



Policies & Procedures Manual 2023–2024

Our Mission Statement

Our purpose is to provide a Christ-centered cooperative learning and social experience by using our gifts and talents to meet the needs of our homeschooled students and to mentor and encourage the homeschool parents as well. The co-op is to be an opportunity of growth and service to all who participate.

Our Declaration of Faith

We accept the Bible to be the inspired, inerrant Word of God and the supreme and final authority in faith and life. We desire members to be active in a local assembly of believers, living their lives in accordance with the tenets of the Bible.

Note: Behaviors that are not in accordance with the Word of God may result in dismissal from the co-op. The decision to ask a particular family to leave rests with the administration of the co-op.

The Vine Homeschooling Co-op Administration Board

High School Director:	Carrie Hatton
Middle School Director:	Jacinda Head
Elementary Director:	Rebecca McBrayer
Preschool Director:	Esther Bopst
Communications Director:	Lisa Moore
Treasurer:	Angie Reynolds
Facilities Director:	Elizabeth Nehemias

Our History

Our name, “The Vine,” is taken from the Scripture, John 15:5. Before it was formed, we knew The Vine Homeschooling Co-op needed to be a group of “like-minded” people, in which our goals, our curriculum, and our hearts would be knitted together by keeping Christ Jesus as the center of our focus.

The Vine Homeschooling Co-op was started in the Fall of 2002 by our founder, Deborah Malone, who “graduated” from homeschooling in 2011. There were several reasons for beginning this co-op. First, there was a need for a group to get together to study science and history, because these seemed to be the subjects that were pushed to the side in order to concentrate on the core subjects: reading, grammar, and math. The decision was made to offer science and history, and then we found out that many colleges and universities were disappointed in the writing skills of the average homeschooler. We decided to add writing as well and have seen wonderful fruit come from our students.

Not only were we to be an academic co-op, but a ministry to homeschooling moms. One issue we discovered with homeschool moms is that they work hard to get their children around other children, yet they often find themselves isolated from other adult fellowship. Therefore, we try to get the moms to take advantage of their break time so that they can enjoy the fellowship with other homeschool moms and glean wisdom and encouragement from one another.

Homeschooling can be a rewarding experience, yet we know that daily we must depend on God’s Word; for it is He, our Lord Jesus Christ, who gives us wisdom, strength, and encouragement to complete this task of homeschooling our children.

The Vine is an academic co-op that meets on Fridays, with three class periods that are approximately one hour each. The teaching responsibility is shared by the parents, who must be present for all three hours. Members are free to choose how many classes their student takes. The volunteer board of directors is composed of grade-level directors, a Communications Director, IT Director, Treasurer, and Facilities Director, which work together to oversee the decisions and leadership of the co-op.

Enrollment Policy

1. It is preferable for new families to be sponsored by a family already in co-op.
2. First priority for acceptance is to parents who are willing to teach a class.
3. A system of evaluation of class participation and academic performance will be in place. This could affect continuation in co-op, re-application eligibility, and/or placement in desired classes.

What if I have a friend who wants to join?

1. In order to be considered for membership in our group, prospective families must make an appointment to visit the campus in the Spring, prior to the upcoming school year.
2. After visiting, they may request an application packet. The new applicant must complete the application, pay a **non-refundable deposit of \$35.00**, and pass a background check from their county of residence. Upon receipt of this written information, an interview will take place to determine acceptance.

Fee Policy

1. Each family must pay a non-refundable Yearly Registration Fee of **\$35**. This serves as a good faith deposit to retain your family's position within the Vine Co-op for the following year. This fee is applied toward the total yearly dues of **\$300**. This fee is based on the decision of the board and may vary from year to year based on the current needs of the group and facility expenses.
2. Parents are responsible for all additional items needed for each individual class, as determined by the teacher, such as books, paper, pencils, and possibly some necessary equipment and/or lab fees.
3. Any expense for which you expect to be reimbursed must be pre-approved by the grade level director and/or Treasurer. Complete a Reimbursement Request and attach a receipt with your name, grade level, and class indicated. Then, hand it to the Treasurer or place it in her family file for processing and reimbursement.

When will the fees be due?

Registration fees, family dues, and classroom fees are due by the last Friday in October. To be respectful of everyone's time and our financial responsibilities as co-op members, payments must be received in a timely manner. It is each member's responsibility to know the status of their account, eliminating the need for phone calls, emails, and invoicing requests from the Treasurer. It creates an unnecessary burden when members ignore payment deadlines and communication attempts. Therefore, unless prior arrangements have been made with the Treasurer, delinquent payments will be assessed a \$25 late fee after the last Friday in October. If an account is still past-due as of the last Friday in November, grading accounts will be suspended and an additional \$25 late fee will be assessed. Any accounts left unpaid by the close of the first Friday in January will be considered in default and students will be removed from classes. If a member has an extenuating circumstance, they must speak directly with the Treasurer, prior to default in payment.

Fundraising Policy

We do a few fundraising projects at The Vine. Occasionally, we have done a fundraiser for a specific purpose or need. However, the money we raise goes back into the general fund to cover expenses of the group. We are also very selective about what we choose to do, trying to promote a product/service that is beneficial and helpful to those who are willing to purchase or participate. Participation is not a requirement, but each family is encouraged to do so.

A few examples of past/present fundraisers:

- **Box Tops for Education** – a program by which our group can receive 10¢ for each valid box top.
- **Labels for Education** – clip and redeem points from product labels for free educational resources.
- **Chick-Fil-A Calendars** – coupons for food items provided at Chick-Fil-A.
- **Snack/Drink Sales** – purchase of these items throughout the day supports the needs of the co-op.

Dress Code Policy

Conservative Christian dress will be required for any adult or student at co-op meetings. Casual dress will be acceptable as long as it is neat, clean and within our guidelines. Again, this dress code applies not only to students, but to teachers as well. Teachers in particular should set a positive example for our students to follow. It is the parent's responsibility to be certain that children are appropriately dressed prior to leaving home on the morning of co-op. If you have to ask yourself, "Is this okay?" change your clothes.

Dress Code "Do's":

Everyone should dress in such a way as to:

1. Be a good witness and representation of the co-op, respecting the ownership of the facility.
2. Not be distracting to students or others.

Dress Code "Don'ts":

Please do not wear any of the following:

1. No hats in the sanctuary, no workout clothes, no extremely baggy/tight clothes, no underclothes showing, etc.
2. No short skirts or short shorts, no low cut tops, no bare midriffs or backs. Midriff or back should not be exposed when arms are raised overhead. Shorts and skirts should not be above fingertip level, when hands are extended down the side of the torso.
3. No extreme hairdos, no extreme body piercing.
4. No apparel with questionable sayings, pictures, or cartoon characters.
5. Nothing that might look like a gang member, excessive use of black clothing, "gothic" look, etc.

Note: Anyone wearing anything questionable may be asked to return home to change before attending classes. Final decision will be at the co-op board's discretion.

Calendar Policy

The Vine is defined as an academic co-operative. We will meet once a week throughout the school year (approximately 32 weeks). The calendar of class dates and holidays may change from year to year, at the board's discretion. The board must give ample notice to the group of any future calendar changes.

Communication Policy

How can we best communicate and know what's new with our group?

Communication is key to great relationships, and we are constantly trying to develop new ways of reaching our co-op family. Right now, we have the following in place: the messaging system within the ThinkWave portal, weekly update emails, our Facebook group, and our individual family file.

When should I check my email for messages from the group?

Each co-op family should have active access to email and check it on a regular basis. At a minimum, it is highly suggested that you make a point to check it Monday and mid-week before co-op on Friday.

What do you mean by the family file? Where is it?

The family file is a file crate with a hanging file folder for each family and is located in the Fellowship Hall. It is imperative that you check your file every Friday before leaving co-op for the day. If you are absent on a particular Friday, have a friend check your file for important information (memos, graded homework, etc.).

I heard we have a website! How can I find it and what's on it?

The Vine has a website located at <http://www.thevinehsc.com>. You'll find contact information, the academic calendar curriculum list, class schedule, and more.

Where do my students receive their weekly assignments and check their grades?

The Vine uses an online gradebook called ThinkWave. Each student enrolled will be assigned a username and password to access all course information. This online grading portal will contain course assignments and grades, which can be printed from home at the discretion of the parent.

Note: Teachers need to post assignments no later than Friday for homework due the following Friday.

Visitor Policy

1. Any visitors, including guest speakers, wishing to attend actual classes, must receive prior approval before doing so, from both the board and the teacher of the class.
2. Animals are not allowed at The Vine, unless prior approval has been granted by the board.
3. For the safety of the co-op, all visitors must check in with a board member.
4. All visitors must follow co-op rules as addressed in this Policies & Procedures manual, including the dress code, while on co-op premises.

Telephone/Cell Phone Policy

As a rule, we do not use the telephone that belongs to the church where we meet. Teachers should have their cell phones set to silent or vibrate while leading a class, so as not to interrupt the class time. Using a cell phone during your class time is not acceptable. Again, please be an example to our students. Students may bring cell phones to co-op, but they must be on silent mode and out of view during class time. If a student's cell phone becomes a distraction in the opinion of the teacher (i.e. checking time), the teacher may take the phone from the student for the duration of the class. Remember, please be an example to the students! Unless it is a dire emergency, do not use your cell phone during class time. The students do notice and comment on this infraction by the teachers, especially since the students themselves aren't allowed to have access and can be disciplined for misuse.

Teacher Terms/Limits Policy

As a teacher, we will want you to share your talents and gifting with a broad range of students. Most of the time, once a teacher has prepared a syllabus and lessons, his or her physical investment in the course warrants use for the following year as well. New groups of students benefit from the use of the original course plan. However, when teachers promote up from year to year with the same class, that group of students fail to benefit from a new teaching style or technique. As a result, we monitor these yearly promotions by setting limits. This benefits the students with a fresh perspective and keeps the teacher from having to learn new coursework, thereby saving them time and energy and allowing for creative application on the second year as well. *Teachers are not permitted to teach the same group of students more than two years in sequence. They will be required to take a two-year break before returning to that same student group.*

Copy Policy

The co-op does not own a copier. We request that all copies needed for class be made by our contracted copy center, Atlantic Laser. We have made special arrangements with the printer to provide copies to our teachers at no charge to them. The teacher simply submits the documents in PDF format, with the class name and number of copies requested, to the printer via e-mail (thevinehsc.copies@gmail.com) by Wednesday at 5 PM for delivery Friday morning. The co-op will make payment to Atlantic Laser on a monthly basis.

1. There should really never be an occasion to make copies of entire chapters or sections of a textbook. You should be asking the parents to purchase a book if that quantity is needed. However, it may be necessary under special exceptions.
2. To allow for the higher volume of copies, families will be charged a class copy fee per student per year. Please respect copyrighted material. Do not copy things that are not legally allowed to be copied. Some classes have a class fee to cover class consumables.

Courses Offered Policy

1. Courses should meet or exceed the requirements in the Florida Sunshine State Standards and are designed at each individual teacher's discretion. Course outlines/objectives are made known by the teachers so that course choices can be made. The parent is the primary teacher for each course and responsible for giving a final grade. However, if a student is assigned a class by his/her parent, completion of all coursework at the direction of the teacher is required. Each teacher may give grades for work done, but the ultimate decision for each student's grade is the parent's.
2. Course availability is based on the volunteer teachers available and the needs expressed by the students and families.
3. It is suggested that class size be limited to no more than 10-12 students.
4. It will be up to each teacher to decide what they want accomplished and when a child should be removed from the class. We only meet for class one day each week and can't afford to waste any time with discipline problems. Students that are not completing assignments are a potential distraction during class because they have not studied the material, limiting their ability to participate in relevant class discussions. When a student has missed bringing in their assignment for two weeks, he or she may be removed from the class and delivered to the student's parent. The student may return to class after all assignments are current. Auditing a class (attending class but not doing the homework) is not permitted.
5. Cheating (including plagiarism) is grounds for removal from a class.
6. Priority for student placement in a class will be as follows:
 - a. Parent/student tenure
 - b. Students with parents who are teachers
 - c. Students with parents who are assistants
 - d. Order of registration with co-op
7. Final decision for placement in and/or removal from a class will be at the discretion of the board.

Note: Middle school students will not be placed in a high school class above a high school student who needs that particular credit.

When a middle school student is placed in a high school level class, said student MUST be able to keep up with the advanced pace of the class.

Discipline Policy

The Bible says, "Let everything be done decently and in good order." In keeping with this command, our policies on discipline must be followed. Consistent disobedience will require dismissal from the co-op. Please adhere to the following guidelines:

1. The board is NOT the Principal. You are in charge of disciplining your own children.
2. Under no circumstance may a student leave the church property without parental consent and/or parental/designated adult accompaniment.
3. Teachers are allowed to remove a student from their class for a day. They may remove a student from their class for the duration of the year with appropriate notification/reason and approval from the board.
4. The board may remove students from classes as they see fit.
5. Eating and drinking in unauthorized areas and/or at unauthorized times is considered a discipline problem and will be treated as such. This is an agreement we have made with our host church.
6. Any student who writes on or otherwise defaces walls or tables, breaks church property, etc., will be required to replace or repair said item.
7. Bad attitudes, disrespect, and/or disrupting class are definitely grounds for disciplinary action.
8. Foul or offensive language and inappropriate jokes are not allowed at any time while on the church property, even during break.
9. Bullying will not be tolerated.
10. All students and parents shall acknowledge it is a privilege our co-op is allowed to use the church facilities. In acknowledging that privilege, students and parents agree to respect church property and rules at all times.
11. Electronic equipment such as handheld video games, iPods and the like may be used only during times when a student IS NOT in class. They may then be used ONLY with earphones so as not to disturb others. Laptops may be used during class only when necessitated by that particular class. Cell phones must be silenced and out of view during class (see Cell Phone Policy). The board reserves the right to take these items from students if they are not complying in any way with these rules.

Note: If personal electronic equipment is brought on the premises during the co-op day and gets broken, tampered with, or disappears altogether, neither the Vine Co-op nor the board members are liable or responsible. Parents must rectify these situations on their own.

For High School Students (Disciplinary Action Notice)

There are some rules we have established over the years to help assist parents and students alike, to maintain a high standard of learning. They are as follows:

1. All students must turn in their homework on time. If work is one week late, a letter grade (10%) will be taken off. Work turned in later than one week will receive a zero, unless the absence is excused.
2. Students may bring cell phones to co-op, BUT they risk that phone being taken away by the teacher/assistant for the duration of the class period. A “phone basket” may become the normal practice in some classes. This decision has been left up to each individual teacher.
3. Behavior is expected to be exemplary. A student asked more than twice to stop talking or disrupting the class will be asked to leave the room and sit with his/her parent. The parent is then to go to the teacher and get the assignments the student may have missed.
4. Anyone caught cheating on an exam will be given a zero and will be asked to take it again, for the sake of learning the material, without a chance of improving their score.
5. If any work is plagiarized, a zero will be given. All of the teachers will explain what plagiarism is to their students and will tell them how to avoid it. Please ensure your student understands plagiarism. When discovered, the plagiarizing student will receive a zero on the assignment and be required to turn in a three-page essay about plagiarism. The essay will be turned into the High School Director and will be considered an assignment given from the co-op. Do you need to understand plagiarism better? Here is a place to start:
http://www.wadsworth.com/english_d/special_features/plagiarism/definition.html
6. MLA Format (Modern Language Association of America) will be used in high school for all papers, essays, reports, etc. in all classes.
7. No food or drinks are allowed in any of the classrooms! Food may be served/eaten in the Fellowship Hall or outside.

Parents, other than these rules, we do ask that you keep all answer keys to tests and other materials out of your student’s reach. They are not fully mature and the temptation to cheat is not something they need to deal with at this time. We keep them from temptation in many ways, but parents often forget this one. Any and all questions concerning any of the above guidelines should be directed to the High School Director.

What if I'm having a discipline issue with a student in my class?

Teachers are to send students to the parent AS SOON AS there seems to be a problem with behavior in the classroom. DO NOT wait until one or two students have affected the entire class. If the parent is unavailable, students will remain with a board member until restitution can be made between the teacher, the parent, and the student. An Administration Evaluation/Conference Form will be completed at that time and will be kept in the student's file. If there is an ongoing problem, parents may be asked to accompany their children to each class they attend at the discretion of the board.

What if I decide to withdraw my child from a class?

Be sure to complete a Class Withdrawal Form so that the board and the teacher will be aware of the change of schedule for your child. You can download this form from our website.

What is The Vine's stand as it pertains to dating relationships among the students?

Parents are the governing agent within their household. The topic of dating should be discussed privately and discreetly at home between the parent and the student at the appropriate age level. As for the property where The Vine meets, all students are voluntarily under the authority of the administration board currently in place. Physical contact between persons is not permitted on campus. This includes the outside areas, fields, playground, parking lot and sidewalks that surround the campus. "PDA," also known as "Public Displays of Affection," are limited to the students' family members. Congratulatory displays such as handshakes, high-fives, side hugs and pats on the back would be appreciated and encouraged to promote community within the group. Generally, two students of the opposite sex must have a third party with them at all times.

Safety/Security Policy

While at co-op, parents are ultimately responsible for their own children. Neither The Vine, its board, or the facility where we meet will be responsible for your children during the co-op day, particularly when they choose to go outside of the building. **YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR CHILDREN** and should know where they are at all times.

1. Children are not to be on the playground without adult supervision.
2. Children are not to approach the wooded areas on the property (snakes!).
3. Younger children should never be alone on campus, especially in the parking lot.
4. Parents should report any suspicious activity of would-be predators to The Vine's board.
5. Running in the building, including the stairwells, is not permitted.
6. The use of wheeled shoes or skateboards is not permitted.
7. The use of sports equipment is not permitted inside the building.
8. Horseplay is not permitted.
9. Chairs can be rickety. All four legs need to be on the floor when occupied.
10. Report any unsafe equipment or facility situations to the building administrator or to security. This could be anything from wasp nests to broken playground equipment.
11. If your child has any medical conditions or allergies, please inform the board AND your child's teachers.

Absentee Policy

The board distributes a calendar to all co-op members well in advance, letting you know which days will be school days and which days are co-op holidays. Since we meet only once per week, any absenteeism will have a negative impact. Please realize that when we are out on a Friday, we do not miss just one day, but an entire week's worth of education. Being in the co-op is a privilege and a commitment. The board asks that you plan and choose carefully any days you **MUST** be out. Please limit your planned absences to less than three Fridays per year. Homework will be due as assigned.

Notice about class cancellation:

It is our policy to not cancel class, except as a last resort and with approval of the department director.

Notice about early class dismissal:

Classes are not to be let out early. If the lesson is completed for the day, students must stay in the classroom until normal dismissal time. Teachers must stay with their students for supervision, respecting the classes next to them regarding noise level.

What if I, the parent, must be out a day?

1. Teachers should notify their grade-level director.
2. Teachers should either ask their assistant or the parent of a student in your class to substitute, then give the substitute instructions and/or materials for continuing the class in their absence.
3. If only the parent must be absent and the children attend co-op, a designated adult must be responsible for their children.
4. In the event you will be absent on the day of your scheduled setup, cleanup, or other duty, notify the facilities director with the name of your replacement.

What if my children have to be absent on a co-op day?

Notify your children's teachers as soon as possible. Remember that it is the student's responsibility to get assignments from the teacher whenever they must miss a class.

What if I have a student in my class who is absent?

Teachers, please make note of each student's absence. This is very important! Share your concern with the grade-level director if there are multiple absences by one child. This may be an indication that the student or family is struggling through circumstances beyond co-op.

Do I have to be physically present at co-op all day on Friday?

YES! However, if you occasionally must run out during your free hour, be sure to clearly communicate with your child(ren) prior to leaving and notify whoever will be in charge of your child(ren) while you are gone. Use the sign-out book near the snack bar to indicate who will be responsible for your child(ren) while away.

Service Policy

It is no easy task to set up classes each co-op morning, break them down at the end of the day, and keep order and neatness throughout a busy co-op day. It is our policy to show appreciation to the place where we meet by leaving the building better at the end of the day than when we arrived that morning. In order to spread the responsibilities of our co-op, each family **MUST** occasionally assist with setup and cleanup. The Setup/Cleanup Schedule will be distributed at the beginning of each year. The facilities director will inform volunteers of their assigned duties ahead of time. In addition, each parent will be assigned dates to be on call for helping in the preschool department, if needed. They will check in with the preschool director that morning.

General FAQs

Does The Vine Co-op have books and science equipment I can borrow?

We have a cabinet with some curriculum that is commonly used at co-op that may be checked out for the school year. Please feel free to take advantage of any books we have to offer. We have a microscope and some science equipment that can be used on co-op day with board approval. A deposit may be required.

Where do my children go if they do not have a class during a certain period? Can they go outside?

Students are not allowed to hang out in the hallways or empty classrooms. They may stay in the Fellowship Hall with a designated guardian.

Accountability Policy

In order for the co-op to be of great service to the families, we have implemented an online grading portal called ThinkWave. All teachers from 1st grade through high school are required to use ThinkWave to post assignments and grades for completed work, tests and projects. This will be your main source of communication with your students. Parents are given access to their student's accounts in order to monitor progress and to print off grade reports. The co-op has two grading periods: the first semester runs from August through early January and the second semester runs from January through May.

Note to Parents of High School Students: If your student is in an umbrella school or playing sports for a public or private school that requires progress reports and/or quarterly grades, it is your responsibility to inform your students' teachers, so that all grades are posted for completeness on ThinkWave.

Policy Changes

Policy is set forth by the current board and is effective as of the stated date on page one of this document. Changes may be made as deemed necessary by the board, and all members of the group must be notified of these changes.

The Vine Homeschooling Co-Op, Policies & Procedures Adherence Agreement

Please check the box of each section you have read and list any questions/concerns you may have.

Sign, date and return to a board member by the first day of co-op. Thanks!

Policy/Procedure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Questions or Concerns
Our Mission Statement, Statement of Faith and History	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Enrollment Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Fee Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Fundraising Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Dress Code Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Calendar Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Communication Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Visitor Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Telephone/Cell Phone Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Teacher Terms/Limits Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Copy Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Courses Offered Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Discipline Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Safety/Security Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Absentee Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Service Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Accountability Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Policy Changes	<input type="checkbox"/>	

I have read The Vine Homeschooling Co-Op Policies & Procedures Manual in its entirety, and understand and agree to abide by each section thereof.

Signed: _____ Date: _____