

REACH Handbook

Policies and Best Practices

Goals for REACH

REACH is an acronym for Resources, Encouragement and Activities for Columbia Homeschoolers. REACH was started with the goals of offering resources that enhance homeschooling, providing encouragement and support for homeschooling parents, and promoting activities for all homeschool families. REACH is open to all homeschoolers, regardless of religious preference, national/ethnic origin or educational philosophy.

How to Join: REACH support group

If you would like to join us, please print out these pages before submitting the form for your records. Fill out the application portion and submit it to REACH along with registration payment to complete the transaction. Please note: REACH membership is available any time during the year- it is never "too late" to join. However, no matter when you join REACH this year, your membership will expire June 30th of that school year. After the administration team processes your membership, we will email you an acceptance letter containing the log-in information for the REACH "Members Only" part of our website and instructions for the discussion forum. Email and Internet access are essential to our communication. If you do not have access to the information on the REACH Internet sites, you may not be able to realize the full potential of benefits from this group. Annual fees cover overhead costs of REACH and go toward groupwide activities.

Accountability Information:

REACH is a support group only. Joining REACH does NOT make you legal. You must be registered with an accountability organization for your homeschool to be legal.

There are 3 options for doing this:

1. The school district
2. SCAIHS
3. A third-option group under SC code 59-65-47, such as REACH the TOP (RTT)
Upgrade the basic REACH membership with the Third Option Participant (TOP) application. Now available with electronic forms for your convenience.

REACH Policies

Fostering a Community of Support : REACH maintains a private discussion forum online where members can find out about ongoing activities planned specifically for REACH members and also activities that are open to the public. Members should also regularly check into the online discussion forum and calendar of events. The forum is also a great place to share personal struggles and successes in our homeschooling journeys. REACH members may contact any of the admin team for support, encouragement or advice. Everyone should participate in the online community, giving and receiving ongoing support.

A membership roster is available on the private discussion forum. Please use the member roster as a homeschool resource to build personal relationships. Refrain from using the roster and discussion board to solicit business contact. We would be happy to post an ad for your business or co-op on our endorsements page. Members can also contact each other privately through the discussion forum.

Volunteer Responsibilities: REACH is organized by a team of volunteers. We rely on members to contribute as a part of this team effort. The more volunteers we have, the more variety of activities and resources we can offer. Health issues, work schedules, and interests change from time to time. Every member should contribute to REACH in some way.

Member responsibilities and involvement vary. Some members serve on an event committee to plan and implement a one-time event, such as: field day, art show, end of the year celebration, used book sale. Other members may choose an ongoing, regular basis activity, such as: boys/girls club, student council advisor, park day contact or admin team.

Participation Expectations: We believe that personal interaction fosters a sense of community. REACH members are asked to participate and supervise their own children at REACH activities. Most activities are not designed for drop-offs. REACH volunteers cannot assume responsibility for the safety of children who we do not know.

Homeschool families often have various age groups, ability levels and interests. Sometimes, members will be permitted to include all of their students, sometimes not. Our ultimate concern is keeping participants safe during REACH activities; therefore we rely on parental supervision.

Age inclusive activities: REACH hosts several groupwide activities that aim to include all ages and interests. Groupwide activities are open to an unlimited number of participants. Individual members may also organize an activity that would be appropriate for a wide range of ages, but may offer limited amount of spaces for participants.

Age specific activities: Some field trips are age specific due to the requirements of the venue. Individual hosts may also specify age-specific activities due to limited spaces available.

Cases will arise where a parent is unable to supervise their own student, if a parent has a scheduling conflict for an age-inclusive activity or if a family has students who are outside of the age-specific range. REACH members may buddy up with another group member who will accept the supervision of their student. The host volunteer may be occupied with host duties declining to supervise additional students. Designated supervisors must be adults that are members of REACH. We do not permit students to babysit while attending REACH activities.

For example: a museum may prohibit toddlers or preschoolers from a group tour or a factory tour may only allow participants over 12 years old. Student council activities are also for the specific age/grades, not older or younger participants.

Problem can be solved when 2 members agree to buddy up for supervising each other's children. One member supervises the age-specific participants at the activity, while another member supervises the non-participants outside the activity or at another location.

Non-members may visit one REACH activity with a REACH member. Groupwide activities are a great opportunity for members to invite their friends to visit REACH. Other activities may be exclusive for REACH members only. Hosts/Volunteers will specify the limitations of their activity.

Drop-off policy: High School Student Council (9-12th) activities are often organized by students and advertised among the teens. Students may drive themselves to the activities. In order to ensure a safe and secure environment, the following procedure will improve our communication practices for all Teen Activities. Please remember that RSVP's need to be registered on main discussion forum so hosts know who is coming. REACH teens may attend without parent, if the parent contacts the host/chaperone directly. Student Council bylaws state that they will have 2 chaperones. However, the Host may desire more chaperones or decline drop-offs.

1. The Host must have emergency contact numbers for the REACH parent. Should the event end early or medical emergency or behavior issue arise, the REACH parent will need to come pick up the participant. Adults need to communicate directly; not relying on relayed messages from the teens.
2. Chaperones must provide their contact number, should the parent have unforeseen circumstances or delayed return.
3. If parents carpool teens to activities, each parent must give the host their emergency contact number and the driver's emergency contact number. The

host needs to know how many students are coming to the event and who is authorized to pick up the teen from the activity.

4. Non-REACH members are allowed to visit REACH organized activities. However, the REACH member who invited the visitor must supervise the visitor. Non-REACH teens should not be dropped off.
5. Student Council activities are designated for REACH teens, 9th -12th grade. Younger siblings attending public Teen Night Out activities must be accompanied by their REACH parent. Teens cannot participate and be responsible supervisors for their younger siblings. REACH alumni may obtain permission from the Admin Team to participate without parent supervision, by contacting rtt@reachgroup.org

Code of Conduct: As homeschoolers, anytime we are together as a group in public, we represent the entire homeschool movement as well as our families, and it is our desire for REACH members to always be viewed in a positive light. Therefore, parents are expected to comply with the following to ensure acceptable behavior during activities and field trips:

- Parents and children are to be appropriately attired for all group events.
- Children and adults are expected to treat each other respectfully at all times.
- Children must not disrupt activities/field trips or behave aggressively at any time.
- Members must be sensitive to the family values of others. This includes the use of language or behavior that others may view as offensive.
- Personal issues with another member must be handled privately. Any problems affecting your enjoyment or ability to participate in REACH activities should be brought to the attention of the admin team. The Admin team is available to assist in handling REACH-specific problems between members.
- Parents are expected to enforce the appropriate conduct of children under their supervision.
- Case by Case problems will be considered by the Admin Team as issues arise.

Conflict Resolution Policy: Start with the “Golden Rule” or “Good Karma”: Members agree to treat one another with respect and encouragement they wish to have returned to themselves. Give the benefit of the doubt, rather than jump to conclusions about another’s motives. Strive to offer encouragement instead of judgment.

Even so, conflict will arise from time to time. When conflicts arise:

1. Members should make every effort to resolve the matter with each other first. Pick up the phone or write a private email that opens the opportunity for communication and explanation of each participant. Be willing to offer reasonable compromise.
2. Members may report conflict issues to an Admin Team representative. All Admin Team members will agree to refrain from gossip. Gossip is defined as sharing information with individuals who are neither part of the problem nor part of the solution.

- a. A-Team Rep will encourage the members to resolve the issue privately with each other and offer counsel on reasonable compromise.
- b. A-Team Rep may contact the other conflict participants to obtain a fuller perspective on the situation and offer counsel/encouragement to bring resolution. A-Team Rep may involve additional board members for the quickest and simplest resolution.
- c. A-Team Rep will report conflict issues to the Admin Team. The admin team needs to be aware of all conflict issues, so that future issues can be handled similarly or improved upon. A-Team will refrain from gossip. (Gossip is defined as relaying situation to individuals who are neither part of the problem nor part of the solution.)
- d. Should the issue continue to escalate, the Admin Team will work together to bring resolution, including but not limited to amending group policies and/or revoke individual membership privileges.

Conflict resolution makes us stronger and better as individuals and as a group. We believe that our different opinions, ideas and perspectives are among our greatest RESOURCES in REACH.

Questions regarding these policies and best practices:
please contact A-team at reach@reachgroup.org

Thanks for choosing REACH. We look forward to getting to know you this year.
~REACH A-team