

Myerstown

Policy Manual

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INDEX

| | |
|--|-----|
| Myerstown Enrichment Center | 3 |
| Membership | 3-4 |
| Options and Requirements | |
| Application Process | |
| Functioning as a Co-op, General Overview | 4 |

| | |
|---|-------|
| Working Together The MEC Board Meetings | |
| Functioning as a Co-op, Week-to-Week | 4-6 |
| Communication, Wi-Fi, Tardiness, Absences, Lobby Fellowship, Cancellation Policy, Keeping the Building Clean, Visitor Policy, Child Safety Policy | |
| Classes | 7 |
| General Information – Registration, Time, Class Size, Grade Levels, Textbooks | |
| Special Situations – Auditing, Dropping/Adding | |
| Teachers other than Full Member Parents | |
| Teacher Expectations | 8-9 |
| Early Planning, Monetary Allowance, Syllabus/Synopsis, Grading, Communication w/Parents, Unapproved Material, Taking Attendance, Clean-up, Discipline | |
| Resources/Supplies for Teachers – TV/VCR/DVD/Computer Projector, Overhead Projector, Copier, Basic School Supplies, Storage, Home Messenger and JDM Accounts | |
| Parent Expectations | 9-10 |
| Basic Supplies, Textbooks, Special Needs, Differences in Beliefs, Homework, Problems with Teachers, Discipline from Teacher, Writing Policy, Review Info With Your Children | |
| Student Expectations | 10-11 |
| General, Classes and Homework, Dress Code, Writing Policy | |
| Discipline Action by the Board | 11 |
| Involving Students, Involving Adults | |
| Safety and Fire Guidelines | 11-12 |
| For Your Safety | |
| First Aid Locations | |
| Fire Alarm Procedure – Teachers, Students, and Moms | |
| Lunches and Beverage Table | 12-13 |
| Students' Lunch | |
| Mom/Teachers' Lunch Table | |
| Beverage Table | |
| Financial information | 13 |
| Payment, Full Membership Cost, Associate Membership Cost, Additional Costs, Overdue Bills, Administrative Fee, Balances Due, Fundraisers | |
| Optional Services | 13-15 |
| To help you teach your children – <i>God's World News</i> , Used Book Sale | |
| To develop student leadership – Student Council, Newsletter, Yearbook | |
| To help you comply with the PA Homeschool Law – Iowa Tests, Evaluations | |
| To provide incentives, foster healthy competition and showcase achievements: Book It!, Geography Bee, Art Contest, WCTU Contests, Graduation, Talent Shows, Closing Program | |
| To provide support – Urgent Prayer Requests, Website, Student Photos, HSLDA | |
| Writing Policy | 15 |

Myerstown Enrichment Center

Myerstown Enrichment Center (MEC) is a Christian homeschool support group that was founded in 1995. We meet each Tuesday, except for listed holidays, from September to May. Our volunteer seven-member board coordinates and administers MEC activities. Our mission is to provide educational resources and support for families.

MEC offers traditional parent/member-taught* educational classes from nursery through high school, with our primary focus on first through twelfth grades. Nursery through kindergarten is primarily a

babysitting/enrichment service designed to allow the mothers of older students to serve, although some academics are included. Membership requires that a family has at least one student enrolling in first grade or above.

Our purpose is to work cooperatively in order to teach our children, while offering extra opportunities to help develop student leadership, providing incentives and a place where students can showcase their achievements. We also seek to offer assistance to comply with the PA Homeschool Law and to be a source of support to families through educational, personal, and prayer support. (Please see end of Policy Manual for more details.)

*At times we pay outside teachers to teach a class that is offered. (See page 7)

Membership

Options and Requirements: Two membership options are available, Associate or Full.

Associate: Associate members pay tuition for each class a child takes in quarterly installments (see p 13).

- 1) Remain current with tuition payments. (see PM page 13 and MEC fees page on the website)
- 2) Commit to arriving on time. Tardiness places an unnecessary burden on both the student and the teacher and may incur additional fees. (see page 5)
- 3) Register your family on the private side of our website. This is where members can find your contact information. You are also responsible to keep it updated throughout your membership.
- 4) Become familiar with MEC policies and agree to abide by them.
- 5) Sign and uphold MEC's statement of faith.
- 6) An Associate Member parent with a student younger than 8 years old must remain on the premises the entire time the student is in class for a two-week trial period to determine if the child will thrive in the classroom setting without mom present. Younger siblings may accompany mom during this trial period. If the child does well, the Associate Member parent is free to leave the premises. After the trial period, parents of younger mobile children should refer to the Lobby Fellowship part of the Policy Manual on page 5.
- 7) Adult Associates are welcome to join other moms in the lobby for fellowship while their children are in class, but should remain in the lobby area and use only the single visitor restroom located in the hallway behind the church office as state law mandates.

Full: Full members pay a much smaller per family rate, but must fulfill more requirements. A full member must:

- 1) Commit to remaining a member for the entire school year. There is a Commitment Fee of \$100 that needs to be paid in order to register children for classes. This money is only refundable at the conclusion of the school year if all commitments have been met, or it can be rolled over for the following year's commitment. Although, the Commitment Fee will not apply to the next year until the current year's financial obligations are met.
- 2) Contribute to teach/help during each Tuesday at MEC. (See curriculum coordinator for more detailed requirements.)
Note: First year members are not eligible to teach, except when absolutely necessary.
- 3) Undergo the appropriate background checks required by PA state law (see "Clearances" on our website).
- 4) Choose to either participate in the moms' lunch or opt out of it. (see details on page 12)
- 5) Clean the facilities two times each year, or pay to be relieved of this obligation. (see page 5)
- 6) Attend the September Business Meeting and the February/March Planning Meeting. (see page 4) Occasionally the board may call additional meetings that you should attend if possible. If there is a conflict that makes this impossible, notify the board secretary in writing (email or paper) in advance, and be sure to speak to someone afterwards so you know what was discussed. Absence from the meeting will not be accepted as an excuse for ignorance of policies discussed at the meeting.
- 7) Remain current with tuition payments. (see PM page 13 and MEC fees page on the website)
- 8) Commit to arriving on time. Tardiness places an unnecessary burden on both the student and the teacher and may incur additional fees. (see page 5)
- 9) Register your family on the private side of our website. This is where members can find your contact information. You are also responsible to keep it updated throughout your membership.
- 10) Become familiar with MEC policies and agree to abide by them.
- 11) Sign and uphold MEC's statement of faith.

Application Process for MEC Membership:

Both associate and full members must fill out the application and submit it with the signed Statement of Faith and application fee to the board registrar. This can be found on our website under "Membership Options." New applicants for full membership will be interviewed prior to acceptance. Interviews are typically conducted between February and June. Acceptance is based upon the date the application is received, available class space, former participation as associate members, and the "fit"

between the applicant family and the MEC program and philosophy. Because of liability concerns, only members of each applicant's immediate family and those for whom they have legal guardianship will be accepted as students. Applications are accepted between the dates of January 1st and April 1st. Previous full MEC members who desire to return to full MEC membership shall submit an application to the MEC Registrar between January 1st and April 1st. The interview and reference process will still apply, but may be waived at the Board's discretion. The Board reserves the right to deny membership upon consideration of administrative challenges, including bad debt or abrupt previous departure.

Functioning as a Co-Op, General Overview

It is imperative for the success of the co-op that all members work together. Everyone must be willing to help as needed. Be aware of the rules, and if you see a student disobeying one of them, lovingly correct him or her; if you see someone in need, lend a hand; if a mom has a sick child, willingly substitute for her; volunteer to assist with one of the many services we offer. This is the type of attitude that will help MEC be a blessing to all.

The MEC Board:

A volunteer seven-member board governs MEC. A nominating committee comprised of out-going board members and two or more persons from the general membership nominates persons to fill available board positions. To qualify for board membership, a nominee must have been a full MEC member for at least two years and share the vision of MEC. Our by-laws contain additional details explaining the process. Nominations are presented to the Board for approval and voted on by the membership at the planning meeting. Because of the extra time board members contribute, they are exempt from cleaning and cooking responsibilities and may also be exempted from teaching duties.

In order to avoid chaos, the board has the authority to make all decisions, though a vote of the membership will sometimes be conducted to provide guidance and/or direction. The board meets each Tuesday during the day at MEC. Additional meetings may be scheduled if necessary during the school year and over the summer months.

Meetings:

Both our September Business Meeting and our February/March Planning Meeting are essential to our communication process. Therefore, attendance at both is required by Full members.

The Business Meeting is when we conduct new family orientation and make last minute preparations for the new school year. Its purpose is to help us all reconnect before the year begins, make pertinent announcements, and answer questions. It is vital in order to start the year right!

The Planning Meeting is when we discuss class ideas for the upcoming year, making sure there is an adequate choice of classes for each grade level. This meeting frequently runs late. Before this meeting, suggestion and sign-up sheets are displayed in the moms' lobby. Around the beginning of the calendar year, you should be thinking about classes you would willingly teach or like to see taught and fill in the information, as much of the planning is done from these papers. Usually, within a week following this meeting, each member will have the opportunity to vote (once for each child in their family) for the classes they would like to see offered. The Board will then chart the votes, plan, and publish the schedule based on preferences shown by the majority.

If a Full Member is absolutely unable to attend either of these meetings, the MEC Secretary needs to be notified with a written note (email or snail mail is acceptable - see website directory). Please be aware a fine will be charged to anyone who does not let her know ahead of time with an acceptable excuse.

Functioning as a Co-Op, Week-To-Week

Communication:

Email: Email is our primary means of communication. The board uses this to pass along messages. Teachers who need to communicate with students and parents throughout the week use it as well. Each member should have an email address they can access on a regular basis.

Online: Our website www.myerstowndenrichmentcenter.org is our main source of information. It is full of information, so if you have a question about something, you just might be able to find your answer there. Messages designed for distribution to the entire membership should be sent through a moderated forum found on the website when you are logged in.

Mailboxes: All members have a "mailbox" (i.e. a labeled hanging file in a bin). The bins are located on a table in the front lobby. Please be sure to remove and read your mail each week, as important announcements are passed along here. Also, remember to check the table area each week for other announcements and sign-up sheets.

Suggestions: While we want you to feel free to talk to any board member at any time, if you have ideas or plans you'd like to see implemented or something you'd like the board to discuss, please write it down and place it in the President's mailbox. A written note will probably not be misunderstood, misrepresented, or forgotten as easily. If you are comfortable, please sign your note so we know whom to contact for clarification. The board will then address your request at a future meeting.

Wi-Fi Usage:

There is Wi-Fi available at MABC. See a Board member for access.

Tardiness:

If students are late to any one class on three separate occasions, their parents will be invoiced with a tardiness fee. If the whole family is late arriving to MEC, the fee will be levied per family after the third time, rather than per student. For example, if a family has four students, only one late fee will be invoiced, not four. Please plan to arrive 15 minutes in advance of when you need to, so if you run into last minute delays, you will then have a few extra minutes to spare.

Absences:

Occasional absences by both teachers and students are inevitable. If you know your child will be absent, please inform the teachers in advance. If you are a Full Member and you are absent for either planned or emergency reasons, **YOU are responsible** for finding someone to fulfill your obligations. If you do not post to the forum and/or let the Secretary know, you will be fined \$5. Please see the website under "Substitutes" for specific instructions.

Opening Exercises:

In order to foster a sense of community and to openly commit our school day to the LORD, we begin our day gathering in the Sanctuary at 9:45 am. Please arrive with enough time to hang up coats, etc and be seated so that we may begin with announcements by 9:50. We may share a brief devotional thought or Scripture meditation before committing our day to the LORD in prayer.

Lobby Fellowship:

The lobby is designed for moms' relaxation and fellowship. The presence of younger mobile children can provide distraction as well as safety concerns, therefore, we ask that parents refrain from bringing these children to this area on a regular basis.

Close relationships develop as moms share around the tables each week, and there is a tremendous amount of wisdom, not only in homeschooling, but also in other aspects of life, shared in the lunchroom each week. Take advantage of it!

Cancellation Policy:

If ELCO School District closes, we close! A delay by ELCO doesn't affect our schedule. School closings are broadcast on local radio stations, TV, news websites, or ELCO School District's website. If we are closed, we will do our best to let you know by sending an email and posting it on our website as early as possible. The 9:00 class teachers may choose to cancel class/lab if they deem it best, but it will be their responsibility to contact students and the substitute coordinator.

In the event of adverse weather in which ELCO does not cancel or is already closed (e.g. parent/teacher conferences), the board will decide on MEC's situation. If we choose to cancel, we will send an email and post it on the website by 7:30a.m. If you don't have email, it will be **your responsibility** to contact a board member to find out if we are having class that day.

If, due to the weather, you decide on your own that your family will not be at MEC, but MEC has not yet announced a cancellation, you must inform the substitute coordinator directly either by phone or personal email of your decision by 7:15 Tuesday morning. Please do not wait until you find out at 7:30 that we're not canceled in order to cancel for yourself if you know ahead of time that you will not venture out either way. Please don't forget to then find substitutes for all of your jobs.

Keeping the Building Clean:

Each teacher should make sure they have cleaned up any "mess" the class has made before leaving the room. It should not be the next teacher or that day's cleaner's responsibility to clean up your class's mess. The final teacher of the day should restore the room to the way the church prefers it to be set up. There is a picture or instructions on top of each supply bin to make this possible.

Full members are assigned to cleaning duty two weeks each year—once upstairs and once downstairs. Our policy is to leave the facility cleaner than we found it each time we use it. A detailed checklist of what needs to be done is provided for the cleaner each week, but a basic summary of what needs to be cleaned is to replace trash liners, pick paper and other trash off the floor, spot clean where necessary, and vacuum lobby and area where moms' lunch is served. Additionally, all bathrooms should be checked for tidiness, making sure that toilets are flushed and counters are dried.

If you wish not to clean, you have the option to pay \$40 to have someone else clean both times for you in order to fulfill your membership requirement by informing the VP/Hostess by July 31st. If you are willing to clean an extra two times for someone who opts out and have \$40 credited to your account, please inform the VP/Hostess of this as well.

The church's custodial supplies – trash can liners, paper towels, vacuums, etc. – are in a closet directly inside the men's bathroom near the kitchen. MEC's vacuum is in the rear room of the nursery.

Visitor Policy:

All visitors including family members and special speakers need to have approval from the board if they will be in a classroom or lunchroom. If a student brings a visitor, he/she should be cleared ahead of time with a MEC board member and the teachers of the classes involved.

Visits by animals should be cleared with the teachers. Please keep in mind that we are meeting in a church facility and that some students are allergic to animals.

Child Safety Policy:

To ensure that a nurturing Christian environment for children/youth is maintained within Myerstown Enrichment Center (MEC), to protect children/youth who participate in activities sponsored by MEC from sexual, mental, and/or physical abuse, and to protect MEC's members from false allegations of abuse, we will follow the following guidelines as circumstances allow:

- 1) Child Abuse Prohibited: Those who accept the special responsibility of working with MEC's children/youth shall not violate that responsibility by intentionally, knowingly or recklessly causing physical injury; mental injury; sexual abuse or serious physical neglect of children/youth; induce or fabricate medical symptoms or any other act described as child abuse in this policy or the laws of our state.
- 2) Sexual Abuse Prohibited: Those who accept the special responsibility of working with MEC's children/youth shall not violate that responsibility by having any interaction with a child/youth where the child/youth is being used for sexual stimulation of the adult or a third person regardless of whether or not the behavior involves touching, or by any other act described as sexual abuse in this policy or the laws of our state.
- 3) Two Person Rule: Two cleared volunteers should be present during any MEC sponsored children/youth activity. In some instances, this might mean 2 adults in the room, or it might mean one person in the room while another person circulates outside the classroom area to be within easy reach to provide assistance if needed and provide accountability (see #4).
- 4) Visibility: All activities/meetings with children/youth must be conducted in a way that allows visibility, e.g., glass areas of doors should not be obstructed, curtains/blinds should be open, when possible, door should be open or a window should allow easy observation of the room. Where possible, conduct activities in a public place, with another person within sight and sound of the activities.
- 5) Bathroom and Diapering
In general, children should be encouraged to use the bathroom before and after classes or other activities. If you need to take a child to the toilet, be aware of your visibility and the child's privacy, e.g., adult stands holding public bathroom door open while child enters toilet stall alone. *Diapering*: Two approved adults must be in room when clothes or diapers are being changed. A parent can also be recruited to change clothes or a diaper. *Two and Three Year Olds*: An approved adult must accompany children to and from the bathroom and inform another adult when this takes place. If assistance is needed, the adult must leave the stall door open.
- 6) Empty Room Policy: After an activity, we will purpose to check rooms to ensure that rooms are empty, especially at the end of the day.
- 7) Expressions of Affection: True expressions of affection toward children/youth can be a manifestation of Christ's love for all of us. A kind word of encouragement to a child/youth or a pat on the back can be a small but significant act for both the adult and the child/youth. Adults must use caution and common sense when physically expressing affection toward children/youth.
 - a. Respect a child's/youth's refusal of affection
 - b. Be aware of appropriate hand placement. A child/youth or an observer could misinterpret a pat on the bottom or a bear hug. A touch on private areas, those areas covered by a bathing suit; or a kiss on the mouth is inappropriate.
 - c. Discipline of any type involving physical contact is not permitted.

*approved adult = one with clearances

Classes

Registration: All students (newborn through high school) must be registered for a class, study hall, or lunch for any time that they will be at MABC. Associate member students may not be registered for back-to-back study halls. The full membership commitment fee and any outstanding balances are due at the time of registration.

Class registration opens to current full members before it opens to other members. If registration exceeds the class limit, priority will be given to students in the upper grade levels, and, if necessary, a raffle will be held between the younger students. When this type of demand exists, we will attempt to repeat the class the following year. Additionally, we may be able to offer two sections of the same class or expand the class size and add extra help if the teacher is agreeable. Finally, if the teacher has her own children in the class, those children will automatically be admitted.

If a current member has not signed up to teach and their children are not registered for classes by June 1st, the board may assume that the family will not be returning and will take steps to replace them and their commitment fee will not be returned to them.

Time: Our regular scheduled classes are held between 10:00 a.m. and 2:40 p.m., though some electives or labs begin earlier. Elementary classes are 45 minutes in length; high school classes are 1 hour long.

Class Size: Classes that are open for registration are only guaranteed when enrollment reaches 5 students. Maximum class sizes are determined by the board, considering the needs of the teacher, and dependent on physical classroom size. A class (other than gym) will not exceed 18 students without the permission of the teacher.

Grade Levels: Recommended grade levels for all classes are listed in the class descriptions, but sometimes these are flexible. If you desire to register your child in a class that is not recommended for his/her grade, you must first get approval from the teacher. If a child is registered without permission the teacher may, at their discretion, remove the child from the class.

Textbooks: Students are expected to have all required textbooks by the first day of class. Refer to the “Class Descriptions” on the website for this information and to determine whether you need to purchase them or if the teacher will be doing this. If you are ever in doubt, contact the teacher for clarification.

Special Situations

Auditing: In the past, some students have audited classes (attended class but did not turn in homework). Others have done the homework, but have not attended the class. However, some teachers are not comfortable with, or classes are not suited for, these kinds of arrangements. If a parent is interested in making such an arrangement for their child's class, they should discuss it with the individual teacher. It will be up to each teacher to decide if the option the parent suggests is feasible.

Dropping/Adding: Some students attend a class they signed up for, but find it is not what they were expecting. Others may realize they want to add a class they had not signed up for. If you choose to drop or add a class, you must fill out an “Add/Drop Form” (located in the bin by the mailboxes) which will require you to notify three people – the teacher, registrar, and treasurer. Failure to do so means you will continue to be billed for the class. Dropping and adding of classes occur free of charge for the first three weeks of class. Persons contacting the registrar prior to the beginning of the 4th week will not be charged, but any classes dropped or added after that time will incur the fee. If you drop a class, you may still be obligated to pay any expenses already incurred, such as textbooks, supplies, and teacher's fees.

Teachers Other Than Full Member Parents

All MEC teachers and helpers must undergo the appropriate background checks required by PA state law, sign MEC's statement of faith, and agree to abide by MEC's policies. If a paid teacher is required, a higher class fee will apply.

Recent Graduates: We have had recent MEC graduates teach classes with varying degrees of success. Some have done an exceptional job; others have struggled. While we welcome their enthusiasm and willingness to volunteer, because they have little or no experience in this capacity, we feel the need to be cautious. Therefore, we have decided that first year graduates will be accepted only as assistants, unless the board grants an exception. For older graduates, additional schooling, life experiences, character, and ability will be considered when considering their eligibility for the position.

Teacher Expectations

Early Planning: In January, all MEC members will receive a document called “10 Steps to Teaching a MEC Class.” Shortly after the Planning Meeting and voting process (see p. 4), as a teacher whose class was voted in, you must begin giving specifics about your class. You will need to place your class description on the website. You will also need to provide the curriculum you wish to use, any additional supplies and fees of which the students will need to be aware, and an estimate of how much homework will be given each week. At this time, you may set reasonable limits on class size and age appropriateness. The curriculum coordinator will review your curriculum and class description once it is placed on the website. If you do not hear from her, your class has been approved.

Monetary Allowance: All classes are allotted \$75 to help cover basic expenses of the class. If you will be spending more than this on supplies, copies, speakers, etc., you will need to determine a reasonable additional fee to charge per student and include it in your class description. You will not need to collect any of this money, but rather the Treasurer will bill your students in the fall. You may either hand in receipts to be reimbursed, or have expenses billed to MEC (see “Home Messenger and JDM Accounts” on p. 9). You will be responsible to pay for any purchases, including the cost of copies, exceeding the total allotted amount.

Syllabus or Synopsis: Junior and senior high school teachers are required to provide students and the curriculum coordinator with a basic schedule and class overview by August 30. Elementary teachers whose class does not provide worksheets or projects that can be placed in a portfolio should provide a synopsis at the end of the year, so that parents have a record for their student’s portfolio.

Grading: Teachers are expected to issue grades to all 7th-12th grade students, both mid-term and at the end of the year. A statement of grading policy is also helpful, as these courses typically receive a letter grade. A pass/fail grade might also be used, at the teacher’s discretion, when appropriate for certain subjects.

Communication with Parents: If you see that students in your class are struggling with their grades, we encourage you to talk to their parents sooner rather than later, so that they can work with their children in bringing up their grades while there is still time to do so.

The MEC website provides a page for each class. We encourage teachers to use it to make forum posts, and post assignments and grades. You can also use this page to upload documents for students to print, view your roster, and keep track of attendance.

Unapproved Material: Please use caution when showing movies or other material for which board and/or parent permission has not been obtained. With any questionable material, be careful so as not to violate viewing standards parents may have set for their children.

Taking Attendance: Each teacher is required to take attendance each week. The registrar will provide a chart for each classroom and will replace it each quarter with an updated class roster. The main reason we need teachers to take attendance is so we have record of those in attendance in the event there is an emergency. Please see “Safety and Fire Guidelines” on page 12. It is also important that teachers take attendance in order to enforce our tardiness policy (see p 5). We encourage everyone to be prompt, and we need the cooperation of our teachers. If a student is late for class three times within a quarter, the treasurer will invoice the parent.

Clean Up: Each teacher should make sure they have cleaned up any “mess” the class has made before leaving the room. It should not be the next teacher or that day’s cleaner’s responsibility to clean up your class’s mess. If necessary, try to end class a few minutes early and have the students help clean up.

Discipline: If a student displays any disruptive behavior, we ask that it be dealt with in the following manner:

Initially, the teacher should try to resolve the issue within the classroom. For minor offenses, we encourage teachers to use some kind of “three strikes, you’re out” rule. In other words, if a child interrupts class three times with behavior issues, it is time to talk to the parent about it, as soon after class as you are able. Please do not continually overlook disruptive behaviors or attitudes, as it is not fair to everyone else in the classroom. As a parent, it is very upsetting to hear via rumor that your child is causing problems of which you are unaware. Allow the parent to work with you to correct the wrong behavior.

If an offense takes place that is serious enough or happens often enough to speak to a parent, we ask you to please record this on a Behavioral Notice Form found in the marked folder by the moms’ mailboxes. This is not designed in any way to belittle or demean anyone, but rather to document patterns that may need to be addressed. Feel free to speak to the Student Body Advisor or another board member for advice and prayer on how to handle a situation.

Resources/Supplies for Teachers

TV/VCR/DVD/Computer Projector: One TV/DVD is available in the library or the hall. There are 6 projectors that are able to be utilized. Please see the clipboard by the mailboxes to reserve a certain time on a certain day.

Copier: MEC has a copier located downstairs in the Resource Room next to the center stairs. Please reserve its use for emergencies only. Because of the cost of ink, we ask that you make the majority of your copies at off-site facilities – it is cheaper for MEC. However, if you find yourself a few copies short for your class or something similar, it is there for your benefit. Please record the copies you make on the log sheet by the copier.

Basic School Supplies: There are three places you can look for basic supplies for your class. 1) In each classroom you should find a small bin marked “MEC” that contains a few basic school supplies (e.g. pencils, scissors, glue sticks, paper, etc.). Feel free to make use of these items, but please return them at the end of class so that they are available for the other classes held in that same room. 2) The church has graciously allowed us to use some cabinets in the Resource Room. The four doors above our copier are marked for our use and you should feel free to use the supplies found within. (e.g. construction paper, markers, scissors, paints, colored pencils, etc.) Again, remember to return these items immediately after class in order for others to use. 3) The large left-most shed in the lower part of the parking lot belongs to MEC. Feel free to look inside for the supplies you may need. If you don't find what you are looking for, please ask a board member.

Storage: MEC's shed is an option for items you use week after week that can withstand extreme cold or heat. If you can find room on a shelf, you may store something in there, but please have it approved by a board member and then mark it clearly as to whose it is. Just be aware that at the end of a MEC day the mailbox cart and some gym items will be returned there, so be careful not to take up the necessary floor space to store these items. At the end of the year, it will be your responsibility to remove your items. Items that are not removed may be donated to charity after the Board's yearly she clean-up.

Home Messenger and JDM accounts: As a teacher, there may be times when you need to make copies for your class. MEC has accounts at Home Messenger and JDM for this purpose. You can make the copies there and charge it to MEC. You must do three things: 1) sign the invoice, 2) specify on it for which class the copies were made, and 3) place the invoice into the treasurer's mailbox. If you choose to make copies elsewhere and pay for them yourself, you can also turn in that invoice and you will be reimbursed. As stated before, the MEC copier is not to be used for the purpose of making many copies.

Parent Expectations

Basic School Supplies: Please be sure your children come to classes each week equipped with basic supplies. All students should have pens/pencils, eraser, and paper. Other supplies such as crayons, colored pencils, scissors, rulers, etc. may also be necessary depending on your child's age and choice of classes.

Textbooks: Students are expected to have all required textbooks by the first day of class. Refer to the “Class Descriptions” on the website for this information and to determine whether you need to purchase them or if the teacher will be doing this. If you are ever in doubt, contact the teacher for clarification.

Special Needs: Because the majority of our teachers are moms that are not trained or prepared to handle many special needs in a classroom setting, we need to rely on parents to determine if their child is able to function in a healthy manner in busy (or not-so-busy) classrooms. Parents will need to take appropriate steps to ensure that class-time and interaction with peers will be a positive experience for everyone involved, which could require an adult to accompany their child through the MEC day for assistance. Please keep in mind that if this is necessary, it would most likely need to be someone other than a parent (like a relative or a TSS) since they would still need to fulfill their own teaching/helping responsibilities. Parents are responsible for initiating clear communication with teachers about any special needs their child has.

Differences in Beliefs: We are a Christian group dedicated to honoring Christ, but our membership comes from varying backgrounds with different interpretations and practices. We desire to honor each other in these areas where individuals attempt to follow the personal convictions God has given them. We feel it would be beneficial if each mother would discuss this with her children, so they will be better equipped to handle issues of differences as they arise. It is your responsibility to discuss with your children's teachers anything about your family's beliefs of which you feel they should be aware.

Homework: Be aware of your children's assignments and encourage them to complete the work promptly. If a student repeatedly does not complete the work a teacher has assigned and the parent has been informed of the situation, the teacher has the authority to drop that student from the class.

Problems with Teachers: If your child reports a situation involving a teacher, whether it is a policy of their class, something that was said, or an action taken, please do not immediately become defensive or accusatory. Most parents can probably recall many instances when our children have totally misunderstood the words we have said or the intent of the words we've spoken. To clarify the issue, first speak with the teacher and/or helper of that class. Only after this has been done should the situation be discussed with any other MEC member.

Discipline from Teacher: Please read the "Discipline" section under "Teacher Expectations" (found on page 8). As parents, we all say we want to know if our child is causing problems, yet when it happens it can be very hard for some to accept. Please, if a teacher comes to you with an issue concerning your child, remember that this is probably hard for her to do. Listen with an open mind; don't make excuses for your child or immediately jump to his/her defense. Address the issue with your child and then work with the teacher to correct the situation. This way we can keep little issues from becoming big problems.

As much as we long to be the source of encouragement to all of our students, there are times when a student refuses to accept correction and continues to cause disruption. It is not in the best interest of the whole group at MEC to allow so few to cause continual strife. He or she may need to have a meeting with the board and his or her parents to evaluate whether MEC is a good fit for them.

Writing Policy: We have compiled a writing policy that is included at the end of this manual. All students and adults should read the policy, as the plagiarism paragraph applies to everyone. Please familiarize yourself with the information. (see page 15)

Review with Your Children: Parents, please have your children read and then discuss with them the Student Handbook, which will be distributed to them and placed on our website.

Student Expectations

(The items in this section can also be found in the Student Handbook)

General: As a student at MEC, we expect you to maintain certain standards. Please do your best to follow the example of Christ and to treat others as you would like to be treated. Befriend students you don't know; make them feel welcome. Show respect for your teachers, other adults, and fellow students. Participate at MEC with a cheerful attitude. Do your homework with an eagerness to learn. Take responsibility for bringing your basic supplies such as books, homework, pencils, erasers and paper. And finally, dress in a manner appropriate for learning. (see dress code below)

Older students are encouraged to set a good example for the younger students in conduct, attitude, and speech. One way to lead by example is by cheerfully volunteering to assist with set-up in the morning and tear-down in the afternoon. Such actions also bless the adults in charge of these duties.

The following are not to be tolerated: disobedience, disrespect, belittling or bullying, vulgarity, disruptive behavior, and challenge of authority. Our teachers are not expected to tolerate rude or unkind behavior.

Classes and Homework: Our teachers work hard to plan class activities and assignments that will provide meaningful learning experiences. Consequently, students should make every effort to hand in assignments on time and have consistent attendance in class. If a student repeatedly does not complete the work a teacher has assigned and the parent has been informed of the situation, the teacher has the authority to drop that student from the class.

Phones/Personal devices/Earbuds: Student cell phones/devices/earbuds are to remain put away in a pocket or bag during class time except at the request of a teacher to use them for a learning activity. If a teacher notices a device in use, they will ask the student to place the device in front of them on the table or away on a side table until the conclusion of the class period.

Dress Code: Clothing should be modest for both males and females; avoid tight clothes, low necklines, low waistlines, high hems, or gaps that expose skin in between when standing or bending over. Undergarments should not be easily visible (either through or outside of clothing). If leggings are worn, then your top should be long enough to reach the upper thigh, completely covering your buttocks area. Clothing and accessories should never distract from classroom activities, nor should they frighten a young child or offend another student or adult. Slogans and pictures on T-shirts should be wholesome and uplifting. These guidelines also apply to gym class attire.

Because our co-op is made up of many families with a wide variety of dress standards, we simply ask that everyone be considerate and lean more on the side of dressing conservatively during MEC activities. We do not wish to heavily police the area

of dress code, but if board members or parents feel like what you are wearing goes beyond what is stated in the previous paragraph, you may be approached about it.

Psychoactive substances: All controlled and psychoactive substances to include “edibles”, vapes, etc. may not be brought to MEC, nor may students be under the influence of these substances while at MEC. Additionally, students may not bring or consume energy drinks during MEC. A student’s belongings may be searched in accordance with MEC policy if there is reason to believe that these items have been brought to MEC. Also as stated in MEC policy, the Board “reserves the right to handle [an issue or offense] in whatever manner the Board feels the situation warrants.” Part of this decision making will involve whether other problems/issues have arisen in the past or if there is a pattern of behaviors. Consequences could be suspension, drafting of a behavioral contract, loss of the privilege of attending MEC social activities, etc. In the case of a student bringing an illegal substance to MEC there will be a “zero tolerance” policy applied with expulsion of the student from MEC.

Writing Policy: We have compiled a writing policy that is included at the end of this manual. All students and adults should read the policy, as the plagiarism paragraph applies to everyone. Please familiarize yourself with the information. (see page 15)

Discipline Action by the Board

Probably the least enjoyable part of being on the board is when a situation warrants a disciplinary meeting or action. However, since we are all fallen creatures, issues will need to be addressed from time to time. When this happens, we need the cooperation of all and we pray everyone has the spirit of cooperation to support the authority of the board. We will do our best to follow the example of Matthew 18.

Involving Students: When a serious sin issue or major offense that needs to be dealt with arises amongst our student body, the board reserves the right to handle that issue in whatever manner we feel the situation warrants. Our intention is never to belittle or embarrass anyone, but rather to restore the offender to a proper relationship with God and his/her fellow students and teachers. We will personally address the offender, and parents of the offending student will be notified in writing of the disciplinary action that we intend to take.

Involving Adults: When an issue arises involving an adult member, the board may choose to address it through a letter and/or through a personal meeting. The board has the authority to remove membership from those who refuse to comply or are repeat offenders.

Re-admittance: Should a previous member seek re-admittance, the Board reserve the right to deny membership based on instances or a history of disciplinary action or interpersonal conflict.

Safety and Fire Guidelines

For Your Safety:

- 1) Students are required to either be in class, in the Study Hall/lobby area, or with their parent. They may not roam the halls or loiter in empty classrooms or anywhere else on the property during class hours.
- 2) Students should enter their classroom a few minutes before class starts. They are not permitted to play in classrooms if they arrive early or finish lunch early.
- 3) When changing classes, students should walk *quietly* in the hallway so as not to disturb other classes that are still in session and the church’s office staff.
- 4) Unless instructed by a teacher, students may not leave backpacks or other personal items lying in hallways because of the safety hazard this presents.
- 5) Students are not permitted to have weapons at MEC. If special permission is obtained to bring something of this sort for a class presentation, it must be kept in a vehicle at all times before and after the class.
- 6) If an adult suspects that a student is in possession of anything illegal or an item that is not allowed at MEC, they have the authority to conduct a search. This should be done by removing the student from the other students in the classroom and with another adult present if possible.
- 7) Unsupervised playing of any kind shall not occur in the parking lot. Please use the Gaga Pit or grassy areas.
- 8) Children who arrive early are asked to remain with a parent until classes begin. Playing in the gym is only permitted with adult or older sibling supervision at parent’s discretion. Following dismissal, an adult provides supervision in the gym, and all elementary students are to await pickup by their parents there.

- 9) **Shelter Emergency:** If there is an emergency that requires students to seek shelter (storm or violence), there are rooms that are more secure and safer than others. These room doors are indicated by a small green square under the room number. Teachers should be aware if their classroom has this square and if not, locate the closest one in case it is necessary throughout the year.

First Aid Locations:

A First aid kit is located on the coatrack in the hall near the lobby. Additional small kits are located in some bathrooms.

Fire Alarm Procedure and Weather/Emergency Procedure:

Fire procedure:

Our meeting place destination is in the grass behind the three sheds. This leaves the parking lot completely free for emergency trucks and personnel to enter any entrance to the building.

Teachers: 1) Grab your attendance chart. 2) Make sure all students are accounted for and then *together* exit the building quickly but calmly, following the posted emergency exit signs. If a student is in the bathroom, the helper should attempt to get that child, but there will also be someone designated to check the bathrooms. The last person to exit the room should turn out lights and close the door. 3) If your class appears to be the last coming down the hallway, close the fire door behind your group. 4) Once your class has gathered, please account for all your students once more. Alert the Board President immediately if a student is missing.

Building Monitor: Proceed to SH to account for all SH students according to the attendance roster and escort the students to a safe exit.

Students: Students need to stay with their teacher/class. It is very important that they not run to an older sibling or parent, but rather stay with their class so they can be accounted for.

Moms: At the time of the fire alarm, all moms who are having free time should head downstairs to the Preschool and Nursery rooms to assist with leading the little ones to safety. We have a designated person to check bathrooms. Even though our “mom instinct” is to find our own children and get them to safety, if every mom in the building would do this it would create a huge amount of chaos and panic. Let’s help teachers stay focused on getting their students out in an orderly manner and every other mom/teacher will do the same. If an incident occurs during student lunch, once outside moms should assist lunch monitors with attendance.

Once we know that all persons have safely exited the building, it will be announced that parents and children can be reunited.

Board President: The Board President will sweep the building, checking bathrooms, and closing fire doors upon confirming that no one is remaining in the building.

Weather/Intruder Emergency procedure:

In the event of a weather emergency, a Board member will sound a bullhorn throughout the hallways. Students and teachers should gather in downstairs hallway rooms marked with a green dot during a weather emergency. These are safe rooms with no windows. See attendance sheet for nearest safe room. The same procedure will be followed as outlined in the fire procedure regarding attendance sheets and gathering young ones from nursery and preschool.

For an intruder emergency, walkie talkie or cellphone use to alert others is recommended. Escape to safety if possible. If escape is not possible, then hide in a safe room designated with a green dot on the door. Alarm door wedges can be used to block entrance to rooms and are located in each room’s supply bin. Use any objects available to throw at the intruder if directly confronted.

Lunches and Beverage Table

Students’ Lunch:

Students must provide their own packed lunch. Students may not leave the lunchroom early to go to their next class. There is a door in the lunchroom that leads to the back lawn where there is a picnic table. Students in grades 7-12 are permitted to eat outside in that general area but may not wander up the entire length of the building or around the corner. We ask that elementary students remain inside during their lunch period.

If a student needs to get their lunch elsewhere, they should try to do so before coming down to the lunchroom. The lunch monitors will have a sign-out system in place, details of which are included in the Student Handbook.

Mom/Teachers’ Lunch Table:

Each parent needs to make a choice as to what they will do for lunch during the year. The first option is to pack your lunch each week. The second option is to participate in the Mom/Teachers' Lunch Table. By participating, each week you may eat the full lunch and dessert that is provided by others who are also participating. Each participant must provide the moms' lunch once each year, or pair up with others and provide it multiple times during the year. Menu items that should be included: a main dish, a green salad, side items (e.g. bread, crackers, pretzels, etc.), fruit, and desserts. Flavored drinks are optional. If you would like to eat off the lunch table but not cook, you can pay a fee to do so (see VP/Hostess for more details). Also, if you would be interested, you may volunteer to cook more than once and in return, receive payment for the additional scheduled lunch.

MEC provides all paper products (plates, bowls, napkins, plastic ware, & cups) and related supplies. The MEC VP/Hostess will provide and set up the decorations (tablecloths, etc.) for the lunch table and is also available to help you set it out in the morning, keep it stocked during the day, and put it away in the afternoon, except for times they are teaching a class.

The VP/Hostess will have a schedule available for you to sign up to participate in the lunch table, as well as a more detailed list of what you should bring. Please contact her with any further questions. Once completed, the schedule will be posted on the website and a master copy will be posted on the bulletin board near the mailboxes.

****The moms' lunch and dessert tables are only for the adults at MEC who signed up to participate. Students are not permitted to eat from this table unless their family provided the meal that day.**

Beverage Table:

Due to church renovations, food and drink may only be consumed in the lunch areas (with the exception of water in a spill-proof bottle or special class treats the teacher has had approved). Lunch items should be consumed in the lunch areas, not used as snacks throughout the day.

The MEC VP/Hostess provides hot water for tea or cocoa and makes regular and decaf coffee each week, mainly as a hospitality to the adults who serve at MEC and to our guests. Any secondary students wishing to get a hot beverage from the table in the lobby may do so, however the drinks may not leave the lobby area and must be consumed prior to 9:45am.

Financial Information

Payment: All money paid to MEC exceeding \$10.00 must be remitted via check made payable to Myerstown Enrichment Center (or MEC) and given to the treasurer, unless otherwise specified.

Full Membership Cost: The annual full membership fee is based on our projected costs and the number of full members participating in MEC (see "Fees" on the website). This fee is invoiced in two installments – half by July 1 and the other half in January. Payment is expected within four weeks of receiving the invoice.

MEC accounts must be paid in full by the February/March planning meeting. If a member has an unpaid account, they may not offer to teach a class for the upcoming school year.

All full members are required to pay a **Commitment Fee** when they submit their class registration packet. This money is only refundable at the conclusion of the school year if all commitments have been met, or it can be rolled over for the following year. Although, the Commitment Fee will not apply to the next year until the current year's financial obligations are met. If a member commits to returning/teaching by the time of the annual planning meeting in February/March and fails to return for the following school year, the commitment fee will not be returned. Additionally, if a family commits to return and has made tuition payment by July 1, but does not return, the tuition payment will not be returned.

On occasion we hire a non-MEC individual to teach a class. These classes may have an additional fee determined in advance.

Associate Membership Cost: The associate membership tuition fee per class is listed on the MEC fees page on the website and is invoiced in four installments – in September, November, January and March. Payment is expected within four weeks of receiving the invoice. After week 15, tuition for 3rd and 4th quarters will still be expected even if the class is dropped.

To assist associate members purchasing classes for more than one student, MEC offers a **multi-student** discount. For every four classes purchased, a member may receive one additional class free.

Additional Costs: Classes may have a textbook and/or materials fee that will be invoiced each year. These fees are noted in the class descriptions. Also, some of our optional services, such as *God's World News* papers, are invoiced as well.

Overdue bills: A late fee will be charged on all overdue invoices. See "MEC Fees" page for specifics.

Administrative Fee: A fee will be charged for late paperwork or late updating of the website. Please be mindful of published due dates. See "MEC Fees" page for specifics.

Balances Due: All balances on accounts must be paid in full by the last Tuesday that MEC meets in May. Failure to pay in full by this deadline may result in full or associate members not being allowed to return to MEC the following school year.

Fundraisers: Fundraisers are available to help offset MEC expenses. Both full and associate members may participate. Current fundraisers may include:

Greenhouse plants (May) – information will be placed in your mailbox.

Box Tops for Education Rewards program is a means of bringing in income to purchase paper supplies for the lunch tables, general art supplies, gym equipment, etc.

Opportunity exists for individuals to hold fundraisers (e.g. Pampered Chef, Thirty-One, etc.) in our lobby with a portion of the proceeds benefitting MEC. If you want to take advantage of this, please contact the VP/Hostess who schedules these events with a maximum of one such fundraiser per month.

Optional Services

To Help You Teach Your Children:

God's World News: A member MAY coordinate this service for MEC. If someone orders a magazine and decides to withdraw from MEC after the magazines have been ordered, they will still be billed, and it will be their responsibility to pick up their magazines from the coordinator. Magazines that are not picked up in a timely manner will be discarded or given away. The last issue of the magazine comes to the coordinator in the summer and it will be put in the MEC mail slots at the beginning of the new school year. If you do not return to MEC it will be your responsibility to pick up your magazines from the coordinator. You will have opportunity to sign up for different age level newspapers as well as the regular *God's World News* magazine. The more people who sign up, the lower the price will be. Your issues will be placed in your mailbox at MEC.

To Develop Student Leadership:

Student Council: The student council is a body of high school students, elected annually by their peers, who operate under the guidance of the Student Body Advisor. The council consists of a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, spirit day coordinator, and two special events coordinators and a primary grade representative.

Newspaper: A student newspaper, "The MEC Lighthouse", is published on a regular basis IF there are students willing to do the work involved and there is a willing overseer. Everyone is welcome to submit photos of MEC classes and activities as well as individual awards. Students are encouraged to become part of the newsletter staff, and all ages are encouraged to submit articles for publication.

Yearbook: A yearbook is published on a regular basis IF there is an adult coordinator and possibly student helpers willing to do the work involved. Everyone is welcome to submit photos of MEC classes and activities by submitting them to the yearbook overseer.

To Provide Incentives, Foster Healthy Competition, and Showcase Achievements:

Art Competition: When there is a teacher willing to organize it, we have an art contest held during the school year. Details will be given at the appropriate time in the year.

Graduation: MEC holds a spring graduation ceremony on the Saturday after Memorial Day in which current MEC seniors may choose to participate. The Graduation Bylaws help the class to smoothly navigate the planning process. Participating seniors and their families plan activities such as a senior banquet, senior trip, etc., in addition to the graduation ceremony. MEC contributes toward the cost, however there are many additional expenses incurred each year. In order to smooth out the financial aspect of the process, each graduate's family will need to submit a Graduation Commitment Form, along with any appropriate fees (the form will be provided at the beginning of the school year and will include all the details). This money will be used to pay additional costs not covered by MEC but shared by participants. Any money not used will be reimbursed to the participating families after the ceremony.

Persons who are not a part of MEC may participate in our graduation services at the discretion of the board. They must pay a participation fee in addition to any other graduation fee.

Talent Shows: MEC hosts up to two talent shows during the school year. Students and parents are encouraged to share their talents with MEC family and friends. These talents may include musical numbers, drama, speeches, art, home ec. skills, etc. Dates will be given at the beginning of the year and details closer to the time of the show(s).

Closing Program: We strongly encourage all MEC families to attend our closing program, which is held in May, typically during the same week as our last day of classes. This is a time for MEC classes to showcase accomplishments from the past year.

Clubs/Teams/Fundraisers: If a teacher or student has an idea to participate in a club or a team, or host a fundraiser, permission must be obtained from the Board.

To Provide Support:

Urgent prayer requests: Any member may send prayer concerns that would be appropriate to share with the MEC family via the "Prayer Requests" forum on our website.

Website: www.myerstowndenrichmentcenter.org contains all pertinent information relating to MEC. Email messages for distribution to the entire MEC membership should be sent through an appropriate forum thread. Because the majority of the forums are moderated, once you "add" your post, it will not show up immediately because it needs to be approved first. If you have any questions about the website, feel free to contact the MEC President or Secretary.

Student Photos: Each year, typically in the fall, MEC designates a student photo day. A professional photographer will take school photos of all MEC students, teachers, and mothers. A variety of photo packages will be available for purchase, but there is no obligation to make a purchase.

HSLDA Membership Discount: Myerstown Enrichment Center has a group account through Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA). This means that we can bring a savings to you for becoming a member of HSLDA through MEC. By joining through us, you will receive a 17% discount (\$20 savings off HSLDA annual fee), plus for every member of our group, MEC will earn rewards! We both benefit! See our website for more details.

Writing/Cheating Policy

In order to provide a consistent standard and to prepare students for college, we ask that students complete all writing assignments in a professional manner. All compositions should be the student's own work. This does not preclude help from parents, teachers, mentors, and editors, but does mean a student should never plagiarize. Plagiarism, using somebody else's work as if it is your own, is a crime and will result in discipline including a possible zero on the assignment. Plagiarism is easily avoided by attributing quotes to the source and citing your paper.

Unless instructed otherwise, all typed work should be in 10-12 pt. Times New Roman or similar font on standard white copy paper using black ink. Students should follow MLA format for formal papers such as essays and research papers unless the teacher provides specific instructions on using an alternate format. Basic MLA format requires that the first page includes the student's name, date, name of class, and title. If the composition is longer than one page, pages should be numbered. For more detail, refer to a book with MLA instructions such as *Writers INC* or an online source such as <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>.

While typed papers are preferred, in most cases teachers will accept handwritten assignments. They must be on 8 ½ x 11" white paper and written legibly in blue or black ink. The same format applies.

Cheating/Plagiarism:

The use of generativeAI tools (ChatGPT, Dall-e, etc) is permitted in a course for the following activities:

- *Brainstorming and refining your ideas
- *Fine tuning your research questions
- *Finding information on your topic
- *Drafting an outline to organize your thoughts
- *Checking grammar and style

The use of generative AI tools is not permitted in a course for the following activities:

- *Impersonating you in classroom context, such as by using the tool to compose discussion board prompts assigned to you or content that you put into a Zoom chat.

- *Completing group work that your group has assigned to you, unless it is mutually agreed upon that you may utilize the tool
- *Writing a draft of a writing assignment
- *Writing entire sentences, paragraphs or papers to complete class assignments

If a teacher suspects cheating in any way then they will reach out to the parent and make them aware of the situation and alert the parent to the teachers decision on the consequence for their class.