

The Mt. Airy Homeschooling
Co-op
Handbook

(revised Tuesday, February 10, 2015)

6511 Lincoln Drive Philadelphia, PA 19119

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The Mt. Airy Homeschooling Co-op maintains an Anti-Harassment Policy, as well as an Anti-Discrimination Policy. Both are available for viewing on the Yahoo group. Also available are the Co-op By-laws.

Mission Statement

The Mt. Airy Homeschooling Co-op consists of homeschooling and unschooling families from the Philadelphia area, working together to provide a gathering place for our children where they can engage in learning and social opportunities. Our mission is to provide a quality, secular, inclusive environment in which children are nurtured, while engaging in classes and activities in a climate of mutual respect.

Our Space

The Mt. Airy Homeschooling Co-op is located in the Mt. Airy section of Philadelphia, in a building on the Unitarian Universalist Society of Germantown campus on Lincoln Drive. Access is by way of the Johnson Street entrance only; take the long, winding driveway back to the rear parking lot (next to the Co-op Nursery School). The MAHC building is straight ahead. Crossing the grassy grove, you can enter directly through the Assembly Room doors.

Play is permitted on the lawn. Please respect the memorial garden: walk, don't run, and don't climb among the stone memorials!

We are delighted to be the guests of the USG Church. We have several wonderful spaces for our use:

- The Assembly Room, where we line up cubby bins for each family, set up the floater station. This room features a baby grand piano which can be used to make music.
- The cozy Daskam Room, with tv/vcr/dvd equipment
- The Sullivan Chapel, which can be divided into three rooms
- The Dining Room, available for class, lunchtime, and some quiet, free play (and has a small, adjacent classroom)
- The Kitchen, where we may store dry supplies, but must take away all trash. (The First Aid kit is located in the kitchen.)

There are boys' and girls' bathrooms downstairs. In our downstairs storage space are a lost-and-found box, some board games and toys for general use, and long-term storage for family bins, floater materials, and general supplies.

When at the co-op, please remember to be a good and courteous guest. Use the stairs quietly: walk, don't run! Dispose of trash and recycling in the receptacles provided and tidy up after yourself. Remember, too, that the church is doing business during co-op hours and in the same building!

Day-to-day Operations

The Mount Airy Homeschooling Co-op has sessions varying from four to six weeks, each of which offers at least twelve classes. The classes are broken into three groups; “Younger” (generally ten and under), “Older” (generally ten and over), and “Mixed” (all ages). There is also one morning class each session for the “Under Sixes”.

Classes are generally capped at 10, with exceptions in both directions. Teachers may collect a modest materials fee at the discretion of each teacher.

The day’s schedule is as follows:

9:30	Doors open; parents sign in their children
9:45–11:00	First class period
11:00–12:00	Lunch
12:00–1:15	Second class period
1:15–2:00	Break
2:00–3:15	Third class period
3:15–3:30	Parents sign out their children

Each class is expected to pick up after itself and leave the classroom clean.

A student may drop or change a class during the first week only. There must be room in the desired new class, and the student must receive the permission of their parent, their current teacher, and the new teacher. This change must be orchestrated by the student’s parent.

Students may not leave the building and/or grounds unsupervised during the day, and may not leave the co-op without parental permission and sign-out. Parents are expected to be able to come to co-op within 15 minutes should their child need assistance, or have designated another parent to act in their stead.

Holidays and other scheduled closings are listed on the Yahoo group calendar and communicated through the mailing list. Weather cancellations follow those of the Philadelphia school system:

If the Phila. school system is closed, we are closed.

If the Phila. school system opens 1 hour late, we will open at 10:30.

If the Phila. school system opens 2 hours late, we will open at 11:30.

If there is bad weather and the Philadelphia schools close early, the co-op (as well as the church offices) will close at the same time that the Philly schools close.

The only announcements that will be made on the subject will be announcements that come from the media. It is the responsibility of each family to monitor the event and to be at the co-op on time to pick up their children.

Conduct and Behavior

All co-op participants and members, youth and adult, are expected to conduct themselves with respect, self-control, responsibility & accountability to themselves, others, and the physical facility.

Specifically, the following behaviors are not acceptable:

- Violence or aggression, either physical or verbal
- Bullying
- Discrimination (see policy)
- Behavior that disrupts the classroom focus
- Youth leaving a classroom without permission
- Teachers leaving a class unattended
- Cursing/foul language
- Damage to church or private property
- Behavior that violates a persons and/or families boundaries

It is imperative that all co-op participants and members, adult and youth, understand and comply with the above expectations: Parents, please discuss with and make sure that your children understand these expectations. This list was generated by co-op members following behaviors that were directly observed at co-op. If the policy above is not followed, the co-op has the following suggestions and procedures in place:

1. For children who need help staying on task during co-op classes, after other strategies have been exhausted (negotiation, private talks, floater assistance); parents may be asked by the teacher to join the class to shadow their child and help their child stay focused and minimize disruptions. Please note that should such a request be made, parents are expected to comply.
2. For other infractions, participants/co-op members may address the infraction and the participant/co-op member is expected to respond with respect and change the behavior.
3. Should #2 be unsuccessful in changing a participants/co-op members behavior, please refer to the section on mediation in this handbook. Mediation may be used in the event of behavior infractions, above. Any co-op member may request mediation by contacting the board.

4. Damage to church or private property will be assessed, and the individual responsible will be required to make amends.
5. The board reserves the right to request that a family withdraw their child or entire family from the co-op if the child or family cannot follow the guidelines for behavior at the co-op.

Adult-Parent Relations

At MAHC, we are fortunate to have a diverse group of families involved who come from a variety of perspectives with respect to religion and worldview, parenting philosophies, and educating philosophies. We respect the authority of parents to make decisions that they deem best for their own children. It is important to respect one another's styles and preferences, and it is not appropriate to criticize other parents' decisions for their own families. All adult members should respect the following:

- If a parent makes a request of another parent or teacher regarding their own child, the request should be honored, unless it violates the MAHC Code of Conduct.
- Parents teaching classes still have the discretion to lead their class as they have designed it, but they should make every effort to accommodate concerns of the parents of the children in their class.
 - If an adult member finds they are unable to accommodate a request or they find the request unreasonable, they should refer the issue to the Board for assistance.
- When parents do not see eye-to-eye on different issues, it is important to keep their language respectful of one another and refrain from gossip.
- Under no circumstances may a co-op member pressure another member to leave MAHC.

Adult-Child Relations

Children have opportunities to interact with adults at co-op in a variety of ways, both within and without the classroom. There are many opportunities for healthy interactions that can benefit both parties as we all learn from one another. However, because children have different maturity levels and sensitivities, it is essential that adults maintain appropriate boundaries and conduct themselves in a careful, conscientious and mature manner. Adults should refrain from the following behaviors at co-op and co-op events:

- Using inappropriate language when children are nearby
- Discussing adult-related topics such as sexualized language, violence, drugs, etc. except in the appropriate context of a class (such as answering a question)
- Giving gifts to individual children, inviting them to social events, or contacting them directly via phone, text, or e-mail without speaking to their parent
- Refusing to disclose information about a child if requested by their parent
- Gossiping with children about other members of MAHC
- Showing favoritism toward certain students within the context of teaching classes

We know that families within the Co-op can overlap in multiple ways, and adults can have closer relationships with some children than others, but parents should make an effort, especially in the classroom, to treat all students equally.

See the previous section regarding incidences when parents raise concerns about how their children are being treated.

Mediation Procedure

Conflict can occur within a large group. Should co-op members find themselves engaged in a conflict that is not easily solved, a member may request mediation*, our co-op's chosen method of conflict resolution. Please review these guidelines for mediation:

Prior to mediation:

- If necessary, allow time for cooling down.
- Arrange to direct your concern to the party involved in a private area. Communications needs to be respectful, with the goal of no shame or blame. Active listening is encouraged.
- Communication that is kept to only the parties involved will ensure privacy for all, and prevent gossip and escalation of conflict.

Conflict that cannot be resolved with the above measures needs to be presented to the board for further mediation.

The board will arrange for a mediator to meet with the parties involved to help resolve the conflict.

If the Board determines that behavior between the involved parties is disruptive to the well-being of the co-op, all parties will be suspended from teaching and Board presence until a peaceful resolution has been reached and the Board has determined that they are ready to return to full member privileges.

** Mediation: the act or process of mediating; especially: intervention between conflicting parties to promote reconciliation, settlement, or compromise.*

Source: <http://www.merriam-webster.com>

Work Requirements

All Mt. Airy Homeschooling Co-op families are required to contribute to the running of the co-op. This includes teaching classes, teaching assistant, teaching sub, non-teaching sub, floating, helping with lunch or break, dismissal, clean up, and serving actively on a committee and on the board. Based on our numbers, everyone will, at some point, need to contribute to the leadership of MAHC by serving on our Board.

The committees are:

- **Administrative.** This committee is responsible for writing and updating, when necessary, the by-laws and policies of the co-op, as well as managing the co-op's finances, including dues collection, the checking account, financial reports, budget and dues analysis.
- **Membership.** This committee is responsible for recruiting new members, maintaining the yahoo group and the website, registering students for classes, and planning social events.
- **Operations.** This committee plans each session's course schedule and room assignments, oversees member work hours, and serves as the point of contact for the physical plant, as needed.

Pickup Policy

Pickup time is between 3:00 and 3:15pm, at the entrance to the Assembly Room. The co-op must leave the building by 3:30pm, so every effort must be made to pick children up on time. If a family is not able to pick up their children by 3:30, please arrange for another family to do so, as the floater and other adults may need to leave for other activities. Please let the day's floater know that someone else will be signing your children out.

If you are late and you have not notified anyone, either the floater or another parent will have to wait outside with your children. They will try to reach you by phone.

The floater is responsible to see that all children have signed out before the floater leaves campus.

A repeated pattern of lateness will be addressed by the Board.

Illness and Infectious Disease Policy

Illness such as pinkeye, scabies, head lice, impetigo, strep infection, whooping cough, measles, mumps, and chicken pox are highly contagious. It is therefore the policy of the Mt. Airy Homeschooling Co-op that no youth or parent attend the co-op with any known or recently developed infectious illness.

If signs of such illness are present on arrival to the co-op or if symptoms emerge during the co-op day, your family will be asked to leave, and not return until resolution of the illness.

Listed below are signs of illness that should indicate a family should not attend co-op:

- Fever above 100 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Signs of possible severe illness such as uncontrolled coughing, difficulty breathing, wheezing, persistent crying, or lethargy.
- Vomiting; once a youth has vomited, most health providers recommend or require that youth not return to a group setting for at least twenty-four hours.
- Any sort of rash, especially when accompanied by a fever or behavior change.

If any member of your family is feeling unwell prior to attending co-op, please consider the symptoms carefully, and the risk they present to the group. Members of our group may be compromised by preexisting chronic illness, immune suppression or pregnancy. We are not just individuals, but a community that needs to care for and consider each other.

Absent Teacher Policy

How teacher absences are handled depends on when the teacher knows they will not be able to teach their class.

All teachers should keep on hand the emergency contact information for the parents of the students in their class. This information is available in the floater notebook kept at the co-op, and in the Yahoo group database.

In case a teacher is unable to make a class, the teacher is to do the following (listed in priority order) to ensure the class will be covered:

If known in advance: (up to and including the evening before the class):

1. Call and email all the parents of the students of the class to notify them of the expected absence. Ask the parents to cover the class alone or in partnership with one another. The parents may decide to follow a plan created by the teacher, or to create their own activity for the class period.
2. If no parent in the class is able to step in for the day, only then send a message to the co-op mailing list asking for coverage. Work to find a sub until one is found. It is the class teacher's responsibility to find their own replacement. If, after appropriate efforts, no sub can be found, the teacher should cancel the class and notify all the parents of the youth in that class and the floater on that shift of the cancellation. This option may pose a hardship for some parents, particularly if it is a second period class. Please use cancellation as a last resort. The important point to remember is that the class is the responsibility of the teacher and any creative solutions should ensure that the youth are safe and supervised as needed. **Please do not count on the sub-on-call, as they are there for last-minute sub needs only.**

If known at the last minute (flat tire, sudden illness...)

Each week the Operations Committee emails to the entire membership the names of the floaters, break parents and the sub-on-call. This is important information to have in case you need to contact the sub-on-call the night before or morning of your class. The information is also posted on the Yahoo group calendar.

Contact the sub-on-call and ask them to sub for you. If they cannot (perhaps because they are already subbing for someone else) call the floater to let them know the situation and discuss possible solutions. (For example, dividing the young people among the other classes.)

Visitor & Guest Policy

MAHC is a small, private co-op. Visits by interested families must be arranged in advance with the New Member Coordinator. Also, please check the website for the date of the next Open House.

If any current co-op member wishes to bring a guest to the co-op, they must first notify the day's floater. They also must ask the permission of all teachers of classes the guest hopes to attend. Guests are expected to follow MAHC rules. In the case of guests under twelve, a host parent must remain at the co-op during the visit. The MAHC guest fee is \$10.00 per person. Repeated guest visits are not allowed.

Pet Policy

The MAHC asks that its members not bring their pets (aide animals excluded) to the co-op. This is to avoid upset and issues of liability, as well as show respect for the church property. For those walking their dogs to or from co-op, please leave them secured at the parking lot edge when you sign your children in and out.

Financial Policies

Checking Account

1. There will be four signers from the board of directors on the checking account.
2. Checks will require any two authorized signers.
3. Bank signature cards will be updated within two weeks of the annual election of the board of directors.
4. Fees for checks that are returned for insufficient funds will be paid by the member.
5. The checkbook will be balanced each month by the Treasurer within three weeks of the statement date, and reviewed by at least one member of the Finance Committee within six weeks of the statement date.
6. There will be four signers from the board of directors on the checking account.

Collection of Fees

1. In order to maintain proper segregation of duties, membership, session and late fees will be collected by one or more members of the Finance Committee, or its designate ("the Collector). The Collector will deliver the funds with a list of payees to the Treasurer within five days of receipt. The Treasurer will deposit the funds in the Co-op checking account.
2. The Collector will issue a written receipt for any cash or money orders received, and submit a copy of the receipt to the Treasurer for reconciliation.

Budget and Fees

1. The Finance Committee will prepare a detailed budget and fee schedule for the coming year and present them to the Membership on or before May 31.
2. The Membership will vote on whether to accept the budget and fee schedule on or before June 30.

Membership, Session and Late Fees

1. Members will pay a one-time, non-refundable membership fee set by the Finance Committee. Initially, this fee is \$25.

2. Session fees for the entire session (generally 12 or 10 weeks) will be due before the first day of the session, as determined by the Finance Committee.
3. The Finance Committee may establish a calendar that accelerates all or part of the session fees. For example, the total session fees may be divided into two payments: the final payment being due one week before the start of the first class of the session and the first payment being due several weeks prior. The calendar will be presented to the Membership along with the annual budget.
4. A late fee may be assessed for payments received after the deadlines established by the Finance Committee. Generally, the co-op will assess a late fee for new members. Initially, the late fee is \$25 per late payment.
5. Registration for classes may not take place until all fees (membership, session and late) are paid according to the schedule established by the Finance Committee or the payment guidelines for new members (below).
6. Payment guidelines for new members:
 - a. If a family joins the Co-op seven or more days before the first payment of session fees is due, the membership and session fees are due according to the regular, established schedule.
 - b. If a family joins the Co-op between six days before the first payment of session fees is due and seven days before the second payment of session fees is due, their membership and first payment of session fees are due within seven days of joining. Their second payment of session fees is due according to the regular, established schedule.
 - c. If a family joins the Co-op between six days before the second payment of session fees is due and the start of classes, the membership and first payment of session fees are due immediately and the second payment of session fees is due within one week of joining or before the start of the first class of the session, whichever is sooner.
7. Payment guidelines for all members:
 - a. If a family pays session fees after the due date but before the start of the first class of the session, a \$25 late fee will be assessed for each payment that is late.
 - b. If a family pays the first payment of session fees but doesn't pay the second payment of session fees before the start of the first class of the session, the

child(ren) cannot attend class and the parent cannot teach class.

- c. If a family pays the first payment of session fees but doesn't pay the second payment of session fees before the start of the second class of the session, the family will be suspended from the Co-op until the start of the next session. Any session fees paid will be forfeited.

Expenditures

1. Classes that use supplies or materials will carry a fee to cover such costs. Allowable expenditures are supplies used in class by the students.
 - a. The teacher will communicate the fee amount to the parents of participants.
 - b. Teachers will refund unused funds to the participants.
 - c. The finance committee will help facilitate collection if requested.
2. Funds may be needed for supplies, assets or other expenses that benefit all the members. To the extent possible, these expenses should be included in the budget.
3. Whether planned or unplanned, members will send an email to the finance committee chair to request funds.
4. All Expenditure Request Forms must be approved by at least two members of the Finance Committee before funds will be released. The Finance Committee will refer to the budget approved by the Membership for guidance on disbursing funds.

Reserves

1. On an annual basis, the Finance Committee will recommend that residual funds not required for operations will be set aside as a reserve for future operations.
2. The Membership will strive to hold 40-50% of its annual operating budget in reserve.
3. Reserves are to be used for the following types of activities:
 - a. Cover an unexpected loss of income
 - b. Cover unexpected expenses
 - c. Cover a net operating loss

- d. Provide for future capital expenses
- e. Recover from a catastrophe
- f. Cover the costs of liquidating the Coop
- g. Buffer cash flow fluctuations
- h. Seed new initiatives
- i. Provide flexibility to take advantage of new opportunity
- j. Fund a change in the business
- k. Provide a source of income through investments

Reports

1. The Treasurer will report on the financial condition of the Coop, comparing budget and actual results, not less than once annually at the final Membership Meeting of the year.
2. Any member may review the financial statements of the Co-op and will receive the most recent statements one week after written request to the Finance Committee chair.

Record Retention

1. The Co-op will retain permanent copies of final, signed tax returns and annual financial statements.
2. The Co-op will retain supporting records (e.g., receipts, membership lists) for seven years following the end of the year in which the records were generated.

Property Damage

1. The cost of damage done intentionally or through gross negligence to church or co-op property will be borne by the individuals / individuals' families who created the damage. All other damage will be assessed on an event by event basis with an understanding of the actual cause of the damage.

Part-Time Attendance Policy

Prospective members who are not able to make an all-day commitment to the Mount Airy Homeschooling Cooperative can choose between two options.

1. **One class with lunch or afternoon break.** The family is required to fulfill one third of the non-teaching hours that a full-time family is responsible for, and tuition is discounted by half. In a 10-week trimester, full-time members work approximately 18 hours and pay \$250. With this option, the work requirement would be approximately six hours, and tuition, \$125.

2. **Two classes plus lunch or afternoon break.** The family is responsible for two thirds of a full time member's workload. With this option, the work requirement would be approximately twelve hours. There is no tuition discount for this option.

If the family is able to teach one class, non-teaching work shifts will be waived for that session.

Participation in a committee is required. Part-time members do not have voting rights.

Membership & Social Committee, 5/19/2013

Drop-Off Program

Minimum age: 12

Day: The regular co-op day, currently 9:30-3:30 on Tuesdays.

Fees:

\$45 for one child, plus class fees

\$60 for two children, plus class fees

\$75 for three children, plus class fees

Application process

1. New Drop-off families will submit the standard MAHC membership application and references.
2. For the initial application process, Drop-off children and at least one parent will spend one day visiting the co-op in order to observe the co-op experience and meet the other families. If this is impossible, at least one Drop-off parent must stay on the first day the Drop-off child is enrolled.
3. Drop-off families will reapply via email notice to the Membership chair each session.
4. Drop-off families will be admitted each session after
 - a. the Operations and/or Membership committees determine whether the Full Privilege membership can sustain Drop-offs and how many.
 - b.a majority vote of the Board.
5. Full Privilege members will receive priority in the application to become Drop-offs.

Community: Socials provide some of our best opportunities for adults to socialize and form relationships that strengthen our community, foster problem solving, and promote the co-op ideals. Drop-off families are expected to attend the session social as part of their membership responsibilities. The membership committee will consider attendance at socials in the application for Drop-off membership.

Membership Status: Drop-off families will not be allowed to vote or hold office.

Work Equity: Drop-off families will not have committee responsibilities.

Incidents:

- If a Drop-off youth is involved in an incident that is documented by an Incident Report, the Drop-off parent must speak with the other adults/children involved with the aim of resolving the conflict before the start of the next co-op day.
- Repeated incidents will result in expulsion from MAHC or non-renewal of the Drop-off membership.