

EP Home Education Ministry Vision Statement

The EP Home Education Ministry is dedicated to providing spiritual guidance to homeschool parents under the oversight of the session, and to providing academic counseling to homeschool parents in carrying out their God-ordained responsibilities to “train up their children in the way they should go.” This shall include assisting homeschool parents in planning and carrying out courses of study to develop in their children Biblical character qualities and a Christian world view, such that their children will be equipped for independent citizenship and be prepared to serve Christ.

Core Values of EPHEM

- The individual Christian family is responsible before and accountable to God for the home instruction they do.
- EPHEM exists because the church is committed to helping families carry out their responsibilities to God and to their children. Thus EPHEM is an equipping ministry to Christian families only, not an outreach evangelism ministry.
- EPHEM believes in the importance of the accountability to the local church therefore EPHEM is a ministry to local PCA families who are held accountable to the elders of the session of their own church through church membership.
- EPHEM is a ministry, not an institution, therefore people are more important than programs and should be treated with Christian love and care.
- EPHEM strives for excellence in its program and encourages excellence in the home education programs of its families because excellence honors God and is what He requires.
- EPHEM acknowledges that the father is the head of the home. Even though he may not do the actual teaching, he should be knowledgeable about the home instruction program in his home since he is responsible for it. Therefore EPHEM sends out couples as reviewers and expects both parents to be present for reviews.
- EPHEM believes all knowledge is God’s knowledge and should be taught from a scriptural perspective.
- Training in knowledge of Scripture and its practical application to daily living in the family, church, and community takes precedence over academic training. Spiritual and academic training are not mutually exclusive, since God is creator and Lord of all, but rather should be integrated and complementary. Nevertheless there is an important order of importance and priority.

Summary of Maryland's Home School Law and Guidelines for the Parent-County Relationship

At least 15 days before beginning a home instruction program for the first time, parents must submit a Home School Notification Form to the officials of the county in which they live, notifying them of their intent to home school, indicating their consent to the requirements of the law, and designating EP Home Education Ministry as their approved legal oversight program. The county will contact EPHEM to confirm that the families designating EPHEM are indeed in its program. No further contact with the county by the family needs to be made, but recent laws require EPHEM to notify the county when there had been a change in status for a student (a move, withdrawal from home education or transfer to another oversight program.) Therefore, EPHEM members are required to inform the EPHEM administrator of any such status changes.

The law to which parents submit by filing the Home School Notification Form requires that children “ 5 years old* or older and under 16” receive home instruction which will:

1. “provide regular, thorough instruction.”
2. “take place on a regular basis during the school year program and be of sufficient duration to implement the instruction program.”

In addition, consent indicates that this “regular, thorough instruction” is under the supervision of a “school or institution offering an educational program operated by a bona fide church organization”, which provides the following:

1. pre-enrollment conferences
2. textbook and other instructional material
3. annual homeschool visits
4. periodic conferences with parents

To obtain a Home School Notification Form, request one from the office responsible for monitoring home instruction in your county. You need only give your names and address and they will promptly mail the form to you.

Anne Arundel County (410) 222-5457
Calvert County (410) 535-7241
Prince Georges County (301) 952-6360
Queen Anne's County (410) 758-2403

HSLDA members may also request a state approved form to submit to their county. (It has fewer questions than some of the county forms.)

* While kindergarten in the state of Maryland is mandatory, not all children are mature enough to begin even a low-key kindergarten program at the age of almost 5 or 5. To request a 1-year exemption from mandatory kindergarten attendance, parents must submit a written request to the county before the opening of school in the calendar year in which their child becomes 5 years old. The local system will approve the request in writing within 5 days.

Guidelines for Participation

Families who participate in the EP Home Education Ministry (EPHEM) for umbrella services must abide by the following guidelines:

- 1. Church Membership-**The Annapolis EP church session and the EP Home Education Ministry Committee under whose authority EPHEM falls, have stipulated that in order to promote the integrity and manageability of the EPHEM ministry, each participating family must be under the authority of the church leadership. Therefore, the parents in participating families must be members in good standing, and regular attendees, of one of the following churches: Annapolis EP Church, Severna Park EP Church, Broadneck EP Church, Grace Point Presbyterian Church (formerly Glen Burnie EP Church), Reformed Presbyterian Church in Bowie, Grace EP Church, Safe Harbor Presbyterian Church, Shore Harvest Presbyterian Church or Pasadena EP Church. Families whose parents are not currently members, but are regular attendees and preparing for membership in one of the aforementioned churches, will be considered for participation in EPHEM on a contingent basis.
- 2. Compliance with Maryland Law-**Since EPHEM is an approved oversight program of the Maryland State Department of Education, it is imperative that all families comply with Maryland's homeschooling law. Therefore, each family shall submit a Home School Notification Form to the officials of the county in which they live notifying them of their intent to home school and listing EPHEM as their approved oversight program. In addition, it is the responsibility of the member family to notify the EPHEM administrator if there is any change in the homeschooling status of their students during the school year. New laws now require EPHEM to notify the counties of this information. Changes in status include any local address changes or withdrawal from EPHEM for any reason, such as a change to another education ministry, enrollment in a public or private school, a student now over 16 years of age or a move out of the area. Maryland law also requires EPHEM to maintain grades on file for any student enrolled in high school. Parents agree to submit to EPHEM by July 15 (or within two weeks of withdrawal from EPHEM if membership terminates during the school year) two copies of grades assigned for all subjects taught that year. If courses have not yet been completed by July 15, paperwork must still be submitted, with "incomplete" listed for the grade and an amended report filed promptly.
- 3. Regular, Thorough Instruction-**As stipulated by law, each homeschooled child must receive regular, thorough instruction. While educational philosophy will affect the way in which the letter of the law is carried out, each family is expected to honor the law's intent. EPHEM considers that for high school students, "thorough instruction" would mean that at least five Carnegie units of instruction be planned for each school year.
- 4. Home Reviews-**Each family must acknowledge the supervisory authority of EPHEM by submitting to periodic review of the home instruction program and correcting any noted deficiencies within a reasonable period of time. (See the section titled Umbrella Procedures.) Reviews are needed to provide EPHEM with adequate documentation that home instruction was carried out. **It is the responsibility of the member family to contact their reviewer to**

set up such reviews in the fall and spring. Contact should be made by Sept. 5 to set up a fall review by Oct. 15 and contact should be made by May 15 to set up a spring review by June 30. IF the reviewer family cannot be reached, it is the responsibility of the member family to contact the EPHEM administrator. Reviewers should also contact the EPHEM administrator if their families do not make contact with them.

5. Mid-Year Withdrawal Policy-A parent may withdraw one or more of their children from EPHEM's supervision at any point during the year. Fees paid to EPHEM for the year, however, will not be refunded. Upon learning of the parent's intention to withdraw a student, EPHEM is legally obligated to inform their county that the student(s) are no longer under EPHEM's supervision. The date of the termination of supervision will be reported as the last date that an in-person review was performed. If the family declines the opportunity to set up a final review by their reviewer at the time of the withdrawal, the termination of supervision date will be reported as being the date of the fall review and the family assumes the risk of having homeschooled since that time without adequate supervision as outlined in the Maryland Home Instruction Regulations COMAR 13A.10.01.
6. Yearly Enrollment Conference-EPHEM acknowledges that in a two parent family, the father is the head of the home. Even though he may not do the actual teaching, he should be knowledgeable about the home instruction program in his home since he is responsible for it. EPHEM sends out couples as reviewers and expects both parents to be present for reviews. In a single parent family, EPHEM acknowledges that the primary custodial parent is the head of the home, whether that is the mother or father. The non-custodial parent is not required to be present during the reviews, but may attend with the permission of the primary parent. Reviewers may be sent as couples or as single parents for reviews.
7. Service Participation-Each family should contribute to the work and ministry of EPHEM so that all may enjoy the benefits of participation.

While not a requirement, all families under EPHEM's umbrella are strongly encouraged to join the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA). Although there is currently little cause for concern in the state of Maryland, such might not always be the case. Membership serves as "legal insurance" and supports the work of HSLDA for families in less tolerant states.

Information About High School

EPHEM does NOT provide transcripts or diplomas. Some other, more expensive umbrellas do provide this option. For EPHEM families, transcripts are the responsibility of the family. Blank diplomas can be purchased and filled in by parent.

EPHEM can confirm that schooling was done in accordance with COMAR regulations, but does not have the manpower to do third party validation of grades which is what would be necessary for a real transcript from EPHEM.

EPHEM can make the family's transcript look more official by adding a signature and embossing with EPHEM's seal, IF the paragraph as seen on the sample High School Record (in EPHEM handbook) is included.

Some families have their students take the GED.

If you are considering only home schooling for only part of your student's high school years, please realize that the county graduations requirements include not only certain courses, but also certain attendance requirements, high school assessments (MSDE HSE), passing grades on certain standardized tests in Maryland, a service-learning requirement, and certain other requirements. If you wish to transfer your student back into the public high school system, someone at the school will evaluate whether the credits earned while home schooling will be accepted. Evaluations, such as exams, may be administered, students may be interviewed, and any portfolio will be carefully inspected. Without proper proof and documentation of completion of satisfactory high school work, credit will not be given and the student will have to retake the subjects.

Most colleges expect a high school transcript to include 20-24 carnegie units. Maryland requires public school students to have 22 credits to graduate. The EPHEM committee therefore requires that high school students in EPHEM have a course of study planned such that they will earn at least 5 carnegie units each school year. (Homeschoolers in Anne Arundel County that are under supervision by the county instead of an umbrella are required to take 6 subjects per year.) These units can, of course, be divided between academic and non-academic subjects.

The exact breakdown of credits identical to public schooled students is NOT required for homeschooled students, as they are not eligible for a diploma from the Maryland State Board of Education. *However*, the law states that homeschooled students must take *approximately* the same courses as public school students take. It is recommended that a similar schedule as to what the public schools require is adhered to in order to be competitive when applying to colleges.

Excellent resources are available from Inge Cannon's Education Plus www.edplus.com
The HSLDA web site also has excellent information about the high school years.

Sources for curriculum materials

(incomplete list, but it is a start for ideas)

1. catalogs
 - a. Sonlight (detailed lesson plans), www.sonlight.com
 - b. Rainbow Resource Center (huge selection), www.rainbowresource.com
 - c. Elijah Company, www.elijahco.com
 - d. Veritas Press (classical), www.veritaspress.com
 - e. Greenleaf Press, (history), www.greenleafpress.com
 - f. Love to Learn, www.LoveToLearn.net
 - g. Timberdoodle, (lots of hands-on educational materials)
www.timberdoodle.com
 - h. Home Training Tools (science), www.hometrainingtools.com
 - i. The Teaching Company (high school, college level) www.TEACH12.com
 - j. Peace Hill Press, (classical) www.peacehillpress.com
 - k. Vision Forum, www.visionforum.org
 - l. Delta Education, (science and math) www.deltaeducation.com
 - m. Covenant Home Curriculum, (classical) www.covenanthome.com
 - n. Bright Ideas Press (science, history, geography)
 - o. Tobin's Lab (science)
 - p. A Beka
 - q. Bob Jones
 - r. Alpha Omega
 - s. Many, many more!!!
2. Curriculum fairs, vendors and seminars
 - a. CHAP, May, Harrisburg, PA, www.CHAPonline.com
 - b. HEAV, June, Richmond, VA, www.heav.org
 - c. AHSG curriculum fair, June, Broadneck EP
 - i. Mostly used books, some seminars

Tutorial Services

ACTS, www.epacts.org

Cornerstone Tutorial, www.cornerstonetutorial.org