



**Spring 2024
Handbook**

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INTRODUCTION

NWI Learning Community, Inc. (NWILC) is a non-profit organization that serves homeschooled children ages 3 to 14. This handbook outlines the expectations and policies of the co-op. All families should read the handbook prior to each semester before enrolling or continuing enrollment in NWILC to understand how the co-op works and to ensure that it is a good fit for their family.

NWI Learning Community, Inc. is incorporated in the state of Indiana for educational purposes.

MISSION

The mission of NWI Learning Community, Inc. is to provide a community for homeschooled children to learn with similarly aged peers as well as provide opportunities for socialization in a secular environment.

VISION

At NWI Learning Community, we envision a homeschool co-op that nurtures confident critical thinkers through structured, accountable, and flexible learning. We emphasize a ‘whole child’ approach, fostering academic, emotional, social, and physical growth, instilling a growth mindset for resilience. Our community is built on mutual respect, offering unwavering support for every member’s educational journey, dedicated to success in an ever-changing world.

MEMBERSHIP

To qualify for membership with NWI Learning Community, Inc., you must:

1. Be an actively homeschooling family with at least one child being homeschooled,
2. Pay enrollment fees and all applicable class fees,
3. Teach one class or assist in two classes every week during the semester,
4. Be willing to serve on a committee or in a leadership position,
5. Assist in the set up or clean up of our meeting space throughout the semester.

Membership Communication

The primary form of communication for the co-op is through the co-op website, email, and group chat via Whatsapp. All families are expected to join the group chat to maintain regular communication. Members should regularly check the website for registration, class, field trip, and event information. All forms and general information are also found on the co-op website at www.nwilearningcommunity.com.

Programs Offered

Regular Classes

Our regular classes program serves children ages 5-14. Children are required to attend three morning classes, 45 minutes each, every Tuesday. After lunch and recess, children may enroll in

an optional afternoon class. Afternoon classes are offered in either 4 week or 12 week sessions, based on the topic and teacher preference.

Classes offered each semester are supplemental, enrichment type classes which should not stand in for the lessons given at home. Parents propose class topics prior to the beginning of the semester and a schedule is created to ensure that there are sufficient class offerings for the students' ages and interests. Class topics change each semester based upon class proposals, children's ages, teacher availability, etc.

Pre-K Program

The Pre-K program serves children ages 3.5 to 5. Children must be comfortable being away from their parent for the entire morning and must be potty trained. The idea of this Montessori-inspired Pre-K program is to provide children with the skills needed to be independent learners. Montessori activities are designed to teach the children to work individually and at their own pace by being able to choose their own activities from a wide range of hands-on work. The wonderful thing about this environment is that it allows a wide age range in one space. Children can model mastered activities and learn from each other. The activities are self-motivated which prepares the children to be successful students. The children will be allowed to move freely about the work area choosing what they are interested in and progress at their own pace. They will be directed to prioritize work and ask for help when needed. The expectation is that the children can put their work away before moving on to a new work. All these skills learned will make for a more successful student.

This program runs all morning from 9:25 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. An optional afternoon pre-K/preschool class is offered if children wish to enroll.

Preschool Program

The preschool program serves children who are ages 2 to 3 with a structured morning of learning. The preschool program focuses on sensory activities, learning things such as colors and shapes, pretend play, practical life activities, going outside to play, and more. If your child is not ready for the pre-K program, they should enroll in the preschool program.

This program runs all morning from 9:25 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. An optional afternoon pre-K/preschool class is offered if children wish to enroll.

Nursery

Children ages 12 months and older must attend our nursery. Infants under 12 months may stay with their parent or they may attend the nursery. If an infant stays with their parent during a class, they must be in a baby carrier or stroller to ensure their safety. It is highly recommended for infants to attend nursery when their parent is teaching/assisting in a class. Nursery children should have a diaper bag with bottles and/or a sippy cup (if not breastfeeding), diapers, wipes, change of clothes, snack, and comfort items.

Class Meeting Information

All classes meet at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 2050 W 1100 N, Chesterton, IN 46304.

Families will enter through the Sanctuary door and check in at the administrative table before proceeding into the Fellowship Hall for morning meeting. All families are responsible for checking themselves in through the app on the co-op tablet as well as ensuring that their family is checked out for the day.

Cubbies

Families are assigned 1-2 cubbies to place their items every day, based on family size. They should be utilized to hold lunch boxes that do not need to be refrigerated, water bottles, class materials, etc. All items from cubbies should be taken home at the end of each co-op day.

Daily Schedule

Time	Activity
8:30 – 8:55 a.m.	Arrival and check in
9:00 – 9:20 a.m.	Morning Meeting
9:25 – 10:10 a.m.	1 st Class Period
10:20 – 11:05 a.m.	2 nd Class Period
11:15 – 12:00 p.m.	3 rd Class Period
12:00 – 12:25 p.m.	Lunch
12:25 – 12:55 p.m.	Recess
1:00 – 2:00 p.m.	4 th Class Period (optional)

Morning Meeting

Students must attend their assigned morning meeting each week from 9:00 to 9:20 a.m. Each morning meeting group is created based on age ranges. Morning Meeting serves as a way for children to start their day of learning with their group of peers and to connect with each other. It is essential part of our program that all students must attend.

Lunch

Lunch begins at 12:00 p.m. and ends at 12:25 p.m. Students can pick up their lunch boxes from the lunch cart in the Fellowship Hall or from their cubby and find a place to sit. All lunches must be consumed in the Fellowship Hall. All members are responsible for cleaning up their place and throwing away their trash.

Recess

Recess begins at 12:25 p.m. and ends at 12:55 p.m. Recess groups will take turns weekly to do a quick, 5 minutes clean up of the Fellowship Hall after lunch. Once finished, they will go out to recess with their monitor.

As we are operating in a larger building and children must walk over to Dogwood Park for recess, we want to ensure that recess happens safely for each child.

Outdoor Recess Rules

1. Dress appropriately for the weather. Recess is outdoors with few exceptions.
2. Line up with their recess group inside the Fellowship Hall after lunch.
3. Listen to the recess monitors.
4. Stay at the playground area.
5. No climbing trees.
6. Line up at the park to walk back to the building when it is time to return.

Indoor Recess Rules

1. Remain in the Fellowship Hall, except for bathroom usage.
2. Treat the area and games/materials with respect.
3. Clean up when recess is over.
4. Parents are responsible for their own children and must supervise them at all times. If a parent is preparing to teach their afternoon class, they may designate another parent to supervise their children.

Children who miss their recess group to go outside will remain indoors during recess. This is not a punishment, but to keep things clear for monitors and ensure that we do not have a safety gap. If a monitor is gone and a replacement parent is not found to take the group, the group will remain indoors for recess.

Parents who do not consent for their children to go out for recess with a monitor are responsible for taking them to and from the park or remaining with them in the building. Parents can revoke consent for their children to be assigned a recess group at any point in the semester, but they cannot add them to recess groups after the semester begins.

Preschool aged children must be with their parents during recess with few exceptions where another parent has been named the responsible party for the child.

Children who choose to stay inside for recess must remain with their parent, who must supervise them.

Membership Dues

Enrollment fees are paid every semester during the enrollment period. The semester enrollment fee is \$100 per family per semester. Families may also choose to pay a \$50 deposit with the \$50 balance due the last day of the month when enrollment closes. Enrollment fees will not be refunded once paid. If semester enrollment fees are not paid by the end of the enrollment period, the family will not be allowed to proceed with membership.

Associate memberships include field trips and events only. The fee for an associate membership is \$40 per family per semester.

Class Fees – Full Members Only

Classes usually require additional fees set by the teacher. These will be listed on the class registration page. You may withdraw from a class prior to class registration closing. Anyone who withdraws after class registration closes and payment is received will not receive a refund on class fees. If class registration fees, where applicable, are not paid by the end of the class registration period, the family will be removed from classes and will not be allowed to proceed with membership.

Class fees will be disbursed to teachers at orientation.

Tuition Assistance and Payment Plans

If your family needs assistance paying for class fees, you may apply on the website by the 10th of the month after class registration takes place. The information provided in this form will only be shared with Board members to determine if you will receive assistance. You will receive an email with the decision by the 12th of the month.

If your family would like to pay through a payment plan, please contact the enrollment coordinator to set this up. Payments will be spread equally over three months with a deposit, for a total of four monthly payments. This plan will be set up through website invoicing. If you do not pay your monthly invoices, you will not be allowed to proceed with membership the following semester or enroll in classes until your payments are up to date.

Class Registration

Class registration happens the first week of August for Fall semester and the first week of January for the Spring semester. Teachers and leadership have priority registration and register their children for classes starting at 8 a.m. on the first day of registration. Non-teachers can register their children beginning at 2 p.m. on the first day of registration. Parents are responsible for registering their children for classes. If issues arise, the enrollment coordinator can assist in enrolling children into classes where needed.

All children must register for three classes in the morning, except for preschool and pre-K children who will register for one class all morning. Afternoon classes are optional. Classes have age restrictions to which must be adhered. Any child whose birthday happens during the semester and will be moving into the minimum age requirement may register for that class. This requires approval from the academic director and the class teacher prior to class registration opening.

Class registration occurs on a first come, first serve basis. Once class maximums are reached, additional students will not be added without approval from the enrollment coordinator and the academic director.

Yearly Calendar

	Fall Semester	Spring Semester
Enrollment	March 1 – March 15	October 1 – October 15
New Family Applications due	March 15	October 15
Visit Days	April	November
New Family Enrollment Due	April 30	November 30
Class Proposals Due	May 15	December 10
Class Schedule Published	May 30	December 20
Class Registration	August 1 – August 2*	January 2 – January 3*
Fee Waiver Form due (if applicable)	August 10	January 10
Class Fees Due	August 15	January 15
New Family Orientation	2 weeks before start of semester	2 weeks before start of semester
Orientation	1 week before start of semester	1 week before start of semester
Classes	13 weeks August – November** (1 week for Fall Break)	13 weeks February – April** (1 week for Spring Break)
Registration for May Class	-	April 1 – April 5
May Class Fees Due	-	April 15
May Class	-	4 weeks in May (outside nature-type class)

*Teachers & leadership receive priority registration.

**Dates for each semester are based on the calendar and will be determined during the previous semester.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Teacher Responsibilities

1. Prepare for your class, bringing all necessary materials not provided by the co-op.
2. Communicate regularly with your assistants so they understand the class objectives and activities.
3. Provide lesson plans, activities, and class materials for your assistants if you are going to be absent.
4. Communicate with the parents of the students in your class either in person, through a Whatsapp group chat, or email.
5. Prepare an emergency substitute lesson plan that will be kept at the co-op building to be used when needed; this must be submitted to the program director along with all supporting materials on orientation day.

6. Submit receipts of class materials purchased for proof that class fee was used for such materials. All receipts must be uploaded to the correct Google Drive folder by the 2nd to last week of the semester.

Assistant Responsibilities

1. Engage and interact with the children in the class.
2. Help the teacher lead activities and pass out materials.
3. Be prepared to substitute for the teacher in case of an absence.
4. Keep the teacher aware of the time so that activities do not run over the class period.
5. Help clean up materials and return them to their proper place.
6. Guide students to their next class during the passing period.

Full Member Responsibilities

1. Attend class days consistently and regularly.
2. Communicate with the program director and appropriate teachers/assistants about planned and/or unplanned absences.
3. Serve in your role during class days and offer help where needed.
4. Attend all necessary meetings for committees or leadership positions for which one has volunteered.
5. Teach one class or assist in two classes per semester.
6. Attend parent meetings, teacher meetings (if applicable), and member meetings.
7. Sign up to set up or clean up four times in the semester on class days or pay the opt out fee of \$40.
8. Check the Whatsapp group chat and email regularly to keep abreast of information regarding the co-op.
9. Work with other members to create a positive learning environment for the children.

Associate Member Responsibilities

1. Check the Whatsapp group chat and email regularly in order to keep abreast of information regarding the co-op.
2. Help create a positive environment for the children and the community.

Student Expectations

1. Students should come to co-op ready to learn and participate in class.
2. No excessive noise, screaming, shouting, or running in the building.
3. Students must attend their assigned morning meeting.
4. Students are expected to be on time for classes.
5. Students are expected to attend the classes in which they are enrolled.
6. Students are not to use cell phones, tablets, hand-held games, or other similar devices during co-op class times, unless research is being conducted which pertains to the lesson being given. If a teacher requires the students to use a device, parents must be made aware prior to the class. Students may use a device after classes are finished for the day.

7. Students must be respectful of all other students and adults, as well as be cooperative with others in the co-op. This includes not cussing or using rude language.

POLICIES

Attendance Policy

Consistency is important to maintaining our co-op community. We strive to build a community of homeschooling families who know each other well. Therefore, consistent attendance is necessary. We understand that there are family emergencies, sickness, and vacations, but we ask that families commit to attending 75% of all classes during the semester. Our semesters are 12 weeks long, so families must attend 9 meetings to maintain their commitment to the co-op.

Children may be brought to co-op with another adult, provided that this adult is listed on the alternative caretaker form completed at the parent meeting prior to the semester beginning. No other adults may bring your child(ren) to co-op besides those listed on the form. All alternative caretakers must also have a background check on file with the co-op.

Families who do not attend 75% of all classes during a semester will be placed on probationary status the following semester. If the family does not attend 75% of all classes in the following semester, they will no longer be able to continue in the co-op as full members.

Please contact the program director if there are extenuating circumstances (i.e. birth of a baby, family death, medical issues, etc.) which affect your attendance.

Anti-Bullying Policy / No Slander Policy

All children and adults in the co-op should feel that they are in a safe environment. Everyone should be treated with respect. Bullying or harassment violates this safety.

Bullying/harassment includes:

- Verbal (teasing, name calling, racial remarks, threats, spreading rumors, gossiping)
- Physical (hitting, kicking, punching, tripping, using violence or unwanted physical contact, taking something that doesn't belong to you, assault)
- Cyberbullying (using technology to harass others)

If you believe that someone is engaging in bullying or harassment or is contributing to a hostile environment, please follow these steps:

1. Report the conduct to the program director.
2. The program director will work to resolve the issue with those involved.
3. If an incident cannot be resolved between the parties, an incident form will be filed.

Children or adults who are engaging in bullying or harassment or creating a hostile environment may be subject to being removed from the co-op and/or not welcome back in the future.

Child Abuse Protection Policy

NWI Learning Community strives to be a safe place for all children who attends its activities. In order to ensure that our organization is doing its best to care for its children, members are required to follow the policies below.

Screening & Background Checks

NWILC conducts personal interviews of its new members. The names of all members of NWILC are screened through the Indiana Sex and Violent Offender Registry. Additionally, NWILC obtains criminal background checks on all members every two years.

Accountability

Two adults must be present in every classroom, including nursery. If an adult must step out of the room and there will only be one adult in the classroom, a floater or the program director must come to the classroom to ensure that there are two adults always present.

All one-on-one interactions with children should be both observable and interruptible. Adults cannot be along with a child of whom they are not the parent without another adult present. If a child needs assistance in the restroom from someone other than their parent, two adults should go into the restroom. Adults may not help children in the restroom or change diapers without expressed written consent from their parent.

Families must sign in on the tablet each week. Visitors are required to sign in at the front table. Children must be always supervised. No children should be outside or left alone in the building without adult supervision.

Training

NWILC provides all members with a copy of the Child Abuse Prevention Policy. NWILC encourages members to be educated about child abuse and how to prevent it.

Reporting

Members of NWILC are aware of Indiana Reporting Law and agree to follow the law in situations regarding the abuse of a child. Any member aware of an incident of abuse shall immediately notify the NWILC board and together those individuals shall contact the proper authorities and document the information for our records. Members of NWILC recognize that it is unlawful to make a false report.

Indiana Law Pertaining to Reporting Child Abuse

IC 31-33-5 Chapter 5. Duty to Report Child Abuse or Neglect

IC 31-33-5-1 Duty to make report

In addition to any other duty to report arising under this article, an individual who has reason to believe that a child is a victim of child abuse or neglect shall make a report as required by this article. As added by P.L.1-1997, SEC. 16.

IC 31-33-5-2 Notification of individual in charge of an institution, school, facility, or agency; report

(a) If an individual is required to make a report under this article in the individual's capacity as a member of the staff of a medical or other public or private institution, school, facility, or agency, the individual shall immediately notify the individual in charge of the institution, school, facility, or agency or the designated agent of the individual in charge of the institution, school, facility, or agency.

(b) An individual notified under subsection (a) shall report or cause a report to be made.

As added by P.L.1-1997, SEC.16.

IC 31-33-5-3 Effect of compliance on individual's own duty to report

This chapter does not relieve an individual of the obligation to report on the individual's own behalf, unless a report has already been made to the best of the individual's belief.

As added by P.L.1-1997, SEC. 16.

IC 31-33-5-4 Immediate oral report to department of child services or law enforcement agency

A person who has a duty under this chapter to report that a child may be a victim of child abuse or neglect shall immediately make an oral report or written report to: (1) the department; or (2) the local law enforcement agency.

Code of Conduct

To maintain a safe environment for both children and parents, we have instituted a code of conduct for all families.

- Parents are responsible for their children at all times or to previously arrange for another adult to be responsible for them. Other adults are allowed to intervene in situations where there is a need, and then will report back to the child's adult. An incident report will be filed for serious or consistent issues.
- No child or adult is permitted to continually or excessively disturb others with bullying, teasing, coarse jesting, rough play, or crude talk.
- Malicious and/or consistent violent behavior, verbal or physical, will not be tolerated.
- PDA – We understand that genuine feelings of affection may exist between two students. However, students should refrain from all Public Displays of Affection (PDA) while at co-op or while attending and/or participating in co-op-related activities. PDA includes any physical contact that may make others in close proximity uncomfortable or serves as a distraction for themselves as well as innocent onlookers. This can include but is not limited to: intimate touching, fondling, cuddling, and kissing at co-op or a co-op-sponsored activity between two students typically in a relationship.

If any member of your family exhibits the above behavior at any co-op class day, field trip, or event, or if the behavior is witnessed and reported to the program director by another family, the program director will investigate the incident and may complete an incident report with all relevant parties. All incident reports will be presented to the relevant parties and signed, with a copy being sent to all Board members within 48 hours of the incident report being filed.

Incident Reports

All members should first attempt to resolve any incidents between each other before filing an incident report. If an issue cannot be resolved, an incident report must be filed. If a child or adult is involved in continuous incidents, an incident report must be filed by either someone who has observed or been involved with the incidents. All incident reports must be turned in to the program director.

The following are examples of when an incident report should be filed:

- Classroom Issue
 - o Consistent tardiness
 - o Skipping class or morning meeting
- Behavior Issue
 - o Physical harm to/from another person (kicking, biting, etc.)
 - o Emotional harm to/from another person (manipulation, humiliating statements, etc.)
 - o Offensive or disrespectful language
 - o Threat or perceived threat of violence
 - o Slander
 - o Bullying behavior
 - o Fighting
 - o Safety issue
- Damage to the facility

Families involved will be notified by the program director and asked to sign the original incident report. A digital copy of the Incident report will be sent to all families involved as well as the Board members. If a child and/or family has three incident reports filed against them in a semester, they will be subject to a Board review, which will happen the week following the third incident report being filed. The family will meet with two Board members. Families will be presented with a written document which outlines all the issues and incidents which have occurred up to the time of the meeting. Families may be placed on probation for the remainder of the semester at the discretion of the Board.

Based on the severity of the incident, a family can be immediately removed from the co-op without previous documentation or incident reports.

Discipline Policy

Corporal punishment is not allowed at co-op. During a class or activity, the teacher and assistants or leader have the responsibility to maintain discipline. There will be times when a child needs extra support during classes or an activity. The following are the steps that should be taken if a child is having difficulty at co-op:

1. The teacher or leader will explain expectations to the child and redirect the child to the appropriate activity. Further, the teacher will ask the child to stop the inappropriate behavior.

2. If the teacher, leader, or assistant has verbally addressed the issue twice and the child continues to act inappropriately, the child will be removed from the class and taken to a separate space with the program director and their parent to try to resolve the issue.
3. The child will be welcomed back to the classroom or activity once the behavior has been resolved.
4. If the parent needs to be brought to address the child's behavior for two weeks in a row, the parent will be asked to attend the class or activity with the child.
5. If the behavior continues with the parent present, the student will be removed from the class for the rest of the semester. If the behavior is happening outside of the classroom, such as at recess, the parent will need to remain with the child at all times for the remainder of the semester.
6. If the behavior is continuous with no lasting resolution, an incident report may be filed by the teacher or other adult witnessing the behavior along with the program director.
7. If the child's behavior is harmful or threatening to the teacher, leader, assistants, or other students, or if the child destroys property, the child will be removed from the class or activity immediately for one week and an incident report will be filed.

Accident Reports

If a child or adult gets injured at a co-op class day, field trip, or activity, an accident report must be filed and turned in to the program director.

Diversity, Inclusivity, and Non-Discrimination Policy

NWI Learning Community, Inc. is run by volunteers and is inclusive and secular. Those in the co-op are committed to fulfilling the objectives without discrimination, including discrimination based on race, color, national origin, ancestry, age, religion, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, disability or handicap, or economic status.

Facilities Policy

All families are required to sign up to set up or clean up before/after co-op days four times in the semester. Families can opt out of this requirement, but they must pay a \$40 cleaning fee each semester. This fee goes into the tuition assistance fund and must be paid by the date that class registration fees are due.

Field Trip Policy

All field trip payments are final and will only be refunded if the co-op or the venue cancels. Members understand that the co-op often makes non-refundable deposits and should not expect their field trip payments to be refunded unless the trip is canceled.

Guest Policy

Guests are not allowed to attend co-op classes unless there is prior permission from the director. Children who are not paid members of the co-op are not allowed to attend co-op classes. Spouses, partners, or other relatives are allowed to attend co-op field trips or events if their

attendance is noted at the field trip or event sign-up. Spouses, partners, or relatives who attend co-op classes must serve a role during the co-op day.

Illness Policy

1. If a member of your family has any of the following symptoms, do not attend classes, field trips, or events:
 - a. Fever, vomiting, or diarrhea within 24 hours of class day, field trip, or event
 - b. Contagious rashes or bacterial illnesses such as pink eye or the flu
 - c. Contagious strep throat
 - d. Head lice
 - e. Any other communicable disease
2. Common cold and allergy symptoms, teething fevers, and the like are acceptable to attend as long as the child is feeling well enough to attend.

Inclement Weather Policy

In the event of inclement weather, we follow the Duneland School Corporation as a guideline to determine if classes are canceled. If Duneland Schools are closed due to inclement weather, co-op classes will be canceled. If a class day is canceled, a makeup day will be added to the end of the semester. The program director will send a message in Whatsapp on this decision by 7 a.m. the morning of a class day.

Reimbursement Policy

Expenses incurred related to events or field trips may be reimbursed. To request a reimbursement, please complete the Reimbursement Form found on the website in the Documents and Forms tab. You must attach all relevant receipts. Reimbursement forms are due within 30 days of purchase.

Substitution Policy

If, for any reason, you cannot attend a class that you were scheduled to teach, please notify the program director as well as your assistants as soon as you know you will be absent. If you are teaching a class, all lesson plan materials must be given to the assistants as soon as you know of your absence. If you cannot get the material to the assistants in a timely manner, the substitute lesson provided at the beginning of the semester will be used. For classes in which all teachers and assistants are absent, those assigned to be floaters will be asked to step in.

If you know that you will be absent for a class in advance, please fill out the Absent Form under Documents and Forms on the website and turn it into the program director at least one week prior to your absence.