



The Learning Connection Handbook

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

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I. Statement of Faith

The Learning Connection is a Bible based Christian homeschooling group. We recognize that there are doctrinal differences throughout the denominations represented in the Christian community. Although these differences exist, we believe there are certain truths that all Christians uphold and that therefore we can walk in unity as believers. The following statement of faith represents the core beliefs of this community. By signing this statement of faith you are signifying that you understand what this community believes and you are agreeing to not teach any other belief that conflicts with TLC's core beliefs

1. The Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God (II Timothy 3:16).
2. There is one God eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Revelation 1:8). Jesus Christ is God come in the flesh, born of a virgin, being both fully God and fully man, except without sin (John 1:14; Luke 1:26-33).
3. Man is by nature sinful and inherently in need of salvation. Salvation is the free gift of God given to the sinner by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His shed blood (Romans 3:21-24; Acts 4:12; Ephesians 2:8-9).
4. Jesus Christ's death provided substitutionary atonement for our sins (Hebrews 10:10, 12; Galatians 2:20; Hebrews 9:11-15; Isaiah 53).
5. Jesus Christ literally and bodily rose from the dead (Matthew 28:6-7; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 11:25; John 20, 21).
6. Jesus Christ will literally come to earth again at the Second Coming (Luke 21:27-28).
7. God is the Creator and His design for people, marriage, and families is perfect. Therefore, we believe marriage is between a man and a woman, and gender is biological and should not be changed/reassigned. (Gen 1:27, Gen 5:2, Genesis 1:31, 2 Samuel 22:31, Isaiah 53:6, Jeremiah 10:23, Psalm 139:13, Numbers 23:19, Matthew 19:4, Colossians 1:16, Mark 10:6, 1 Timothy 4:4)

II. Mission Statement

TLC’s mission is to encourage and assist parents in the high calling of raising Godly children. God has called parents to love, nurture, and equip their children to fulfill God’s call on their lives. TLC is designed to help walk alongside and encourage families in this calling. Homeschooling is a privilege and through God’s amazing grace, we are able to teach our children and point them to Christ. We work together, in community with each other, to raise and equip our children, understanding that the Lord fills in all the gaps as we will never be perfect in our parenting. He will lovingly guide us, equip us, and empower us to raise the children He has blessed us with!

III. Purpose of TLC

TLC desires to see parents rediscover their God-given role to educate their children. "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:7).

IV. TLC General Information

The Learning Connection is a Christ-centered home education support group ministering to families in Northwest Jersey. We are here to encourage you on this journey of home schooling through many facets.

The annual non-refundable membership fee for TLC is \$40/family. As a member, you will have access to our website at www.mytlcnj.com, which includes our Calendar of Events and Forum for support and communication.

Below is a list of possible activities you can look forward to:

Mom’s Night Out	Family Nights	Field Trips
TLC Weekly Co-op	Holiday Parties	Student Photo Day
Social Gatherings	Graduation Events	Yearbook

Activities

- Student portraits for all TLC Support Group members will take place during our weekly Co-op day, which currently meets on Thursday.
- Each year, TLC will host a year end Graduation Ceremony. At this ceremony, all of our children are recognized for their achievements and advancement to the next grade level. All students are given a certificate for this achievement. During this ceremony, the Kindergarten and 8th grade classes will be recognized and may wear caps and gowns.

Communication/Forum

Our online forum is provided as a service to registrants of TLC exclusively. Through this media, members of the group may post messages on topics such as, but not limited to, the following:

- Field trip details and/or ideas
- Club details and/or ideas
- Fellowship event details and/or ideas
- General information on events in a given area that would be of interest to home educators
- Prayer requests (under “Prayer Request Forum”)
- Curriculum discussions/suggestions
- Home education teaching methods
- Legislative alerts pertinent to New Jersey homeschoolers only

As we all know, time is precious to our families, so please be sensitive to the fact that people do not want to be inundated with emails. Please only post things that will be beneficial to the group. Remember the following points when posting messages to the group:

- The Forum is for the sole purpose of mutual exhortation, edification, and education in the area of homeschooling.
- The Forum is for parental use only. If your child(ren) would like to organize a homeschool or fellowship related activity, and wants to post the details on this forum, you may do so on their behalf. Please be sure to review (and edit) this message for content before posting.

As Christians we desire to have all participants deal with one another with the generally accepted basic values of the sanctity of life and home, the worship of God, and mutual respect which we offer through the love which Christ has placed in our hearts. If any member feels she/he has been offended, please do not respond to the other party publicly via this message board. Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother (Matthew 18:15).

Please keep in mind that we serve a God who is able to reconcile and restore. However, if this principle is violated, this will be cause for a meeting with the TLC Director.

V. Request/Renewing Annual TLC Support Membership

TLC accepts new members at any time of the year. New families may request membership by going to our website and clicking on “Request Membership”.

- **TLC Support Member only:** \$40 Annual non-refundable fee
- **TLC Support Member and Co Op Fee:** \$120-225/family for the year
(varies based on our location costs)

Our Support Member only fee will be waived for any new member joining after January 31st until our renewal time in April. Annual membership must be renewed each year by April 10th.

If your membership expires without payment, you will be “parked” and denied access to the website until your membership is renewed with payment. If you are parked, please contact us at info@mytlcnj.com to renew your membership otherwise your profile will be deleted from the website.

Termination of membership: If a member does not abide by the TLC handbook, and the issue is not resolved in accordance to the Peacemakers Pledge, membership may be terminated by agreement of 3/4 of the admin team.

VI. Payment & Refund Policy

Our preferred form of payment is Venmo. We also offer Paypal online, and TLC will absorb the transaction fees, except when refunds are requested (2.2% + .30/ transaction). We also accept payment by check made out to **The Learning Connection**.

- The support membership fee (\$40) is non-refundable
- Co-op Refund structure is as follows:
 - Cancellations/Refund Requests made before the July 31st payment deadline will receive 100% refund of fees paid.
 - Barring extenuating circumstances, Cancellations/Refund Requests made after the payment deadline will be subject to no refund of fees paid as teachers have often begun purchasing supplies by this time.

An additional reduction of 2.2% + .30/transaction will be made for payments made online.

VII. Financial Assistance

If your family is in need of financial assistance, please contact the administration at info@mytlcnj.com. Each request will be considered by both need and availability of funds.

Under special circumstances, deferred payment plans are available. Please contact the administration at info@mytlcnj.com to set this up.

VIII. Co-operative Distinctive

TLC offers a Co-operative learning environment meeting once a week during the academic school year, and is a ministry to families by families. It is an opportunity for parents to come together and share their resources, gifts, and talents for the benefit of other families and ultimately the Body of Christ.

We currently meet on Thursdays from 9:15 AM – 2:00 PM.

Our role is to encourage the parent through support, assistance, Co-op classes, and relationship building. **We do not function as a school or choose what parents teach each year.** Some parents will teach using a curriculum, and some will create classes using many different sources. (The Administration retains all decision-making over which proposed classes make it to the class grid. They will take into consideration both time and space concerns, as well as interest for subjects expressed by the current year Co-op members.)

Membership is only available to families who have at least one school age child (age 5 by October 31st) participating in classes.

October 31st is the cut-off deadline for all grades. If your child is “on the bubble” and you would like to move them up or down a grade level, please contact the Admins by April 14 so that we can get input from your child’s teachers to determine if the move would be advantageous. If you do not contact the Admins by April 14, you will not be able to switch the child’s grade level for registration, & he or she will need to register for the grade for which they are age-appropriate.

Every family will play a vital role in the success of this educational venture. Because this is truly a Co-operative effort, each family will support the Co-operative by assisting consistently in some of the following areas:

- ❖ Teacher
- ❖ Nursery Worker
- ❖ Teacher's Aid
- ❖ Clean-up/Set-up
- ❖ Hall/lunch monitor
- ❖ Administration

We need every member to serve faithfully in their assigned capacities in order for co-op to run smoothly. It is a team effort.

All Co-op members are required to attend the annual mandatory meeting usually held one week before the beginning of the Co-op year in September. Check the calendar on the website and save the date!

Responsibility Bond

Reason for the bond:

- We have, in the past, experienced families that would not show up for Co-op without letting anyone know, regularly show up late or leave early, or have excessive absences.
- Each family is a vital part of the Co-op. When you are absent, it affects everyone. When you are late, it affects everyone.
- We found that when we implemented the bond, it drastically reduced the above issues.

The bond helps bring accountability to our group so that no one is left scrambling on the day of Co-op and the classes that parents have paid for are being taught without disruption.

Here are the things that cause TLC to cash your bond:

- Frequent tardiness
- Frequent absences
 - (more than 4 unexcused absences in a year considering we only meet 31 times)
 - Excused absences are sickness, emergency situations, etc. (vacation, routine dr. appointments, etc are not considered excused)
- Not informing TLC of your absences via the absentee form, email or phone call
- Failure to fulfill your duties during the Co-op day

TLC, as a ministry, desires to be accessible to all families.

- Prices of classes will be determined by the cost of supplies. Teachers and all other helpers volunteer their time. (An expert may be hired to teach a specific course with the condition that he/she has no children enrolled in classes at TLC.)
- **As a group of volunteers, please note that we are not qualified to handle students with special needs in our co-op setting.**

- TLC Co-op is collaborative in style. We are not in competition with any other Co-op. We will be very generous in sharing new ideas, forms, and processes that work (or don't work) in our Co-op. In this way, we foster relationships and grow together.

IX. Structure of the Co-op

TLC leadership will consist of the following delegations:

Administration Team:

Meet our current team by clicking on the Leadership tab at the top of our homepage. There you will find a brief intro to each admin as well as their contact info.

Coordination Team:

Individuals are assigned yearly to be our coordinators. Please see the Leadership page on the website to see our current coordinators.

X. Operating Procedures

This Co-op shall have the right to govern itself according to the standards of the New Testament scriptures, "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). The governing body of this organization shall be known as its Administrative Team and it shall have the power to do all things necessary and proper to operate the organization.

The Director together with the administrative team shall decide on policy, teachers, job descriptions, and oversee all aspects of the TLC ministry.

The Director of TLC shall appoint all administrators to help facilitate activities and accomplish needed tasks within the group. The Director, together with the administration, shall decide on schedules, classes, coordinator job descriptions, and the day-to-day workings of the support and Co-op group.

Responsibilities of Teachers

Teachers shall:

- Agree with the TLC statement of faith.
- Provide a written testimony of their salvation and a referral letter from the church they attend.
- Agree with TLC's mission statement.
- Demonstrate servant leadership.
- Have demonstrated the ability to maintain Christian unity within the classroom as well as outside the classroom.
- Demonstrate an ability to adhere to the Peacemaker's Pledge (see page 15) when dealing with conflict within the classroom as well as outside the classroom.
- Provide/make classroom materials available to allow for the continuation of his/her class in the event of his/her absence.
- Keep the Scriptures at the center of their instruction.
- Set class size restrictions and projected prices of supplies per student.
- Submit receipts for class related expenses (keeping within total of predetermined class material cost).
- Be on time or early for their class.
- Be in control of the class at all times. The teacher's expectations of student behavior shall conform to the Student Conduct Rules and the Parent Contract.
- Never be alone with a student(s) for any reason. There is a 2 adult policy within TLC.
- Be a member of the weekly Co-op for one year before stepping up to teach. If the Co-op has a need for a teacher that cannot be filled by those who have been members of the Co-op for at least 1 year, a new Co-op member may teach provided they are approved by the administrative team.

Teacher approval by the TLC Director is contingent upon candidate teacher compliance to the above standards.

XI. Visitors

- Guests, both adults and children, are welcome to visit the Co-op. All guests need to contact us for approval ahead of time. This can be done through our website (www.mytlcnj.com). All requests will go through our admins, and they will contact you to confirm the details. Once approved, all guests are required to check in at the information table the day of their visit.
- Siblings of our Co-op families are welcome any time their school is closed for any reason, **but please notify us ahead of time so we can accommodate them as best as possible.**

XII. Attendance/Absence Procedures/Tardiness

- Membership in TLC is a commitment in a ministry to each other and to our children. Each family is allowed 2 unexcused absences per session (2 before Christmas break/2 after Christmas break). Please remember this is a CO-OP (a Cooperative effort), and we are very grateful that parents give their time. We realize that illness and extenuating circumstances sometimes arise, but every effort should be made to fulfill your commitment whenever possible. Doctor appointments, car/home repair appointments, vacations, etc should be scheduled on days that Co-op does not meet whenever possible. Being absent excessively creates a burden for your fellow homeschooling families who must cover your assigned duties. We need your cooperation and regular attendance to make this Co-op work.

Tardiness

- It is understandable that traffic or other emergencies may cause families to be late to Co-op, however tardiness creates an undue burden on teachers and the distraction negatively impacts the class instruction as a whole. We ask that you do everything you can to ensure you are at Co-op on time.

Teachers

- If it is a planned absence, please fill out the Absentee Form online. We encourage you to find a substitute teacher so your class can still be taught. If there is no one who can teach in your place, your class will become a study period.
- If you are unable to teach the morning of Co-op, please fill out the online Absentee Form if it is before 8:30 am. Directions will be given at the mandatory meeting about who to text or call if it is after 8:30 am on the day of co-op as this will vary by year.

Class helpers/other members

- If it is a planned absence, please fill out the Absentee Form online.
- If you are unable to make it the morning of the Co-op, please fill out the online Absentee Form if it is before 8:30 am. Directions will be given at the mandatory meeting about who to text or call if it is after 8:30 am on the day of co-op as this will vary by year.

XIII. Sickness Procedure

- We ask that all families refrain from attending Co-op while sick. Please be considerate of all the other families in attendance and stay home if you are ill. **Sick children will not be allowed in the nursery.** This includes children with runny noses (the exception is a clear runny nose).
- Children must be at least **24 hours** free of fever, vomiting, or diarrhea before returning to Co-op.

XIV. Homework Policy

- Our teachers spend a great amount of time and effort in preparing for their classes each week. It is expected that all students respect this and that they turn in their homework, when required, on time.
- If a student is unable to hand in the work on time, it is expected that the teacher will be notified before the next week so other arrangements can be made if necessary.
- If a student repeatedly does not hand in homework without having good cause, the student will be asked to drop the class.

XV. Code of Conduct

Basic Standards

- Teachers and staff are delegated authority from the parents and should be respected and obeyed accordingly. There should be no back talk or arguing with teachers or staff. Prompt and cheerful obedience is expected.
- Name-calling, slander, and gossip are forbidden. Students are expected to treat each other with respect.
- Dishonesty, lying, cheating, or stealing will not be tolerated.
- Students may not leave the school grounds without permission.

Classroom Standards

- Students are to be seated when class begins and have all required materials ready.
- Students are to focus on the teacher, stay in their seats, and keep their hands and feet to themselves.
- Toys or other distracting items are not to be brought to class.
- Students are to have cell phones off and stored in their book bags during the entire co-op day, including lunch, unless a teacher approves it for specific use during their class. This is a matter of respect and honoring of families that may have different standards, so out of love for them, we will leave all cell phones away during co-op. If a child is caught using a cell phone outside of class purposes, an adult has the right to take the phone and bring it to the info table where it will remain until the end of the day.
- Students are to display good stewardship in caring for the property of the church, TLC, and other students.
- Students are to be cooperative, respectful, and obedient to the teachers and staff at all times.
- Students are to be courteous, respectful, and loving to classmates and visitors.
- Clothing should be modest and appropriate for a Christian co-op.
- Food is only permitted in designated areas at specific times.

XVI. The Peacemaker's Pledge

A Commitment to Biblical Conflict Resolution

As people reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe that we are called to respond to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict.¹ We also believe that conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, serve other people, and grow to be like Christ.² Therefore, in response to God's love and in reliance on His grace, we commit ourselves to respond to conflict according to the following principles:

Glorify God — Instead of focusing on our own desires or dwelling on what others may do, we will seek to please and honor God—by depending on His wisdom, power, and love; by faithfully obeying His commands; and by seeking to maintain a loving, merciful, and forgiving attitude.³

Get the log out of your own eye — Instead of attacking others or dwelling on their wrongs, we will take responsibility for our own contribution to conflicts—confessing our sins, asking God to help us change any attitudes and habits that lead to conflict, and seeking to repair any harm we have caused.⁴

Gently restore — Instead of pretending that conflict doesn't exist or talking about others behind their backs, we will choose to overlook minor offenses, or we will talk directly and graciously with those whose offenses seem too serious to overlook. When a conflict with another Christian cannot be resolved in private, we will ask others in the body of Christ to help us settle the matter in a biblical manner.⁵

Go and be reconciled—Instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to wither, we will actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation—forgiving others as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us, and seeking just and mutually beneficial solutions to our differences.⁶

By God's grace, we will apply these principles as a matter of stewardship, realizing that conflict is an opportunity, not an accident. We will remember that success, in God's eyes, is not a matter of specific results but of faithful, dependent obedience. And we will pray that our service as peacemakers brings praise to our Lord and leads others to know His infinite love.⁷

¹ Luke 6:27-36; Gal. 5:19-26; Matt. 5:9.

² 1 Cor. 10:31-11:1; Rom. 8:28-29; James 1:2-4.

³ 1 Cor. 10:31; James 4:1-3; Psalm 37:1-6; Phil. 4:2-9; Col. 3:1-4; 1 Peter 2:12; John 14:15; James 3:17-18; Rom. 12:17-21; Mark 11:25.

⁴ Matt. 7:3-5; 1 John 1:8-9; Prov. 28:13; Col. 3:5-14; Luke 19:8.

⁵ Matt. 18:15-20; James 5:9; Prov. 19:11; Gal. 6:1-2; Eph. 4:29; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; 1 Cor. 6:1-8.

⁶ Matt. 5:23-24; Matt. 6:12; Eph. 4:1-3, 32; Matt. 7:12; Phil. 2:3-4.

⁷ Matt. 25:14-21; 1 Peter 2:19, 4:19; Rom. 12:18; John 13:34-35

XVII. Discipline

Parents have the primary responsibility to discipline their children and must be informed of problems in order that they may work to correct them. All teachers and parents will follow the guidelines below when dealing with student behavior problems.

- At the first and second offenses of behavior not in keeping with TLC standards, the teacher will warn the student and state the expected behavior.
- If students are talking or misbehaving together, please make efforts to separate them from each other to attempt to stop the issue. Helpers/assistants can also position themselves near the misbehaving student(s) to help diffuse issues before they begin.
- Sometimes, it can be helpful to have a private conversation with a student who is acting out. If needed, take the student into the hallway for a quick conversation to clearly explain the issue and ask them what they think could help solve the problem. If they have no helpful feedback, let them know it is their final warning for the behavior to cease before being removed from the class.
- At a third offense, a teacher or helper will remove the child from the class and bring him to the Admins at the Info desk for correction. The student will then be required to remain with their parent for the remainder of the period, in whichever class/station that parent is assigned.
- It will be necessary for the student to make a sincere in-person apology to the teacher in order to be permitted to re-enter the class the following week.
- A fourth offense will require removal from the class for the remainder of the year. The student will then be required to remain with their parent indefinitely, in whichever class/station that parent is assigned.
- Any additional offenses may result in further disciplinary action, up to and including complete removal from the co-op.
- The 3 strike policy is a guideline for minor offenses only and any child can be removed from classes anytime for offenses deemed major by the leadership team (such as physical assaults, verbal disrespect to a teacher or adult, etc.)
- Please note: Participation in TLC is a privilege and may be suspended. We only use this as a last resort, but it will be done if necessary. The goal of all discipline/correction is restoration.

XVIII. TLC Parent Contract

We, as parents attending TLC, promise to fulfill our responsibility and commitment to TLC by faithfully executing the volunteer duties and contributions to which we have agreed.

We understand and acknowledge the stated mission philosophy of TLC.

We realize that TLC is not a replacement for parental instruction but an enrichment and supplemental program for the benefit of home educating families.

We agree to have at least one of us present and available at all times during the TLC classes that our child(ren) are participating in.

We will keep apprised of our child(ren)'s conduct and progress by communicating frequently with the teachers.

We acknowledge our God-given responsibility to discipline our children. When informed of any behavioral problem, we will properly discipline our child with the goal of ensuring compliance with the standards of student conduct set forth by TLC.

We acknowledge that we will be financially responsible for any property damage done by our children in or around the church building.

We promise to resolve disputes by dealing with the person or persons involved in a spirit of forgiveness and restoration without criticizing them or TLC using the guidelines established in the Peacemaker's Pledge.

In consideration for the use of the church property and the volunteer staff of TLC, we hereby waive and release any right or claim we may have against the church or TLC, and agree to hold them harmless from all claims, suits, losses or related causes of action for damages, death, accidental or otherwise during or arising in any way from TLC classes and our children's use of the church property. (TLC does carry liability insurance for all events and activities.)

Parent Signature _____ Date _____

Parent Signature _____ Date _____

XIX. TLC Student Conduct Contract

CLASSROOM STANDARDS

1. Students are to be seated when class begins and have all required materials ready.
2. Students are to focus on the teacher, stay in their seats and keep their hands and feet to themselves.
3. Toys or other distracting items are not to be brought to class.
4. Students are to display good stewardship in caring for property of the church, TLC, and other students.
5. Students are to be cooperative, respectful and obedient to the teachers and staff at all times.
6. Being a source of distraction and causing others to stumble in the area of dress/appearance is a matter of spiritual purity and should be a concern to all Believers. The following revealing types and styles of clothing and adornment are not to be worn during TLC classes/functions: “Shock value” tee shirts, tight clothing, bare midriffs, sheer clothing, low cut tops, short-shorts, extreme sagging pants, etc. Some language, gestures, and suggestive art on apparel may also be considered inappropriate.
7. Cell phone/Devices are not to be used at any time (unless teacher permission is given during a specific class.) Please leave all devices at home unless needed for a class and then please only take devices out for that class. Cell phones may be confiscated by any adult and kept at the info table for the remainder of the day.

BASIC TLC CO-OP STANDARDS

1. Teachers and staff are the delegated authorities from the parent and will be respected and obeyed accordingly. There should be no back talk or arguing with teachers or staff.
2. Name-calling, slander and gossip are unacceptable. Students are expected to treat each other with respect.
3. Dishonesty, lying, cheating or stealing will not be tolerated.
4. Any type of physical altercation is completely unacceptable and will be met with students leaving co-op immediately.
5. Students may not leave the church grounds without permission.
6. Bikes, rollerblades, roller-skates, skateboards, scooters and/or any other similar devices may not be used at co-op at anytime. This includes before and after the start of co-op and also during lunch.

As a student, I understand the above standards and agree to behave according to these rules of conduct. I understand that if I fail to comply with these standards I may lose the privilege of participating in TLC.

Child Name/Signature Date

Child Name/Signature Date

Parent Name/Signature Date