

School Year

2021-2022

GROWING UP TOGETHER SPIRITUALLY

GUTS CO-OP HANDBOOK

Growing Up Together Spiritually

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Hello friends!

Thank you for considering Growing Up Together Spiritually for your homeschooling family. Growing Up Together Spiritually, known as GUTS, is a non-profit co-op for families in the Lord who are members of the North Alabama Christian School. Its purpose is to allow our children to spend time in learning and fellowship together on a weekly basis.

Our mission for the GUTS co-op is to assist families in providing a broader home-based education for our children by combining parents' talents and resources, to give our children the opportunity to participate in group activities, to offer an economical means of enriching homeschoolers' educational experiences, and to give homeschooling families a means of having supportive relationships with other homeschoolers.

The following are the guidelines and policies for enrolling your family in GUTS. This handbook meets the standards of and is approved by the North Alabama Christian School (NACS), the church school under which GUTS operates. Please take the time to read and familiarize yourself with this guide. I look forward to growing up together spiritually with you and your children!

Alissa Clarke, Director

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MEETING DAYS, TIMES, AND AGES

We meet on Fridays from 10 AM to 12 PM at the building of the West Huntsville church of Christ at Providence. Our program teaches preschool thru high school and includes a nursery for infants.

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

- Member in good standing of North Alabama Christian School (NACS)
- Honorary members of NACS (available to families with children under the compulsory age of attendance or living in the states of Georgia or Tennessee)
- Complete GUTS enrollment form (online)
- Complete Medical Emergency form (at orientation)

FEES

Enrollment fees are paid once per year for birth through high school and are non-refundable.

- Nursery Class Fees – None
- 1 Year Old Class – 12th Grade - \$10 per child (payable at orientation)

The goal of GUTS is to keep the program as low cost as possible. If the fees are ever a problem for your family, please discuss this with the director. It is our goal that no family ever avoid participating in GUTS due to cost.

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WORK POLICY

GUTS is not a drop-off program. Every family is expected to provide a worker in the co-op. Our goal is that work is distributed evenly among all families. This year's work requirements are as follows:

- Each family will provide an adult to serve as a teaching team member for the year
- Each family will work with the co-op administrators to ensure that they are participating and helping ensure the smooth operation of the co-op on a weekly basis.
- Parents may not leave the building during co-op hours without consulting the director or assistant director.

CLASSES

GUTS provides classes for preschool, pre-k and kindergarten, 1st thru 5th grades, middle school and high school students. Nursery services are available for infants too young to attend classes.

Class Policy

This will be expounded upon in the Student Responsibility Agreement, but in short we expect your child to behave and the parent to behave.

It is preferred that two adults be present in classes up through 5th grade to maintain discipline, provide an extra pair of helping hands, and escort children as needed.

Bathroom Policy

Preschool through Kindergarten teachers should schedule a regular bathroom break during class, sending a small group at a time. Parents may need to be available to help their potty-training children and should discuss this in advance with the preschool teachers to give assurance and provide consistency for each child, according to his/her needs.

Teachers may allow older students grade 1 and above to go to the restroom one at a time, sending a helper to go with two or more students, as they may need to be supervised or reminded to be quiet.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips may be scheduled throughout the year. Field trip attendance is optional.

CO-OP COMMUNICATION

The Facebook group, GUTS, is our primary form of communication. It is a closed group created just for our GUTS families. Much of the information may relate to NACS as a whole, so many announcements are double posted on the NACS Facebook group wall and the GUTS group wall.

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Emails are also sent out at the beginning of the year to all NACS families for members who prefer not to use Facebook. Emails continue to be sent out during the year relating to due dates and events for GUTS, but informal conversations, ongoing updates, member posts for assistance, member questions and answers, and general discussion details on the GUTS Facebook group wall will not be emailed. ***While it is the desire of the co-op to direct pertinent information to your email box regularly, it is each family's responsibility to stay current on information needed to participate at a comfortable level in the co-op's events and activities.***

Weather Warnings and Cancellations

Discussion of possible Friday cancellations usually begins on the GUTS Facebook group wall. In the event that the co-op is canceled due to bad weather, an email will be sent out notifying all families.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF TEACHERS AND TEACHING TEAMS

A co-op is a commitment, however, we want the experience for the teachers to be free from extreme stress. Below some guidelines are given to help you in the teaching process:

- Use the Bible as the standard when determining which topics are appropriate to teach
- If you are unsure, direct questions to the Director or Assistant Director
- Activities in preschool and elementary classes are supposed to be supplemental
- Do not assign homework at the elementary level
- Do not overcomplicate your class, children are satisfied with very little
- Look for online for free curriculums

Here is a list of additional responsibilities and policies:

- Determine the supply list for your class
- Determine if materials need to be purchased from the co-op budget and submit requests in writing to the director
- Determine if an extra fee needs to be charged for your class
- Any material purchased with co-op funds or fees charged becomes property of the co-op
- Turn in all co-op property at the end of the semester
- In the event of your absence, you are responsible for providing your team with a lesson plan if needed

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- Print handouts and prepare copies before co-op
- Arrive a few minutes early to set up and to ensure that someone is present when students arrive
- Start class on time. Do not wait for latecomers
- Maintain order and focus in the class and avoid side conversations with the helpers
- Be alert to help students who may have trouble but may be too shy to ask for help
- End class on time so students will not be late to their next activity
- Tidy the room at the end of each class
- Delegate responsibilities to the helper

RESPONSIBILITIES OF HELPERS

If you are not actively teaching, here are some activities you can be doing to help your team. Helper responsibilities are as follows:

- Do not interfere with the teacher or guest speaker's ability to teach
- Assist all children in the classroom, not just your own
- Fill in for absent teachers with provided lesson plans
- Help teachers tidy rooms
- Remain in the classroom even if you feel you are not needed. A situation could arise at any time that requires another set of adult hands.
- Take children to the bathroom
- Help ensure children have returned after breaks

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NURSERY

We staff a nursery for parents with infants too young to attend classes. During this time your child will be attended to, but there is no structured curriculum (except maybe spoiling). Below is a list of nursery requirements and policies:

- You are responsible for providing all of your child's diapers, wipes, food, etc
- Label everything you bring to avoid confusion
- You will be contacted if we are unable to console your child
- You are responsible for your infant during times outside
- Nursery attendants are responsible for cleaning and disinfecting the nursery at the end of each day. Please be sure everything is returned to the area you found it in.
- Only dispose of dirty diapers in the diaper pails provided

PRESCHOOL

The preschool is for children over a year old through four years of age. A teacher and at least one helper are required during the hours of co-op. Below is a list of policies for preschool classes:

- Label everything brought for your child
- Only dispose of dirty diapers in the diaper pails provided
- Inform helpers if potty training is going on and any actions that need to be taken.
- You are responsible for your preschooler outside of classroom time
- Please pick up your preschoolers from class for lunch and escort them to the fellowship hall

ATTENDANCE

Weekly attendance is expected and required. It is the responsibility of the parent-teacher to inform the co-op of any necessary absence of any family member who participates in the co-op. The co-op should have notice of any absence as soon as possible (months in advance, when applicable). In the case of sickness, a warning is preferred rather than waiting to give notice hours before the co-op meets.

Approved absences include:

- Child unable to attend due to illness
- Pre-planned family vacations
- Family emergencies
- Necessary Surgeries

Contact the director about your situation if you don't find it listed here. We want to work with you .

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Try to schedule your regular doctors' appointments and events so that they will not conflict with our Friday class program.

Nobody likes to be sick. If you have a sick child, please keep your family home to avoid spreading illness. If your child exhibits any of these symptoms, please keep them home:

- Fever of 99 degrees or greater within 24 hours prior to co-op
- Fever that needs medication to control (such as Tylenol, Advil, or Motrin)
- Vomiting or nausea within 48 hours prior to co-op
- Diarrhea within 24 hours prior to co-op
- Nasal congestion, or yellow or green nasal discharge, or excessive clear nasal discharge that is heavy enough to require frequent wiping
- Common cold symptoms with sore throat or persistent coughing or sneezing
- Streptococcal infection, until 48 hours after medication has been initiated*
- Antibiotics for less than 48 hours*
- Infected skin or eyes or undiagnosed rash, including but not limited to conjunctivitis, poison ivy, Fifth Disease, chickenpox, etc., until the prescribed drops, cream or treatment are complete or incubation period recommended by doctor has passed
- Cold sores (fever blisters) on children kindergarten and below, until lesions are scabbed

If you decide to bring your child with a clear runny nose due to allergies or teething, please be diligent about wiping your child's nose often and washing your hands immediately afterward.

*Although a sinus infection is not contagious, the cold that preceded the sinus infection is highly contagious. As a result, with a sinus infection, please stay home until fully recovered from cold symptoms as stated above. The same applies to strep throat. If you still have cold symptoms even after 48 hours on medication, please stay home until cold symptoms end. Other contagious symptoms, including but not limited to lice, ringworm, etc.

Willful violation of the sickness policy may result in dismissal from the co-op.

SUBSTITUTES POLICY

The absent parent is ultimately responsible for finding a competent substitute and preparing that substitute for the task that day. However, if you are unsure who to call you may contact the director and assistant director to help you find an appropriate sub.

In the case of sickness, we will do our best to help make the upset in your schedule less stressful. The sooner you contact other GUTS families and make your need known, the sooner we can figure out how to help you get someone assigned to your task; but it is your responsibility to see that a substitute is found and prepared.

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Families or parent-teachers who are absent more than two (2) times without notifying the co-op, or getting approval for the absence, will meet with the director. Any unapproved absence following this meeting will result in the family's dismissal from the co-op.

Teachers/Helpers who do not prepare substitutes more than two (2) times will meet with the director. If the teacher/helper continues to neglect finding a substitute after meeting with the director, it will result in the family's dismissal from the co-op.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

For families with special situations that arise during the year, please contact the director to discuss whether co-op participation is feasible for the remainder of the year.

You may use a volunteer parent to bring your children in your stead. This may not be a parent already attending the co-op. The volunteer parent will be in charge of your child(ren) and responsible for your child(ren)'s needs and the behavior your child(ren) exhibit(s) while participating with the co-op that day.

Before deciding that co-op is not feasible due to family situations, please schedule a meeting with the director to see if alternate planning is necessary.

DISCIPLINE AND DISMISSAL

All parents and children are expected to abide by the parent responsibility and student responsibility agreements, respectively.

Electronics Policy

There is a zero tolerance policy for electronics use for elementary students and younger. This includes times before, during, or after school. Junior and Senior High Students are not allowed to use electronics during class. They are allowed to use electronics before or after school provided they show maturity and discretion. This privilege can be revoked at any time without warning. Starting with the 2018-2019 school year, all electronics must be left with a parent or checked in with an administrator during class times. If the electronics are needed for the class, the student must check out the electronic or retrieve it from the parent. A detailed explanation for the need will be expected at the time of the request.

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Parent Responsibility Agreement

_____ Commit to participation on a weekly basis before you join the group. Show up, be on time, and be prepared to assume your assigned responsibilities. We encourage our families to arrive on time, so that we may all start our day united, coming together to home school co-operatively. Opening Assembly is also a time used to ensure that members are kept informed about important co-op activities, opportunities, and events. As members of a small group, each family's participation will be very important to the success of the group. Do as much as you are able.

_____ Read, understand, and enforce all rules, building policies, and ensure that YOUR children adhere to proper codes of conduct, dress, and behavior while at group meetings.

_____ Know that conflict will arise, and when it does, we will follow the guidelines of Matthew 18. Help the children try to respectfully resolve the conflict with the other person. They are responsible for talking to the other person about what they have done to upset them. They are to be honest about their own responsibility within the disagreement, then come to an adult if the conflict cannot easily be resolved by taking these steps.

_____ Remain on the premises while your children are participating in the co-op, unless it is your off week or you have been given prior permission by the director. Every parent is responsible for bringing her own child(ren) to group meetings and staying with them throughout the day. Exceptions will only be allowed on a case by case basis and must be approved each time the need arises. If any parent is unable to attend more than three (3) consecutive weeks, the children will need to be withdrawn from class participation until such time as their parent is able to resume regular attendance with them.

_____ Monitor your children. Children are not permitted outside the building during snack or break time, or after group meetings, without adult supervision. Please be aware of *all* children, not just yours.

_____ All personal items brought from home should be labeled clearly for all students. Any personal items, including cell phones, iPods, iPads, trading cards, headsets, etc., that accompany students into the facility are the sole responsibility of the parent. If items are brought to use during a presentation, it is suggested that the parent keeps the items before and after the child's sharing time. Laptops and cell phones are allowed for parents, not for students unless approved. Items such as personal knives or multi-tools require approval in advance, and then the parent is responsible for any consequences. Any negative issues that arise with personal property will result in the suspension of the privilege to carry the item on their person to group meetings.

_____ All parents are volunteers who serve within the co-op. Every family is responsible for the clean up of the facility during the year. It is the responsibility of each family to assist *each* week

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to clean and reset the areas that we use. The classrooms and main gathering rooms must be set for Sunday services when we leave each afternoon.

_____ Participate as a teacher, assistant, or coordinator for events or projects within the group.

_____ In case of absence, find and prepare a substitute teacher/helper for your class.

_____ Notify the director and teachers on the days that you may need to bring visitors.

Breaking the Parent Responsibility Agreement

Families or parent-teachers who are absent more than two (2) times without notifying the co-op, or getting approval for the absence, will meet with the director. Any unapproved absence following this meeting will result in the family's dismissal from the co-op.

Teachers/Helpers who do not prepare substitutes more than two (2) times will meet with the director. If the teacher/helper continues to neglect finding a substitute after meeting with the director, it will result in the family's dismissal from the co-op.

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Student Responsibility Agreement

_____ Treat others with love, kindness, and patience. Try to resolve conflicts with a spirit of forgiveness.

_____ Be careful with the younger children. Be sure to get permission from the mother of a young child to pick the child up. Any behavior that endangers another child will be disciplined immediately.

_____ You are expected to encourage and support one another in a gracious and loving environment. No name calling or destructive comments toward one another will be tolerated.

_____ When a conflict arises, try to respectfully resolve the conflict with the other person. Talk to the other person about what they have done to upset you. Be honest about your own responsibility within the disagreement. Come to an adult if the conflict cannot easily be resolved by taking these steps and they will help you resolve the conflict. If conflicts cannot be easily resolved, children will meet with the director. Bullying will not be tolerated in ANY form.

_____ Be respectful of others and their property. Keep hands and feet to yourself.

_____ Be respectful of the church property. Failure to respect church property will result in discipline. Treat items gently, put church items back where you found them, and leave each area better than you found it. Be a good steward of our resources. Your parent will be financially responsible for any damage to the church property that you are in any way responsible for.

_____ You are expected to have self control and respond appropriately to the teacher's directions. Control your voice and your body. Do not distract other children with your behavior. You are expected to participate with a good attitude. If you cannot follow directions or maintain a positive attitude, you will be asked to sit with your parent for the remainder of the class time.

_____ Slang or inappropriate language is not permitted. Please be mindful of what speech you are using.

_____ If you need to be reminded more than once to stop *any* unacceptable behavior, you will be asked to go and sit with your parent. Unacceptable behavior includes: playing any type of ball game indoors, wrestling, racing around a room, throwing any objects, or making a mess for another to clean up.

_____ Stay only in the rooms that we are permitted to use on our group meeting days.

_____ No one may eat or drink during class time unless it is part of the classroom activities. This rule includes chewing gum and eating candy. If you make a mess, clean it up.

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_____ No cell phones, other electronic games/equipment, or personal items should be brought to class, unless they are part of a presentation. Your parent/teacher must keep the item(s) before and after your presentation. Use of electronic devices during our Welcome Time will not be tolerated. If you are found using any electronic device during any time in which your attention is necessary, the item will be given to your parent/teacher to keep for the rest of the day. No personal knives or multi-tools are permitted to be shown or used unless it is approved by the director in advance. If you chose to display or use your knife or tool, it will be taken and given to your parent. You will lose the privilege of bringing that item to group meetings permanently if any incident occurs, whether the item is approved or not.

Breaking the Student Responsibility Agreement

If a child exhibits bad behavior, such as a disrespectful attitude toward his/her teacher, the teacher will correct the behavior and give a warning. If the behavior does not change, the child will be sent to the director.

The director will have a meeting with the child and his/her parent. After three (3) meetings with the director regarding the same child's behavior, the child will be dismissed from the co-op.

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COMPLAINTS AND SUGGESTIONS

All complaints/suggestions must be turned in to a member of administration in writing. All complaints must contain a detailed proposal for a solution to item being complained about. The administration of both ends of the co-op will review the item of concern and recommended solution and make final decisions on implementation.

DRESS CODE

We want to dress to honor God in appearance, as well as in attitude. Parents and students should wear modest clothing appropriate for the work being done at co-op. If in doubt, leave it out! Here is a standard dress code that can help assist you in your decisions:

- Halter tops, spaghetti straps and/or visible cleavage are unacceptable.
- Tank tops are not acceptable.
- Shorts, dresses, and skirts must come to the top of the knee.
- Bare midriff, front or back, is unacceptable.
- Underclothing should not be visible at any time.
- Clothing may not have inappropriate messages or graphics that are vulgar, rude or appear to dishonor God or the Christian faith.
- A person's eyes must be clearly seen at all times.
- Leggings are not pants and should not be worn as pants. Leggings should be covered by a shirt or dress that comes to the knee.

Please do not put us in the uncomfortable position of having to tell an adult or child that he/she is out of line! Parents, police your child's apparel before leaving for co-op. Do not go to co-op and then ask if clothing is appropriate. If you need to ask if something is appropriate, then it is not, so wear something else.

SHARING THE BUILDING

In the event that our GUTS families need to stay out of certain areas of the building due to special events, this will be announced during that Friday Welcome Time. We will do our best to work around the restricted areas for the comfort of those members of the church outside the GUTS program, and the children will be expected to stay out of those areas for that day.

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OBSERVATIONS BY POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

Families considering joining the co-op are welcome to schedule a day to come observe a typical day at GUTS. Guidelines for scheduling an observation are as follows:

- Observations must be scheduled in writing and in advance and approved by the director.
- Children are not allowed at observations, because they cause distractions for the students that are currently in the class and the teacher is not prepared with enough materials to handle an unexpected student.
- For classroom observations, please arrive in time to be able to be seated before class begins and remain in the classroom until it is over to avoid distracting the students.
- Please do not participate, interrupt, or make comments during the class. You will have time during your visit to meet with the director or Elementary Coordinator. Write your questions down and we will address them at that time.
- We understand that potential participants may have friends already in the program. Please keep socializing with friends limited to the lunch break or after co-op as your friends have responsibilities to be executed during class times.
- If your observation becomes a distraction by excessive visiting with working moms or interrupting teachers, you will be asked to leave.