take sides
- Bring two sides together to talk this out, but take a board member along
- Don't get drawn into the problem; stick to policies
- If resolution can be reached within set policies, no others need be involved, and the offended parties can often move beyond the problem

- If resolution cannot be reached, then the board must be involved
 - A hearing might need to take place if resolution is still not reached, and the good of the group should always come first in this situation.

Sometimes resolution cannot be reached. This is hard on a leader but it can happen. When it does:

- Gather your team around you and don't get drawn into problem
- Pray for the offended member and for your group
- Realize that no single group can meet every need.

Sometimes families leave a homeschool group as a result of a problem within the group. If this happens to your group, do not blame yourself. Remember:

- Maybe the group truly was not a good fit for the family
- Maybe the family learned through the experience and is functioning differently in their new group.

Sometimes families will leave but will still be connected with your group or members of the group. This connection can be uncomfortable, but time has a way of making it easier.

Discipline

Running a group would be great if it weren't for people, right? But all joking aside, planning ahead can make group discipline so much easier. Follow these simple rules:

- Avoid getting drawn into problems and taking things out of context
- Compromises are fine, but don't compromise the rules
 - Bending the rules for one family tends to get noticed, and before you know it, you no longer have the rule
- Always have some type of exit plan, or possibly a zero-tolerance policy in the event of a situation you did not expect
- Keep records; it takes a little time and effort, but when things get busy, you will forget that you've pulled the student out of class for the fourth time this semester and have not gone to talk to his parents
 - A binder or log, kept in a safe location, will help you keep track of problems that seem to recur, including a brief description of the incident and the parent or teacher who was present at the time of the incident
 - This will also help you strategize with parents to help their children succeed.

Let's take a look at a discipline policy that needed revamping (the example group name has been changed for privacy reasons).

ABC Homeschool Group has a support group and a parent-led co-op. The policy for co-op classes does not permit students to be dropped off. Co-op does allow parents to leave campus temporarily; this is allowed during an hour when parents are not assigned to class. In the event of a schedule conflict, they may send their child with another member family. This is not permitted on a recurring basis.

ABC Homeschool Group Disciplinary Policy:

“In the event that a student is disruptive in class or does not abide by the policies of ABC Homeschool Group, the following steps will be taken:

First offense will require parents and older students to sign the misconduct form.

Second offense will require a parent-teacher conference.

Third offense will require a meeting of parents, teacher and leadership team with the possibility of expulsion.”

This is a real policy from a homeschool group and is copied exactly as it was shown in the group handbook for years. In later years, the group faced challenges with its policy.

What was wrong with this disciplinary policy?

Did you think there were any problems with this group’s discipline policy? This group was struggling because sometimes problems occurred in the hallway, and sometimes parents were off-campus (having sent their children with a friend who was usually another group member).

Additionally, there were no real consequences for misconduct. Simply signing a paper often meant that there was never any attempt to help the student and parent remedy the behavior.

Unfortunately, this meant the student was at risk for expulsion when they felt they had never really been in that much trouble. Because the group operated with parents typically on campus, but allowed parents to leave campus briefly or send the child with another family at times, they came up with some solutions.

What did ABC Homeschool Group do?

Some discipline issues occurred outside of class. The group removed the mention of the discipline issue in class and the parent-teacher conference.

The group added a series of consequences that would affect the family involved (more than simply signing a disciplinary statement), which were:

1. The parent is not permitted to leave child on campus for designated number of weeks and child must remain with parent when not in class
2. Parent accompanies child to classes for designated number of weeks
3. Temporary suspension from classes (the child must remain with parent on campus); risks expulsion
4. Automatic expulsion. The group added a policy for managing problems that need to bypass steps 1-3. These are zero-tolerance offenses.

These situations are never easy, especially on leaders. But as a leader of your homeschool group, you are responsible for the well-being, and “parenting” if you will, of your group. Do not shrink from your duty as a leader to remind, rebuke and reprimand as necessary.

11.2 It Could Happen to You: Dealing With Child Abuse

We think homeschoolers do not have to deal with issues like child abuse—but we are wrong! We need to make ourselves aware and know how to protect our children, our families and—if you are a group leader—how to protect yourself.

This year in the United States, three million children will be victims of child abuse, with nearly five hundred thousand of those being victims of child sexual abuse. One out of three girls and one out of five boys will be sexually abused before they reach their eighteenth birthdays. In a survey conducted by the Los Angeles Times, 22% of Americans reported that they had been sexually abused as children. One-third of those who reported that they had been sexually abused as children didn't reveal the abuse until well into adulthood. In 55% of the cases, the molester was someone known to the child. Most molesters are males, but females are blameworthy too.

There are many reasons why we homeschool—one is keeping our children safe. We try to keep our children in loving surroundings, however, by having them involved in co-ops, homeschool group activities, youth groups, etc., they are put into situations where assaults can happen.

We have had it brought to our attention that we've had cases of child molestation within homeschool groups here in Texas—**this is preventable!**

It's important that we educate ourselves and know how to educate our children on what child abuse is and how to deal with it. Child abuse occurs when an adult intentionally hurts a child.

There are several kinds of child abuse. Physical abuse is caused by hitting or beating, while emotional abuse is caused by saying things that make a child feel like a bad person. A child is abused by neglect when food, care and shelter are taken away. Sexual abuse occurs when an adult touches the private parts of a child's body, tries to get the child to take off their clothes, or touches or kisses them in a way that scares them.

To recognize and deal with child abuse, you need to be familiar with the three "R's" of Child Abuse Prevention. The first "R" represents "Recognize." Children must learn to recognize situations in which they are at risk. Since most child molesters are known to the child—perhaps a family member or someone in a position of authority over the child—we can no longer simply warn children about "stranger danger." Warn children about strangers, but also warn them about people they know. Typical lures used by predators are affection, assistance, authority, bribery, ego, emergency, fear, treats, jobs, magic, rituals, name recognition and playmates. Additional information can be found in the book "Child Lures" by Kenneth Wooden.

The second "R" represents "Resist." Know that most child molesters will stop if the child resists; the molester wants a willing victim. Teach your child to trust his or her instincts and feel free to react assertively when feeling threatened. Children must be taught that they have the right to

say “no” to anyone touching them. Teach your children it’s ok to scream out that someone is touching them.

The third “R” represents “Report.” Children should be encouraged to tell their parents or another trusted adult whenever they encounter questionable behavior by an older youth or adult. Reporting an attempted or actual molestation is very difficult for children. Children are often afraid to tell their parents because they think they will not be believed. Statistically, most children will not lie about this type of situation because it’s embarrassing. Therefore, if a child comes to you and tells you they have been touched, be sure you act on the situation.

Often children are too frightened to talk about sexual molestation. However, they may exhibit a variety of physical and behavioral signs. Any or several of these signs may be significant. Parents should assume responsibility for noticing such symptoms including extreme changes in behavior such as loss of appetite, recurrent nightmares, disturbed sleep patterns, fear of the dark, and a regression to more infantile behavior such as bedwetting, thumb sucking or excessive crying.

Listen to and be aware of things your child says. If your child tells you that they don’t want to go to that support group activity and play with those children, it could be a red flag. Be alert to your child having unusual interest in or knowledge of sexual behavior or expressing affection in ways inappropriate for a child of that age.

Be sensitive of any fear or intense dislike your child may have of a person they are being left with. Other behavioral signals may be aggression, disruptive behavior, withdrawal, running away, delinquent behavior or failing in school.

It’s important to know you cannot blame yourself if something does happen to your child. We don’t intentionally put our children in situations where abuse would happen. However, we need to remember it could happen to us. We need to remember it can happen within our own family; be aware of behavioral issues of family members as well as your own children.

Be aware of the Texas state law regarding reporting abuse or neglect. Any person who believes that a child or person 65 years or older or an adult with disabilities is being abused, neglected or exploited, must report the circumstances to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) Abuse Hotline. A person making a report is immune from civil or criminal liability, and the name of the person making the report is kept confidential. Any person suspecting abuse and not reporting it can be held liable for a Class B misdemeanor. Time frames for investigating reports are based on severity of allegations. Reporting suspected child abuse makes it possible for a family to get help. Abuse can be reported by phone (1-800-252-5400) or [secure internet website](#).

Protecting yourself as a homeschool group leader is important. Train your leadership about abuse. Make sure they know the law. Have materials available for parents. Always have a “two

deep” policy at all leadership activities and never bend this rule (this “two deep” duo should never be husband and wife teams). Know who your adult leaders and youth leaders are; consider background checks. Do not allow one-on-one contact. Respect privacy such as restrooms and changing clothes at campouts and other activities. Train leadership to report incidents through the proper channels.

Chapter 12: Leadership Success Stories

With all that we have said thus far regarding how to be a good leader, it may seem harder than anticipated. We understand, and we believe you may benefit from some personal stories of the leaders who have gone before you, learning as they went—some learning the hard way! These short recollections will show you first-hand some of the triumphs and challenges of leading a homeschool group, and they will hopefully inspire you to do great things with your homeschool group as well.

12.1 A Call to Leadership Education

By Rebecca Smith

It all began the summer of 2007 when I attended a seminar on leadership education by Oliver DeMille. He’d just finished a masterful discourse on the need for a revival of classical literacy and on leadership education.

According to DeMille, when public compulsory schooling became the American way, we put ourselves on a conveyor belt of sorts. While education for the masses has been integral to the goal of widespread literacy, it has edged out leadership education, which is badly needed in our time. We rarely see this latter type of education administered in America today.

So I pondered over my own experience on the conveyor belt as the seminar drew to a close. The desire came over me to make the sacrifices necessary to gain the education I lacked.

I knew that the vast majority of my homeschooling peers were also products of the conveyor belt approach. Surely I wasn’t alone in my need for scholarship. I sensed that a population of homeschoolers existed that would also want to participate in the creation of a leadership society.

Fortunately for me, the Texas homeschooling community, to which I was a recent transplant, already enjoyed an abundance of great leadership. Even better, there was an infrastructure of resources in place that had been built over the course of at least 20 years, beginning with the pioneers of the 1980s who wanted more for their children, just like I do.

Now fast-forward to October of that year, and you find me sitting by a beautiful lake adjacent to the Lake View Conference Center in Waxahachie, Texas. I had by now contacted the other Thomas Jefferson Education (TJEd) families I knew who were dispersed all over the D/FW Metroplex. A Thomas Jefferson Education is the title of the first of three books authored and co-authored by Dr. Oliver DeMille. In it, he describes the kind of education that created some of the greatest leaders in history—Thomas Jefferson being the quintessential example.

Beginning with about ten families, we met in July and formed the North Texas Statesmanship Society. I'd heard about the opportunity to attend the THSC annual Leadership Conference for homeschool support leaders. Anxious for training, I jumped at the chance to attend, though not without some trepidation. After all, my support group leadership experience amounted to a grand total of three months. I wondered if I really had what it takes to create the kind of community I'd envisioned. I was almost overcome with a sense of inadequacy at the prospect of my present path.

Then something amazing happened, in that half-hour by the lake, on that beautiful autumn afternoon, in a moment of prayerful meditation, an indelible sense of calling washed over me. It replaced the suffocating fear that had held me captive just a moment earlier. Conviction of the rightness of my course came into my mind along with a cascade of ideas, adding vibrant details to my earlier vision. In that moment God made it abundantly clear that He had work for me to do and that I'd better get to it.

I walked back into the leadership conference, carried by this greater vision. It was a watershed weekend for me. I didn't know any of the leaders there and didn't converse with nearly enough of them. But those whom I did get to know and observe were inspiring leaders and statesmen, all with missions of their own, going about the work they were called to do. They inspired me to be a better person, lifting me up with their examples of courage.

I am often drawn back to this idea that it's not just a select few of us who are meant to be statesmen. Indeed, I'm inclined to believe that each of us has a calling we are meant to fill—a mission that only we can accomplish. As to what that mission is, no one but the individual can determine.

Of all societies in history, I think ours is among the neediest of statesmanship. But with the angry masses always clamoring for our attention, it's no wonder we feel like there is little we can do to make a difference. But this is wrong thinking. There is much we can do. Homeschoolers and educators are uniquely equipped to influence future generations for good. But do we realize how much power we hold in our hands? We are molding the next generation.

In this context, does it make any sense to replicate the conveyor belt model of learning in our homes? Yet, many of us, not knowing anything but this unnatural approach, unwittingly beat ourselves up in the pursuit of mediocrity.

Let's discuss two of the seven keys to a great education.

First: Inspire, Don't Require.

Was your natural love of learning as a child smothered in the education process? Think about your upbringing in the public school system. If all of our teachers had set out to inspire great learning in each of us, exposing us to the greatest classics down through history, allowing us to explore our greatest talents in depth, what would have happened? Our founding fathers, like Thomas Jefferson, were mentored this way. They thirsted after great knowledge. Their mentors filled the need. Because of this way of educating, they were prepared for the miraculous work of building a new nation, where it is understood that all men are created equal.

Second: You, Not Them.

How does a child choose to get a great education? One of the elements of conveyor belt schooling is that children's initiative is marginalized, even discouraged. We don't believe anymore that if left alone, a child might make wise educational choices. If done well, education can be a mix of child-initiated learning and wise parent-mentoring.

The most powerful way to ensure your child's acquisition of a world-class liberal arts education is simply to get one yourself. The best mentors are first and foremost excellent students, pursuing lifelong learning and growth.

Who are the mentors who can help us rise above our limitations? God is naturally our first and most important mentor. If we are careful observers, we can identify other mentors who are most willing to help us. Aristotle had Plato. Thomas Jefferson had George Wythe. Esther had Mordecai. Who were your mentors?

Statesmen are visionary leaders, walking an independent path. They look for the need that they can fill, and then go about doing it. When that need is filled they find and fill another one. They do it again and again. They heed an inner voice that guides them undeviatingly to serve the common good. Anchored to true principles, guided by God and the greater good, they live publicly and privately virtuous lives.

We are meant to be more than we've allowed ourselves to be. In ten years your education will be the same as your children's. Will it be poor, mediocre or great? "If not you, then who? If not now, when?"

12.2 Are You Ready to be an Oarsmen?

By Bill Keating

"I want to serve, but now is not a good time." Possibly you have heard these words. Probably you have spoken these words.

Were you in need of medical care, these words would be unthinkable, possibly a death sentence. The same is true about a volunteer group. Without the lifeblood of people willing to serve the body, the group dies. With its death, all of the support functions you have enjoyed also die. The question then becomes: Have you given as much to your group as you have received? If you have not, reconsider your attitude. Giving is an uplifting experience and a worthy use of one's time. Our Lord Jesus extolled the virtue in giving and serving when He washed the disciples' feet.

Many people in these groups have served either in board positions or those most necessary, and often thankless, jobs of coordinating individual activities; however, many more have never even helped with anything. In all organizations, there has usually been an 80/20 ratio of takers to givers. In today's world, those ratios have shrunk closer to 90/10. Nowhere is that more evident than in volunteer organizations such as local support groups. However, they have no paid staff, no paid volunteers, and even the volunteers pay the same fees as everyone else to participate in group activities. So the only rewards must come from a sense of a job well done or a "thank you" given by an individual member.

Now, granted, there will always be some in these groups who will never give. This is unfortunate, but true. People in these groups have given in years past and some too new to homeschooling to need any other additional responsibilities. This article is not directed at you. However, for those of you who say or think, "I'm too busy to serve," my hope is that you will take this article to heart.

If you are too busy because of other activities to give back to a group which has provided for your needs, I humbly submit that you have two choices: return some energy or leave the group. This is not to say that the truly needy should consider this an indictment, but can you honestly look in the mirror and claim to be truly needy? For most of us, "too busy" means forgoing serving to continue enjoying the pleasure of being served. In which category do you fall?

A volunteer group is similar to one of those multi-man crew boats we see in the Summer Olympics. They can only get to their goal if all six oarsmen pull in unison. If several oars are left unpulled and those people ride ... well, you get the picture. Only one person does not row, the coxswain, and his job is to coordinate the pull and the pace which is a different, but necessary function.

Most support groups need a lot more oarsmen. Are you ready to row, but cannot decide which oar to pick up? Do you have an interest in strengthening your left hand? Pick up an oar on the left which is something you are uncomfortable doing, but need to learn to do. Do you want to use your strength to its full advantage? Pick up that oar which is your current strength. Volunteer for a job with which you feel comfortable. Remember that these are large boats with many oars. In fact, many extra seats exist if you have a special calling that your group needs. They may also have training and beginners' oars with plenty for all.

Probably no one but you and God will ever know if you never volunteer for a single job or position with your group, but if you have enjoyed your group for a year or two or more, it is time to give back. It is time to serve others who are coming behind you and will now be the new homeschooler that you once were. Take your pulse to see if your servant's heart is sick or dying and then volunteer for the perfect cure.

Think of all the great experiences, growth, friends, and fellowship you will miss if you are "too busy." Realize how important it is to be fully involved in a few organizations and not peripherally involved in a great number of organizations.

This decision is about choices. Does your group live or die from lack of volunteers? The choice and decision is in your hands. If your group is worth your membership then it is worth your service. Your membership fee does not fulfill that duty when only you and your time will meet this need. As you enjoy the summer, prayerfully consider whether to rejoin. Count the cost and consider service as a part of that cost.

12.3 A New Website Gave New Life to my Homeschool Group

By Shanna Phillips

We had 300 families. Administration time was at least one hour per family; that's the amount of time our group leader was spending doing administrative work each year for our group. More than seven weeks of full time work per year or nearly two months out of twelve months and we were supposed to be homeschooling our kids! You can imagine with that amount of administrative work to be completed lead to little time left over for actually leading the group! Things had to change and fast.

For several years we had been dreaming of getting a new website. When people Googled homeschool groups in our area they maybe came across our site. When they did find it, it was not impressive. The code was so outdated that we could not even fix problems, much less add new content. Who would want to join our group with a site like that?

With so much administration falling under the responsibility of the support group leader, and half of our leadership expecting babies and juggling other commitments in life, who was left to get a new site up and running?

If we had only known how much better a new website would make the job of leadership, we might have conjured up the time to make the change long ago! Really, it was an educational process. What is out there? What are the website options? What is on our wish list? How much is it going to cost? Whom should we trust with all of that money to complete the project? We had lots of questions and it was a slow learning process to get the answers.

We wanted our website to be a fresh, exciting first glimpse into our dynamic support group.

Visitors to our site should be encouraged, know who we are and what we are about, and want to be a part of it all. Membership registration should be online and payable by PayPal. With online registration, the membership database should be automatically populated, saving the bulk of the administrative time for group leadership.

Other website requirements included a secure site for members, online event sign-up, an interactive calendar, a central point of information for the group, and the ability to allow each volunteer to have access to update their part of the website (to help spread the administrative duties out over all members). Finally, it had to be affordable. We are, after all, called to be good stewards of the resources with which we have been entrusted!

Was this a dream list? Yes. Could it be reality? As it turned out, yes!

The answer to our need presented itself in a well timed email from homeschool-life.com. It was as though a website developer had found our wish list and created a site just for us. Even better, it was ready for public viewing in just a few days! It was wonderful to work with the people at homeschool-life.com. When we had a need they had not yet considered, they were willing to help us figure out a workable solution, and then they added it to the development wishlist. Our dream website turned into reality!

Our new website has sparked a new energy in our support group this year! We have increased our membership at a time when we were afraid we might be declining in numbers and interest. Through the use of teleconferencing technology, we were able to quickly train our leadership team (in the comfort of their own homes and on their own computers) to use and update the website.

Our theory of spreading the work out over many to free up our leadership has become a proven concept! Great things are happening in our group because our leaders can focus on passing along a vision instead of on administration. We have a record number of new members this year, as people search the internet and come upon our group and our fresh, exciting website!

Is a good website a necessary part of a successful homeschool support group? Absolutely, if you are trying to serve more than just a few families while not burning out your leadership.

12.4 Promoting a Positive Image

By Kay Orr

With the sun peaking over the hills of Elm Valley and the rooster crowing his morning hello, three little boys awaken one by one and make their way, sleepy-eyed, down the hallway to school. Yes, we homeschool.

The hallway in our home leads to lands beyond the boundaries of our community.

Homeschooling allows us to walk on clay bricks in Mesopotamia, smell the gunpowder of the Boston Massacre, and swim with crocodiles in the rivers of Australia. Where else can a child eat breakfast by the fire in pajamas and listen to the tales of Robinson Crusoe?

Teaching children to be articulate, smart, confident, and morally sound has always been a common goal for homeschooling families. What has changed, however, are the reasons for making the decision in the first place. Many families choose to homeschool because their jobs call for frequent relocation. Homeschooling lets children enjoy the stability of learning at home, wherever home may be. Families are also homeschooling so they can be proactive in the development of their children's Christian education and values, something not allowed by law in public schools. Many homeschooling parents take into consideration the size of public and private school systems and the restrictions placed on teachers relative to discipline and displays of affection toward students.

As with any form of education, homeschooling brings with it advantages and disadvantages. When someone asks my children where they go to school and are told we homeschool, we receive one of two responses. The first is a friendly smile and well wishes followed by a story of someone they knew who homeschooled and now have children in college or possibly a neighbor with a unique way of integrating community service into a school day. The second response seems to be driven by unfortunate past experiences or stories they have heard from someone else on the national news. This second response is almost always accompanied by a crinkling of the eyebrows and blank stare as if they are struggling for words.

Yes, drawbacks exist to home education and the struggles change with time just as do the reasons for making the choice. The financial sacrifice that comes with homeschooling will be a determining factor for more families in upcoming years than in years past. Not only do homeschool families pay school taxes in addition to the cost of purchasing student curriculum, but they are almost always a one income family. Lesson preparation, teaching time and the coordination of a school day are difficult, if not impossible, to do with both parents working in a formal setting outside the home. This, of course, depends on the ages of the students and the type of curriculum chosen.

The ever popular question about the social development of the student appears. Socialization, as previously defined by answer.com, is "the process whereby a child learns to get along with and to behave similarly to other people in the group, largely through imitation as well as group pressure." For our family, socialization is one of the reasons we decided to homeschool. Most homeschooling families embrace every opportunity to teach their children about the current societal trends, discuss moral issues, and nurture knowledge of what is right and wrong based on what we believe to be true.

One of the ways homeschooling families increase socialization opportunities is through group interaction.

Big Country Home Educators (BCHE) is a local group based in Abilene, Texas, that supports the efforts of Christian home educators by pooling resources and providing supplemental educational opportunities, as well as opportunities for fellowship, encouragement, and the exchange of ideas.

With a membership of 170 families, serving approximately 400 children across ten counties, BCHE children participate in a wide variety of activities and events, which include:

- Science and history project fairs
- Four competitive basketball teams
- Spelling bee
- Field trips
- Christmas and spring music festivals
- Teaching cooperatives
- Annual family picnic
- Movie nights
- Choir
- Debate clubs

In existence for twenty-five years, BCHE is proud to provide a common ground for home educating families to connect and grow together.

12.5 Teen Homeschool Activities in Abundance

By Linda Nuttall

When our family started homeschooling in the spring of 2000, we had children in 9th, 7th, and 2nd grade. Therefore, the entire time we homeschooled, we've needed to focus on the special needs of homeschooling teens. The curriculum needs for teens are advanced and varied. More than subject matter, we were concerned with opportunities that would help our kids grow into responsible, contributing adults, and that would give them good memories so that 20 years from now they wouldn't look back and feel they had been deprived of some valuable rite of passage experience.

We were among five families that started a support group at the end of 2005 and which quickly grew to a steady 45 plus families covering the greater Houston area. We were able to make sure the needs of teens were always addressed by the group. That turned out to be a huge undertaking, but also a real blessing.

We started what we call Teen Leadership Council (TLC), which functions something like a student body council. The TLC learns and puts into practice leadership skills by planning activities. During our first year we had the council develop their own mission statement and draft bylaws. I was really proud of their insights and effort. The mission statement included four

categories:

- Responsibility (to serve as a liaison between the teens and adult leaders)
- Spirituality (living high standards and including prayer and spiritual experiences in planning and activities)
- Leadership development (receiving and putting into practice leadership lessons during planning meetings)
- Fun (planning activities that would encourage teens in the group to enjoy associating together).

The TLC group is mostly self appointing, with approval from adult teen leaders. It requires a pretty big commitment from both the teen and the family. Therefore, it's unlikely that there would be more than a dozen in the group that can commit to TLC in a given school year.

We've honored them with certificates at the end of the year. They can feel confident that their service will be useful on college applications and resumes. Usually an adult teen leader and an assistant work directly with the council and bring in other parental help as needed. The learning and experience, we believe, far exceed what a public schooler could get on a student council (for the few who even get that opportunity).

The TLC keeps the lives of teens in the group pretty full. This is an understatement, as you'll see.

We have a monthly special program during the school year, put on by some of the dads, called Teen Quest. The adult volunteers are called Questians (which sounds a lot like "questions," of which they ask a lot). The program is designed to teach principles in a fun and active learning setting. It's usually held in a home and averages about 25 teens.

Teen Quest follows a theme through each school year. One year the text they used was "7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens" by Stephen Covey. Another year they covered philosophers through the ages, comparing those to the philosophy of their own religion.

There are a couple of advantages to this special program. It is popular because it's so much fun and dads can be pretty wacky sometimes. It's also a unique opportunity for dads to make a contribution to the homeschooling effort with their own kids and their kids' friends.

Annually we hold a Teen Camp, running from Thursday evening through Saturday afternoon. It is led by the Questians, who decide on the theme; and it's planned by the TLC, with help from a lot of adult volunteers. TLC members design the T-shirt, plan the meals, handle publicity, and lead the groups during activities. Sometimes we have special guests come and help with the teaching (a professional photographer, a Christian rock band, a ballroom dance instructor, a rock climbing instructor, etc.).

Most of the program is presented by the Questians. We also conduct a service project, hold a dance, and have plenty of free time. Somehow the tradition took hold that the final activity would be a water fight, instigated by the Questians. They search for a new method of attack each year.

The length of time together, involved in so many shared intense experiences, allows for some close bonding and wonderful memories. We make a photo CD so the kids can go back and recall the good times they had.

Quarterly we have a day for religious experience. Our group is associated because of our common religion, so this makes these experiences desirable and well supported by families. We typically have a service project and spiritual class during the day, then a late afternoon visit to the temple, followed by dinner and evening activities (often Teen Quest, when the schedules align). These are consistently among our best attended activities; they are very effective for providing spiritual, social, and learning opportunities all in one day.

Monthly during the school year our support group holds Education Days, with classes divided by age group. We have the teens (ages 12 and up) meet together for science and other classes that are best accomplished in a larger group. Teachers for these classes come either from within the group or we recruit guest teachers or presenters. We try to have plenty of active learning and labs, rather than just sitting and listening to lectures.

On occasion we have teen field trips. One year we took the teens to visit artist Ken Turner's studio in Columbus, Texas. Since we were already far from our home in Houston, we stopped in at an archaeological dig near Stephen F. Austin State Park and learned about the history of that place, where a brief battle had taken place during the Runaway Scrape. Another field trip was to the Reliant Center downtown shortly before Christmas to put together bikes for the Elves & More project.

One year we held a monthly teen book club, concentrating on books that were likely to be expected reading before college, plus a few just for fun. Annually we put on a Shakespeare play, which includes younger players as well, but teens usually play the leads. Listing leading roles in various well known plays also looks good on a college application.

In addition, kids get together for parties, church dances, book signings, service projects, and anything individual families or the TLC chooses to plan. One spring the teens held a parent appreciation dinner, including entertainment for their parents. This past spring we held a "squeaky clean prom" where music was clean, semi-formal dresses were modest and behavior was fun, yet appropriate. The homeschooling teens invited their like minded friends from public schools, so they had over 90 teens attend at a cost of just \$10 each, which covered hall rental, DJ, decorations, and a wide array of refreshments. This event was very well supported by the community, with businesses donating gift cards and coupons worth several thousand dollars. We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, which helps when asking for donations. It was such a success that the prom is likely to be an annual event.

The teens have various ways of keeping in frequent contact. They have their own online chat group, the entire TLC has a group on Facebook, phone calls, and texting seem to fill in any gaps. When people ask "what about socialization?" we just laugh. They have no idea.

There are going to be experiences we might not be able to provide our teens (marching band, varsity football, homecoming queen, etc.). No doubt our family has had better social lives homeschooling than they had (or could have had) as public schoolers. Also, we were able to provide more experiences for each of them than any of them could have had in competition with hundreds of others in a public school. I hope what our group has done will give you ideas and maybe spark confidence that whatever wild plan you come up with, especially when you consider that teen energy will be part of the equation.

12.6 Peacemaking and Homeschooling

By Annette Friesen

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"Make every effort to live at peace with all men." Hebrews 12:14a

"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." Romans 12:18

As Christian homeschoolers, my husband and I take seriously God's call to live at peace with others. We always have, but it hasn't always been easy. When Rick and I began homeschooling in 1984, **pursuing peace with those who wanted to make homeschooling illegal or at least very difficult often led to more adversarial relationships than it did to peaceful ones.** Over the years, however, we have seen the tables turn. Through the efforts of many, homeschooling is not only accepted, but often we are considered some kind of saint for having the patience and fortitude to stay home and teach children all day!

And yet our responses to those who question our homeschooling can still be adversarial in nature. Homeschoolers are wonderful and unique, but perhaps the long years of battle have left us more willing to fight than to pursue peace. I have seen this tendency in myself! Even though all our homeschool battles are not **yet** won, we can choose to see our homeschooling differently.

In 2 Corinthians Paul says, *"And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore ambassadors for Christ"* (2 Cor. 5:19b-20a). As ambassadors for Christ who homeschool we can deliver the gospel of peace. We can do this by learning to respond to our conflicts biblically.

“As people reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe that we are called to respond to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict.” So begins the “Peacemaker’s Pledge,” which beautifully states a Christian’s commitment to being a peacemaker.

So I have to ask myself, how do I respond to conflict, and is my response a Godly one? If I am to abide by 1 Corinthians 10:31b, “doing all to the glory of God,” are my responses doing that? Or are they simply an attempt to serve myself instead? When I evaluate my typical response to conflict, I must admit I serve myself more often than I glorify God, and I realize the need to know how to respond to conflict in such a way that God is glorified.

In order to learn how to respond to conflict biblically, I need to understand what is conflict. In his book, “The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict,” Ken Sande defines conflict as “a difference in opinion or purpose that frustrates someone’s goals or desires.” This definition includes large conflicts like lawsuits and the little conflicts we encounter every day.

For example, in my own life the adversarial approach reasserted itself when I caused a conflict with Rick. We were having a small support group leaders meeting. As we were finishing it, Rick, who is our organization’s president, mentioned that due to the time we would have to forgo what I was going to say (which could have waited and wasn’t that important). He had previously told me that this might happen. Yet, without thinking, I jumped up and asked him, “May I have a few minutes?” Without waiting for an answer, I began talking. I was so focused on what I wanted to say that I didn’t give any regard to his leadership or his desire to finish the meeting. Our desires had become diametrically opposed.

Later Rick confronted me with this and I reacted defensively, justifying my actions and even pointing out some of his faults, as if this would strengthen my case. Instead of bringing reconciliation, I escalated the problem. God worked on my heart, though, and I was humbled to realize how I had violated Philippians 2:4, “Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.” I had only been concerned about achieving my own desire and had not given any thought to Rick’s interests. It was not easy to confess to him what I had done without excusing it, and to ask his forgiveness, but as I revealed honestly to Rick how I had not put his interests first, and had dishonored him and God, Rick immediately forgave me. I was humbled by Rick’s forgiveness and grateful to God that through obedience to Him, I had peace with my husband.

The Peacemaker’s Pledge continues, “We also believe that conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, serve other people, and grow to be like Christ.” Focusing on these opportunities is very reassuring. God has a plan for each conflict if we will trust Him and follow His instructions. We can begin by choosing to respond to all our conflicts biblically. To see what this looks like, read Peacemaker Ministries’ simple “Four G’s”:

- **Glorify God** - Instead of focusing on our own desires or dwelling on what others may do, we will seek to please and honor God

- **Get the Log Out of Your Own Eye** - Instead of attacking others or dwelling on their wrongs, we will take responsibility for our own contribution to conflicts
- **Go and Show Your Brother His Fault** - Instead of pretending that conflict doesn't exist or talking about others behind their backs, we will choose to overlook minor offenses or we will talk directly and graciously with those whose offenses seem too serious to overlook
- **Go and be Reconciled** - Instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to wither, we will actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation.

The Peacemaker Pledge ends this way, "We will remember that success, in God's eyes, is not a matter of specific results, but of faithful, dependent obedience. And we pray that our service as peacemakers brings praise to our Lord and leads others to know His infinite love." Whether our conflicts arise at home, in church, or in the community, whether they are homeschool related or not, we have an opportunity to be ambassadors for Christ with the message of reconciliation. I am committed to responding to conflict biblically. Will you join me?

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Appendix

Statement of Faith Sample 1

(Name of Group) Statement of Faith

1. Inerrancy of the Bible

We believe the Bible is the inerrant, plenary, verbally inspired word of God, which is needed to direct lost souls to a saving faith in Jesus Christ as Savior.

2. Sin and Salvation

We believe that Jesus Christ was, is, and shall forever more be the Son of God (John 1:1, 14).

We believe that Jesus Christ lived a perfectly sinless life and His sacrificial death on the cross is complete atonement for our sins (1 Peter 2:21-22, 24; and John 19:30).

We believe all mankind possesses a bent toward sin and must personally accept the

work of the Lord Jesus Christ as payment for the penalty of those sins (Romans 3:23, 6:23; Acts 16:31; John 1:12).

3. Family

We believe the family is the basic governmental, social, and spiritual unit created by God. In it, the child learns self government, social relationships, and develops a relationship to the Creator and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:5, 16; Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20). The family also provides protection from over extensive government and over stimulating social involvements.

We understand “family” to mean a male and a female parent, legally married to each other, with one or more children (Genesis 1:26-28), although we recognize the exceptions of single parents and adopted, foster, and stepchildren (James 1:27).

We reject homosexual “marriages” or homosexual orientation because it is contrary to Scripture and the intentions of God in creation (Romans 1:18-32), and we believe that such relationships are destructive to children and the very idea of family. Further, we reject transitory, cohabitational relationships as being equally in violation of God’s laws and incapable of providing the long term nurture and instruction needed by children and commanded by God (Proverbs 1:18-32, 2:1-11; Colossians 3:21; and Ephesians 6:4). In view of this, no homosexual or merely cohabiting “parents” are eligible for membership.

4. Parental Rights and Responsibility in Education

We believe that the ultimate responsibility for the education of children belongs to parents (Deuteronomy 4:1-4, 9, 6:1-25). Thus, we believe this is an inalienable right given by God, which the state cannot create, destroy, or alter. Parents may allow another to teach some of the cognitive information that children need to know, but all education must be under the ultimate control and supervision of the parents.

We believe education in the home to be the best form of education, but we recognize that many parents cannot educate at home for valid reasons and support the right of parents to send their children to private Christian schools.

5. Nature of Education

We believe that all education is religious in nature since one’s view of the world and life is inevitably involved in teaching (Proverbs 2:1-8; 3:1-2; 6:20-23; Matthew 28:18-20).

We believe that every disciple of knowledge, whether it be a subject such as mathematics, science, or history will have as his or her final reference point a theistic or, in the alternative, a humanistic view of reality (Colossians 1:15-20, 2:8-15), and that there is no neutral academic discipline.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I/We, the undersigned, do hereby affirm that I/we have read and agree with the above and foregoing (Name) Statement of Faith, the _____

day of _____, 20 ____.

_____(Parent)

_____(Parent)

(Please print your name beneath your signature.)

Sample Constitution 1

(Name of Group) Constitution
Revised and Approved by Membership Vote on (Date)

Article I

Name

The name of the organization shall be (name), a Christian charter.

Article II

Membership

(Name) shall be comprised of homeschooling families who desire to affiliate.

Membership shall be restricted to those individuals who concur with the Beliefs We Hold in Common, as stated in Article VIII, and agree to abide by the Constitution of the charter.

Membership dues will be exacted per family and will be determined each year by the board members with the approval of the membership in regular general meetings. Special provision will be made for those who desire to be members, but are unable to pay.

Those who cease to agree with the Beliefs We Hold in Common, cease to abide by the Constitution, or in some way bring disrepute to the Association shall be biblically confronted by the board members for restoration. If unrepentant, they will be excluded from membership (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 2 John 9-11). The vote to exclude from membership shall be determined by a two-thirds vote of all board members. Board members who are not present for the vote shall cast their vote in absentee.

Article III

Purpose

The purpose of the Association is to provide support to parents who educate their children at home. Support may include services such as field trips, small group meetings for close fellowship and for mutual educational, academic, spiritual and emotional encouragement, regularly scheduled large group meetings for information on curricula and assistance in choosing appropriate curriculum, special speakers, workshops, coordinated efforts of political and legal concern, and a newsletter.

Article IV

Board Members

The board members of the association shall consist of a president, vice-president (the number to be determined by the current board), secretary, and treasurer.

The president shall provide the oversight for the Association through the other board members and persons appointed by him or her. The president shall preside, or appoint someone to preside over all general and board meetings of the Association, work with the treasurer in the disbursement of funds, and speak for the organization.

The vice-president(s) shall assist the president in the performance of his or her duties and chair special committees set up by the president.

The secretary will be responsible for keeping a record of each meeting and handling any correspondence necessary. The treasurer will receive funds and disburse payments and provide at each board meeting an accounting of this activity. Records shall be reviewed or audited annually or as determined by the board.

The offices of president, vice-president(s), secretary and treasurer shall be elected by a majority vote of the board. Two or more offices may be held by the same individual, except for president and secretary. The president, secretary or treasurer may be dismissed from their respective offices by a majority vote of the other board members at any board meeting. A motion to remove or replace an officer shall never be out of order, shall take precedence over any other business, shall require a second, shall allow for a limited discussion, and shall require a vote.

Any board member shall be subject to censorship or dismissal from the board by a two-thirds vote by the members present and voting in regularly called general meetings or by a unanimous decision of the other board members.

Board members of the Association shall meet the following qualifications:

Board members shall have homeschooled for at least two years.

Board members must be members of the Association.

A board member's term of office is for two years. Elections for board members will be held each year at the May general membership meeting. A nominating committee is to be appointed by March 1, with nominations made by April 1. Written notice of these nominations is to be mailed to all members at least one week in advance of the May general meeting. Should a board member resign during his term of office, the board may appoint someone to complete his term.

Motions and official business of the board are binding, pending a majority vote of those present. A quorum of two-thirds or more of the board members must be present in order to hold official business.

Article V

Attendance of Meetings

Persons who are not members of the Association are welcome to attend general meetings and should conduct themselves in a decent and respectable manner.

Persons who are not members of the Association will not be allowed to attend board meetings. Members of the Association may attend board meetings.

Article VI

Meetings

The time, date, place, and frequency of general meetings shall be decided by the board members. The membership will be notified at least one week in advance of all general meetings.

All general meetings of the Association shall be conducted according to, "Robert's Rules of Order" in its most recent edition.

The time, date, place, and frequency of board meetings shall be decided by a majority vote of the board members. All board members shall be notified of board meetings within a reasonable amount of time. If the president is not able to attend a board meeting and has not appointed a replacement to preside over the board meeting, the secretary shall preside over the board meeting. If both the president and secretary are not able to attend a board meeting and have not appointed a replacement to preside over the board meeting, the treasurer shall preside over the board meeting.

Article VII

Execution and Amendment of the Constitution

This Constitution shall become effective upon approval by two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a general meeting called for that purpose. This Constitution may be

amended by a three-fourths vote of the members present and voting at a general meeting of the Association, provided written notice of the proposed amendment(s) is mailed to all members at least one week in advance of the meeting.

Article VIII

Beliefs We Hold In Common

The Bible is the verbally inspired and only infallible, authoritative Word of God, inerrant in the autographs (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

God is one Being, Who eternally exists as three Persons (i.e., Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). All of the Persons are equal in power and glory (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

Jesus Christ is fully God and man (John 1:1,4), born of a virgin (Matthew 1:18), and sinless in His life (Hebrews 4:15). He died vicariously on the cross as a substitution for sinful men (Hebrews 9:15). He rose bodily from the grave (John 20:1-9, 24-31; Acts 2:24) and now reigns with the Father (Acts 2:33; Hebrews 10:12). He will return visibly and personally to earth both in salvation and judgment (Acts 1:11; Hebrews 9:28; Matthew 24:30).

All humans are sinful by nature (Romans 3:23; 5:12) and can only be forgiven by the expression of trust in Jesus as Savior (John 3:16) brought about by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5-7).

We believe in the continuing ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life (Romans 8:1-17).

We reject the anti-Christian tenets of secular humanism, including the general theory of evolution, one world government, government mandated sex education, government mandated parenting courses, modern feminist ideology, and abortion.

Family

We believe that the family is the basic governmental, social, and spiritual unit created by God. In it the child gradually learns self government, social relationships, and develops a relationship to the Creator and Savior (Ephesians 6:1-3; Colossians 3:20). The family also provides protection from over extensive government and over stimulating social involvements.

We understand family to mean one male and one female parent with one or more children, all related by the institution of marriage, though we recognize the exception of a single parent. We reject homosexual marriages or homosexual orientation because it is contrary to Scripture and the intentions of God in Creation (Romans 1:18-32). As well, we reject transitory cohabitational relationships as being equally in violation of God's laws and incapable of providing the long term nurture and instruction needed by children and commanded by God

(Proverbs 1:8-9; 2:1-11; Colossians 3:21; Ephesians 6:4). In view of these rejections, no homosexual or cohabiting “parents” are eligible for membership.

Parental Rights and Responsibility in Education

We believe the ultimate responsibility for the education of children belongs to parents (Deuteronomy 4:1-4, 9; 6:1-25; Ephesians 6:4). Thus, we believe parents directing the education of their children is an inalienable right given by God which the state can neither create, destroy, or alter. Parents may allow another to teach some of the cognitive information that children need to know, but all education must be under the control and supervision of the parents.

We believe education in the home to be the best form of education, but we recognize that many parents cannot educate at home for valid reasons and we support the right of parents to send their children to private Christian schools.

Nature of Education

We believe that all education is religious in nature, since one’s view of the world and life is inevitably involved in teaching (Proverbs 2:1-8; 3:1-2; 6:20-23; Matthew 28:18-20). Every disciple of knowledge, whether it be subjects such as mathematics, science, or history will have as his or her final reference point a theistic or humanistic view of reality (Colossians 1:15-20; 2:8-15), and there is no neutral academic discipline.

Thus, we believe that all social, physical, and cognitive knowledge should have as its beginning the fear of God and its end, the Glory of God (Proverbs 1:7; Romans 11:33-36).

Sample Constitution 2

CONSTITUTION
for
_____ CHRISTIAN HOME EDUCATORS
_____ County, Texas

Article I

Name

The name of the organization shall be _____, also hereinafter referred to as “the Association.”

Article II

Membership

(Name) shall be composed of home educating families who desire to affiliate (Hebrews 10:25).

Membership dues shall be exacted per family and will be determined each year by the directors with the approval of the membership, in regular business meetings. Each family unit shall have one vote. Special provision will be made for those who desire to be members, but are unable to pay.

Those who cease to abide by this Constitution, or who otherwise bring disrepute on the Association, shall be biblically confronted by the directors of the Association for restoration, and if necessary, will be removed from membership by unanimous consent of the directors (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 2 John 9-11).

Article III

Purpose

The purpose of the Association is as follows:

- to provide fellowship and support for Christian homeschool families (Hebrews 10:25)
- to provide to members news and information concerning home education
- to provide group activities and elective classes for children, when available (Deuteronomy 11:19)
- to strive for godly environments in which children may build relationships with peers and mixed age groups (2 Corinthians 6:14)
- to provide good organization and communication within the group through phone tree, a regularly distributed newsletter, and regularly scheduled meetings
- to maintain an attitude of outreach to new or potential home education families

(Colossians 4:5).

The Association shall not impinge on the rights of parents to educate their children, as parents believe best. (Name) is a service organization providing advice and help to members who may use the assistance offered, as they desire.

Article IV

Statement of Principles

Family

We believe the family is the basic governmental, social and spiritual unit created by God. In the family, the child learns self government and social relationships and develops a relationship to God (Ephesians 6:1-3; Colossians 3:20).

We understand family to mean one male and one female parent with one or more children, all related by the institution of marriage, though we realize the exception of a single parent (Genesis 2:24).

We reject marriage of homosexual orientation because it is contrary to the Scripture and the intentions of God in creation (Romans 1:18-32). We also reject transitory, cohabitational relationships (1 Corinthians 5:9-11). We believe these relationships to be in violation of God's laws and incapable of providing the long term nurture and instruction needed by children and commanded by God (Proverbs 1:8-9; Colossians 3:21; Ephesians 6:4).

Nature of Education

We believe that all social, physical, and cognitive knowledge should have as its beginning the fear of God, and as its end the glory of God (Proverbs 1:7; Romans 11:33-36).

Rejection of Secular Humanism

We reject and oppose the anti-Christian tenets of secular humanism. These tenets include the general theory of evolution, one world government, government mandated sex education, government mandated parenting courses, modern feminist ideology, and abortion (2 John 9-11; 2 Corinthians 6:14).

Article V

Statement of Faith

We believe the Bible to be the only Word of God, written by men divinely inspired by God, and that it is the record of God's revelation of Himself to man. It has God as its author, salvation for

its end, and truth, without any mixture of error. The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ (Deuteronomy 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21).

We believe there is only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver and Ruler of the universe. He reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence or being (John 1:1).

We believe Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man, born of a virgin (Matthew 1:18), and sinless in His life (Hebrews 4:15). He died vicariously on the cross as substitution for sinful men (Hebrews 9:15). He rose bodily from the grave (John 20:1-9) and now reigns with the Father (Acts 2:23). He will return visibly and personally to the earth, both in salvation and judgment (Acts 1:11; Hebrews 9:28).

We believe all humans are sinful by nature (Romans 3:23) and can only be forgiven by the expression of trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (John 3:16), brought about by the regeneration work of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5-7).

We believe in the continuing ministry of the Holy Spirit, by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life (Romans 8:1-7).

Article VI

Code of Conduct for (Name) Functions

Each individual shall conduct himself in purity, according to the standards set forth in 1 Timothy 5:1-2.

We will refrain from any inappropriate public display of affection (2 Timothy 2:22).

We will refrain from tobacco use (1 Corinthians 8:9).

We will use no profanity or other degrading speech (Colossians 3:8).

We will dress in a modest manner. Short shorts and halter tops are specifically prohibited (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

We will not make negative comments or speeches regarding other forms of education, especially public schools and their representatives. We will instead focus our time together on the positive attributes of homeschooling (Philippians 4:8; Colossians 4:6).

Written, signed suggestions may be mailed to any director. Complaints and grumblings should be taken before the Lord (Philippians 2:14-15).

Activities and field trips are restricted to members of (name). This rule, of course, does not exclude visitors who are interested in (name) from attending park days or general meetings (2 Thessalonians 3:11-12).

Please read this Constitution together as a family and, if in agreement, sign the following signature page.

Sample Bylaws 1

(Name) Homeschoolers Association

(Address)

BYLAWS

Article I - Name

The name of the organization shall be _____ Homeschoolers Association.

Article II - General Purposes and Goals

To support and encourage parents desiring to educate their children at home

To promote legislation in support of the parents' primary and constitutionally guaranteed rights to educate their children

To further the appreciation of homeschooling in the community through education, community involvement, and media communication

To provide educational opportunities toward the needs of the group

Article III - Membership

For the purposes of this document, all references to the terms "Members" or "Membership" shall be defined as referring to the body of (name of group) corporately. All references to the term "board" shall refer specifically to the body of elected officers comprised of the chairman, vice chairman, secretary, and treasurer.

Members must read the bylaws and sign the response form indicating that they will concur with this organization's bylaws and constitution. Complete agreement with the Statement of Faith is required for board members only.

Membership dues will be expected per family at the beginning of the fiscal year (the fiscal year being September through August). Dues will be determined by the board, with the approval of the membership in a regular business meeting. Special provision will be made for those who desire to be members, but are unable to pay.

Those who cease to abide by the Constitution or in some way bring disrepute to the organization shall be biblically confronted by the board members for restoration; if restoration attempts are unsuccessful, these families will be excluded from membership (Matthew 18:15-17). The Board of Directors, by an affirmative vote of a majority of all of the Directors of

the Board, may suspend or expel a member for good cause, including, but not limited to non-compliance with the Statement of Faith or doctrinal statement.

Article IV - Board

The board shall consist of a chairman, vice chairman, secretary, and treasurer.

Qualifications:

- A. Officers must be members of (name of group) and be in complete agreement with the Statement of Faith.
- B. The office of chairman shall be filled by a husband and wife team.
- C. Officers shall have homeschooled for no less than one year.
- D. Officers shall be subject to censure and or dismissal by two-thirds of the membership attending a regularly scheduled business meeting.
- E. Officers are elected by a simple majority of attending members to a term of one year. Officers cannot serve more than two consecutive years in any one office.
 - a. In the event that an office becomes vacant between regularly scheduled meetings, the board shall appoint a replacement officer until the membership can vote by a two-thirds majority vote on a replacement.

Special meetings may be called by the membership and shall be scheduled not less than four nor more than 30 days from the date the request was made.

All business matters shall be decided by a majority vote of the active members present at a meeting.

The management of the affairs of this organization shall be vested in the board.

The board shall meet on an as needed basis, with a minimum of two meetings per year.

All officers shall work together in the performance of their duties to coordinate the activities for this association in a timely manner so as not to delay another member in the fulfilling of his duties.

The goal of the board is to operate by consensus. Where consensus among the board is not obtainable, the office of chairman shall have final authority.

Article V - Board Duties

General Board Duties

- Enforcement of the bylaws and any other declaration of the board.
- Affect the smooth and efficient flow of the homeschool group toward the stated purposes and goals of the organization.
- Bring to the attention of the membership any issues on which the membership must act.
- Set up temporary committees for specific purposes, which will be dissolved upon completion of their purpose.
- Supervise group activities as delegated to board members by chairperson.
- Approve creation and dissolution of group activities.

Chairman

- Preside at all meetings of the membership or appoint another board member to preside over meetings in the absence of the chairman.
- Act as an official representative of the Association.

- Schedule general and special meetings and draw up an agenda for each meeting. A minimum of two general meetings will be called annually.
- Delegate board members to supervise (name of group) sponsored activities.

Vice-Chairman

- Maintain a master calendar for all (name of group) sponsored activities.
- Recruit and coordinate volunteers to organize various activities throughout the year.
- This person will not be responsible for arranging (name of group) functions.
- Preside over business meetings in the absence of chairperson or their appointed replacement.

Secretary/Treasurer

- Keep minutes of board and membership meetings.
- Maintain accurate and up to date records of the membership and records of dues.
- Receive all dues and contributions.
- Disburse funds as needed to cover expenses incurred by the Association.
- Maintain an up to date list of the membership.
- Oversee the typing, copying, and mailing of the monthly newsletters.
- Read minutes of previous meetings and give current financial standing at each called meeting.
- Notify board of requests from non-members for information.

Article VI - Elections

Board members shall be elected during the May general meeting and shall assume office upon election. They shall serve until the following year's election. Election procedure shall be as follows:

- Any qualified Association member wishing to serve must submit their name and office of interest at least two weeks before the May meeting.
- The board will compile a list of these names to submit in ballot form to the membership at the May meeting.
- Members will record their votes on this form and return it to the chairman.
- If candidates for these positions are not submitted prior to the two week deadline, the board will dissolve, and elections will not be held until further action is taken by the general membership.

Article VII - Amendments and Execution

The bylaws shall go into effect with a majority approval of the active members in attendance at a regularly called meeting of the Association. The bylaws may be amended by a three-fourths vote of the active members in attendance at the meeting called for this purpose. All active members must have two weeks written notice prior to such a meeting. Such notice shall contain the meeting date, time, place, and changes proposed. Members not able to attend this meeting may mail in an absentee vote to the secretary or treasurer prior to the date of the meeting.

Sample Bylaws 2

BYLAWS OF

Preamble

The purpose of (name of group) is to provide support, education and fellowship for local homeschooling families.

Article I

Offices

The initial principal office of the Nonprofit Corporation in the state of Texas shall be located at _____ . The Nonprofit Corporation may have such other offices, either within or without the state of Texas, as the board of directors may determine or as the affairs of the Corporation may require on occasion.

The Nonprofit Corporation shall have, and continuously maintain, in the state of Texas a registered office and registered agent whose office is identical with such registered office as required by the Texas Nonprofit Corporation Act. The registered office may be, but does not need to be identical with the principal office in the state of Texas, and the address of the principal office and the registered office may be changed occasionally by the board of directors.

Article II

Members

Classes of Members

The board of directors will determine the types of classes of members and set the qualifications to become members in the corporation by meeting such qualifications, completing such forms, and paying such membership fee(s) as shall from time to time be designated by the board of directors.

The members will not have voting rights in the affairs of the corporation unless given voting rights by a majority of the board of directors.

The board of directors, by affirmative vote of two-thirds of all the members of the board, may suspend or expel a member for cause after an appropriate hearing.

- The Board of Directors, by an affirmative vote of a majority of all of the Directors of the Board, may suspend or expel a member for good cause, including, but not limited to non-compliance with the Statement of Faith or doctrinal statement.

Any member may resign by filing a written resignation with the secretary.

Upon written request signed by a former member and filed with the secretary, the board of directors may, by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members of the board, reinstate such former member to membership upon such terms as the board of directors may deem appropriate.

Membership in this corporation is not transferable or assignable.

Article III

Board of Directors

Section 1: General Powers

The affairs of the corporation shall be managed by its board of directors. Directors must be residents of the state of Texas and members of the corporation.

Section 2: Number, Tenure, and Qualifications

The number of directors shall always be at least three. The number of directors may be increased by at least a two-thirds vote of all the directors on the board of directors.

Each director shall hold office until the next annual meeting of directors and until his successor shall have been elected and qualified. There shall be no limit on consecutive terms.

Each director shall sign the Statement of Conduct. Each director shall demonstrate moral character. Each director shall have a minimum of two consecutive years homeschooling experience. Each director shall be an active participant in homeschooling activities.

Section 3: Meetings

The board of directors shall have meetings on a regular basis in order to conduct the affairs of the corporation. Notice of any meeting of the board of directors shall be given at least two days previously, in a manner determined by the chairman of the board of directors. A majority of the board of directors shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting of the board. At no time may a meeting be held with less than three directors present.

Section 4: Manner of Acting

The act of a majority of the directors present at a meeting at which a quorum is present shall be the act of the board of directors, unless the act of a greater number is required by law or by these bylaws.

Section 5: Vacancies

Any vacancy occurring in the board of directors, and any directorship to be filled by reason of an increase in the number of directors, may be filled by the affirmative vote of a majority of the remaining directors, though less than a quorum of the board of directors. A director elected to fill a vacancy shall be elected for the unexpired term of his predecessor in office.

Section 6: Compensation

Directors, as such, shall not receive any stated salaries for their services, but by resolution of the board of directors, a fixed sum and expenses of attendance, if any, may be allowed for attendance at each regular or special meeting of the board; nothing herein contained shall be construed to preclude any director from serving the corporation in any other capacity and receiving compensation thereof.

Section 7: Informal Action by Directors

Any action required by law to be taken at a meeting of directors, or any action that may be taken at a meeting of directors, may be taken without a meeting if a consent in writing, setting forth the action so taken, shall be signed by all of the directors.

Section 8: Removal of Director

Any director elected or appointed by the board of directors may be removed by the board of directors whenever in its judgment the best interests of the corporation would be served thereby, but such removal shall be without prejudice to the contract rights, if any, of the directors so removed.

Article IV

Officers

Section 1: Officers

The officers of the corporation shall be a president, one or more vice-presidents (the number thereof to be determined by the board of directors), a secretary, a treasurer and such other officers as may be elected in accordance with the provisions of this Article. The board of directors may elect or appoint such other officers, including one or more assistant secretaries and one or more assistant treasurers, as it shall deem desirable, such officers to have the authority to perform the duties prescribed, from time to time, by the board of directors. Any two or more offices may be held by the same person, except the office of the president and secretary.

Section 2: Appointment and Term of Office

The officers of the corporation shall be appointed annually by the board of directors from those nominees selected by the nominating committee. The nominating committee shall consist of the current board of directors as well as the current officers of the corporation. Officer appointments shall be held at the regular annual meeting of the board of directors. If the appointment of officers shall not be held at such meeting, appointments shall be held as soon thereafter as conveniently may be done. New offices may be created and filled at any meeting of the board of directors. Each officer shall hold office until his successor shall have been duly appointed and shall have qualified. There shall be no limit on consecutive terms.

Section 3: Qualifications

Each officer shall demonstrate moral character. Each officer shall have a minimum of two consecutive years of homeschooling experience. Each officer shall be an active participant in homeschooling activities.

Section 4: Removal

Any officer elected or appointed by the board of directors may be removed by the same board of directors whenever, in its judgment, the best interests of the corporation would be served thereby, but such removal shall be without prejudice to the contract rights, if any, of the officers so removed.

Section 5: Vacancies

A vacancy in any office because of death, resignation, removal, disqualification, or otherwise may be filled by the board of directors for the unexpired portion of the term.

Section 6: President

The president shall be the principal executive officer of the corporation, and shall, in general, supervise and control all of the business and affairs of the corporation. He or she shall preside at all meetings of the Association members and of the board of directors. He or she may sign, with the secretary or any other proper officer of the corporation authorized by the board of directors, any deeds, mortgages, bonds, contracts, or other instruments which the board of directors has authorized to be executed, except in cases where the signing and execution thereof shall be expressly delegated by the board of directors or by these bylaws or by statute to some other officer or agent of the corporation; in general he or she shall perform all duties incident to the office of president and such other duties as may be prescribed by the board of directors on occasion.

Section 7: Vice-President

In the absence of the president or in the event of his or her inability or refusal to act, the vice-president (or in the event there be more than one vice-president, the vice-president in the order of their election) shall perform the duties of the president, and when so acting, shall have all the powers and be subject to all the restrictions upon the president. Any vice-president shall perform such other duties as occasionally may be assigned to him or her by the president or by the board of directors.

Section 8: Treasurer

If required by the board of directors, the treasurer shall give a bond for the faithful discharge of his or her duties in such sum and with such surety or sureties as the board of directors shall determine. He or she shall have charge and custody of and be responsible for all funds and securities of the corporation; receive and give receipts for moneys due and payable to the corporation from any source whatsoever; and deposit all such monies in the name of the corporation in such banks, trust companies or other depositories as shall be selected in accordance with the provisions of Article VI of these bylaws. He or she shall keep adequate records, provide periodic updates to the board of directors, and in general, perform all the duties as from time to time may be assigned to him or her by the president or by the board of directors.

Section 9: Secretary

The secretary shall keep the minutes of the meetings of the board of directors, in one or more books provided for that purpose; see that all notices are duly given in accordance with the provisions of these bylaws or as required by law; be custodian of the corporate records; keep a register of the address of each member, which shall be furnished to the secretary by such member; and in general, perform all duties incident to the office of secretary and such other duties as from time to time may be assigned to him or her by the president or by the board of directors.

Section 10: Assistant Treasurer and Assistant Secretary

If required by the board of directors, the assistant treasurer shall give bonds for the faithful discharge of their duties in such sums, and with such sureties, as the board of directors shall determine. The assistant treasurer and assistant secretary, in general, shall perform such duties as shall be assigned to them by the treasurer, the secretary, the president, or the board of directors.

Article V

Committees

Section 1: Primary Committees

The board of directors, by resolution adopted by a majority of the directors in office, may: designate and appoint one or more committees, which to the extent provided in said resolution, shall have and exercise the authority of the board of directors in the management of the corporation, except that no such committee shall have the authority of the board of directors in reference to amending, altering, or repealing the bylaws; electing, appointing or removing any director or officer of the corporation; amend the articles of incorporation; restate articles of incorporation; adopting a plan of merger or adopting a plan of consolidation with another corporation; authorizing the sale, lease, exchange or mortgage of all or substantially all of the property and assets of the corporation; authorizing the voluntary dissolution of the assets of the corporation or revoking proceedings therefore; adopting a plan for the distribution of the assets of the corporation; or amending, altering, or repealing any resolution of the board of directors which by its terms provides that it shall not be amended, altered, or repeated by such committee. The designation and appointment of any such committee and the delegation thereto of authority shall not operate to relieve the board of directors, or any individual director, of any responsibility imposed upon it or him or her by law.

Section 2: Secondary Committees

Secondary committees not having and exercising the authority of the board of directors in the management of the corporation may be appointed in such manner as may be designated by a resolution adopted by a majority of the directors present at a meeting at which a quorum is present. Except as otherwise provided in such resolution, members of each such committee shall be members of the corporation, and the president of the corporation shall appoint the members thereof. Any member thereof may be removed by the person or persons authorized to appoint such member whenever, in their judgment, the best interests of the corporation shall be served by such removal.

Section 3: Term of Office

Each member of a primary committee shall continue as such until the board of directors has been notified by the committee that a successor has been appointed, unless the committee shall be sooner terminated, or unless such member be removed from such committee, or unless such member ceases to qualify as a member thereof. A primary committee shall have the right

to appoint its own members unless such right is specifically excluded by an act of the board of directors. There shall be no limit on consecutive terms.

Section 4: Chairman

One member of each committee shall be appointed chairman by the person or persons authorized to appoint the members thereof.

Section 5: Vacancies

Vacancies in the membership of any committee may be filled by appointments made in the same manner as provided in the case of the original appointments. The committee will notify the board of directors of changes in the membership of the committee.

Section 6: Quorum

Unless otherwise provided in the resolution of the board of directors designating a committee, a majority of the whole committee shall constitute a quorum, and the act of a majority of the members present at a meeting at which a quorum is present shall be the act of the committee.

Section 7: Rules

Each committee may adopt rules for its own government not inconsistent with these bylaws or with rules adopted by the board of directors.

Article VI

Contracts, Checks, Deposits, and Funds

Section 1: Contracts

The board of directors may authorize any officer or officers, or agent or agents of the corporation, in addition to the officers so authorized by these bylaws, to enter into any contract or execute and deliver any instrument in the name of and on behalf of the corporation, and such authority may be general or confined to specific instances.

Section 2: Checks, Drafts, etc.

All checks, drafts, or orders for the payment of money, notes, or other evidences of indebtedness issued in the name of the corporation shall be signed by such officer, officers, agent, or agents of the corporation and in such manner as shall from time to time be determined by resolution of the board of directors. In the absence of such determination by the board of directors, such instruments shall be signed by the treasurer or an assistant treasurer.

Section 3: Deposits

All funds of the corporation shall be deposited from time to time to the credit of the corporation in such banks, trust companies, or other depositories as the board of directors may select.

Section 4: Gifts

The board of directors may accept on behalf of the corporation any contribution, gift, bequest, or devise for the general purposes or for any special purpose of the corporation.

Article VII

Certificates of Membership

Section 1: Certificates of Membership

The board of directors may provide for the issuance of certificates evidencing membership in the corporation, which shall be in such form as may be determined by the board.

Section 2: Issuance of Certificates

When a member has paid any initiation fee and dues that may then be required, a certificate of membership shall be issued in his or her name and delivered to him or her by the secretary, if the board of directors shall have provided for the issuance of certificates of membership under the provisions of Section 1 of Article VII.

Article VIII

Books and Records

The corporation shall keep correct and complete books and records of account and shall also keep minutes of the proceedings of its members, board of directors, and committees having any of the authority of the board of directors, and shall keep at its registered or principal office a record giving the names and addresses of the members. All books and records of the corporation may be inspected by any officer or director, or his agent or attorney, for any proper purpose at any reasonable time.

Article IX

Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the corporation shall begin on August 1 and end on July 31 of each year.

Article X

Waiver of Notice

Whenever any notice is required to be given under the provisions of the Texas Nonprofit Corporation Act or under the provisions of the articles of incorporation or the bylaws of the corporation, a waiver thereof in writing signed by the person or persons entitled to such notice, whether before or after the time stated therein, shall be deemed equivalent to the giving of such notice.

Article XI

Amendments to Bylaws

These bylaws may be altered, amended, or repealed and new bylaws may be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the directors present at any regular meeting or specially called meeting, if at least two (2) days' written notice is given of intention to alter, amend, or repeal or to adopt new bylaws at such meeting.

Article XII

Adoption of Bylaws

The foregoing Initial Bylaws of this corporation are hereby adopted by the undersigned, being all the directors of such corporation named in the Articles of Incorporation on _____.

Sample Bylaws 3

Bylaws of the _____ Association

Article I - Name

The name of the organization shall be (name of group), a not-for-profit organization.

Article II - General Purposes and Goals

To Support and encourage parents desiring to educate their children at home by:

- Disseminating information of interest to potential home educators.
- Pooling resources to provide educational opportunities that would be difficult for parents to provide by themselves.
- Providing opportunities for fellowship, encouragement, and the exchange of ideas among home educators.
- Encouraging high standards of excellence throughout all the membership.

To promote legislation in support of parents' God given and constitutionally guaranteed rights to educate their children.

To further opportunities for home educators and the appreciation of homeschooling in the community through education, community involvement, and media communication.

Article III - Membership

Membership in (name) is based on application, a signed agreement with the Bylaws and Statement of Faith, payment of dues, and good standing with the Association.

Members must read the Bylaws and sign the response form indicating that they will abide by the Statement of Faith and Bylaws. Complete agreement with the Statement of Faith is required for every member of the group.

Members of (name) have voting privileges and are encouraged to help plan and organize (name) activities and regularly attend meetings.

Each family that desires (name) membership will pay annual dues, to be determined each year by the Board. A 30 day grace period will be granted before a member's name is removed from the rolls for nonpayment of dues. Special provision will be made for those who desire to be members, but are unable to pay.

Those who cease to abide by the Statement of Faith or the Bylaws, or in some way bring disrepute to the Association, shall be biblically confronted by the Board members for restoration; if this process is unsuccessful, such members will be excluded from membership. (Matthew 18:15-17)

No homosexual or cohabiting, unmarried parents will be accepted for membership, as this would be in violation of the statement of faith and this group's constitution.

The Board of Directors, by an affirmative vote of a majority of all of the Directors of the Board, may suspend or expel a member for good cause, including, but not limited to non-compliance with the Statement of Faith or doctrinal statement.

Article IV - Board

The board shall consist of a chairman, vice chairman, secretary, and treasurer.

Qualifications

1. Board members must be members of (name) and be in complete agreement with the Statement of Faith.
2. Board members shall have homeschooled their children for no less than one year and shall have been a member of (name) for at least one year.

Board members shall be subject to dismissal by two-thirds of the members attending a regularly scheduled meeting. Prior notice of such a vote will be posted in the newsletter.

The management of the affairs of this Association shall be vested in the board.

The board shall meet in accordance with rules set forth under Article VI - Meetings.

Article V - Board Duties

General Board Duties

- Enforce the Bylaws and any other declarations of the board.
- Direct the Association toward its stated purposes and goals.
- Bring to the attention of the membership any issues on which the membership should act.
- Set up temporary committees for specific purposes which will be dissolved upon completion of their purpose.

Chairman

- Preside at all meetings of the membership or appoint another board member to preside over meetings in the absence of the chairman.
- Act as an official representative of the Association.
- Schedule board, regular, and special meetings and establish the agenda for each meeting as necessary.

Vice Chairman for Academic Activities

- Plan and execute activities, such as field trips, seminars, and workshops, for students as well as parents.
- Submit plan of events to the chairman and vice chairman for communications in a timely manner.

Vice Chairman for Recreational Activities

- Plan and execute recreational and social activities.
- Submit plan of events to the chairman and vice chairman for communications in a timely manner.

Vice Chairman for Fundraising and Community Awareness

- Plan and execute any fundraising and community awareness activities.
- Coordinate release of information to the media.

- Submit information to the vice chairman for communications for inclusion in the monthly newsletter.

Vice Chairman for Communications

- Oversee operations of a phone tree and newsletter.
- Maintain a list of known homeschoolers.
- Distribute literature to prospective homeschoolers.
- Oversee management of curriculum resources and curriculum exchanges.

Secretary/Treasurer

- Write and keep a record of each board meeting, handle any correspondence necessary, and do other administrative functions as assigned by the chairman.
- Maintain an up to date list of the membership.
- Administer and keep records of elections and keep records of changes to the Bylaws and Standing Rules.
- Receive funds, including dues and donations, and disburse payments and provide an accounting of this activity at each board meeting. Keep all financial records which shall be reviewed or audited annually or as determined by the board.

Article VI - Meetings

The time, date, and place of regular and special meetings shall be published in the newsletter. A quorum of twenty percent of the current (name) membership must be established before voting for board member dismissal or amendments to the Bylaws.

Article VII - Elections

Board members shall be elected in May and shall assume office in June and serve until May 31 of the following year. If an election is not held in May, one shall be held on the earliest possible date at a time set by the chairman, or by consensus of at least two vice chairmen. The date of the election shall be published in the newsletter at least four weeks before the election. Election procedure shall be as follows:

- Any member desiring to be a candidate for a position on the board shall submit to the secretary or treasurer their name and office of interest at least two weeks before the election.
- Members may submit a written nomination to the secretary or treasurer at least three weeks prior to the election. The secretary or treasurer will confirm, at least two weeks before the election, the willingness of the nominee to serve on the board.
- The secretary or treasurer will compile a list of qualified candidates' names on a ballot, to be voted upon by the members. Ballots must be published in the newsletter, mailed, or hand-delivered to all members at least one week before the election.
 - Two weeks before the election, if there is no opposition in all six offices on the board of directors, candidates shall be declared eligible to assume office without conducting an election.
- A member who meets all qualifications to serve on the board, except for time requirements set forth in Article IV, 2., may be elected as a chairman-elect or vice chairman-elect. Such a person must serve under the oversight of the chairman or the

vice chairman with the same function, and after having been a member and homeschooler for at least a year, may assume the office of the chairman or vice chairman for the remainder of the term, if the chairman or vice chairman chooses to resign from office. If the chairman or vice chairman chooses not to resign, the chairman-elect or vice chairman-elect will assume office the following June, if there is no opposition for the position.

- Board members are elected for a term of one year by a majority vote of members. Absentee votes will be accepted.
- In the event that an office becomes vacant, the membership will vote to replace the vacancy for the remainder of the unexpired term. Such an election will be subject to the same requirements as the regular election.

Article VIII - Amendments and Execution

The Bylaws, Statement of Faith, and Standing Rules shall go into effect with a majority approval of those in attendance at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Association.

The Bylaws may be amended by a three-fourths vote of the members in attendance at a meeting called for this purpose. All members must have at least two weeks' written notice, as published in the newsletter, prior to such a meeting. Copies of the proposed changes will be made available to members upon request. Members not able to attend this meeting may mail in an absentee vote to the secretary or treasurer prior to the date of the meeting. Such absentee votes will count toward the establishment of a quorum.

The [THSC Partner Groups listed on THSC.org](#) reflect the freedom of home educators in Texas to choose from a wide variety of home school philosophies and teaching methods. Opinions and attitudes expressed in articles do not necessarily reflect the beliefs of the Texas Home School Coalition. THSC does not endorse or advocate any one method, philosophy or views expressed by THSC Partner Groups. [This list](#) has not been provided for solicitors, and should not be duplicated or copied for solicitation. Inclusion on this list is in no way an endorsement by THSC nor an indication of similar values as THSC. The board encourages home educators to seek God's will in determining what is best for them, their school, and their students.

The information on [THSC.org](#) or [HomeEducator.com](#) or in the links provided by either website or by THSC staff are not to be misconstrued as legal advice or a recommendation regarding any of the legal issues or problems described herein.

We do offer intervention services for homeschool families in order to help families when they encounter organizations that limit access or participation simply because a child is homeschooled. This intervention is a THSC member benefit, and is not part of the [THSC Partner Group Program](#).

While THSC can give you pointers on how to construct the bylaws for your [THSC Partner Group](#), we cannot give legal advice on the final wording and its legal effect. Furthermore, THSC does not assist in resolving group conflict or involve itself in ongoing issues within [THSC Partner Groups](#). Groups seeking legal advice on the application of their bylaws in a particular situation should seek assistance from an attorney.

Group leaders with questions related to volunteer liability or charitable immunity and liability should consult with legal counsel referring to [Civil Practice & Remedies Code](#).

Leaders Guide Revision History:

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