

Eagle River Christian Homeschool Association Policies & Guidelines

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1. PURPOSE

For the purpose of this document, the term *parents* can be defined as one or both parents and the term *child* can be defined as a single child or children of one family.

Eagle River Christian Homeschool Association (ERCHA) is a local Christian homeschool support group in the Chugiak/Eagle River area. We offer encouragement, advice and fellowship for families who have made the decision to educate their children at home. We also welcome inquiries from people who are considering the home-schooling option.

We believe the ultimate responsibility for the care, training, and education remains with each child's parents (Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:1-25; 4:1-4). This is an inalienable right given by God, which the State cannot create, destroy, or alter. While others may be delegated to teach at times, the final responsibility and control for education remains with each child's parents.

We believe that as parents carry out the education of their children, it is their duty to do so in a manner that actively works to produce educational excellence, good citizenship and godly character. We encourage parents to be familiar with and comply with Alaska State Law regarding home education.

2. MEMBERSHIP

While ERCHA is based on Biblical principles and conducted with Christian values, membership in ERCHA is for all families who are actively homeschooling or preparing to do so.

Membership packets may be obtained:

- Online
- By emailing membership@ercha.com
- At ERCHA Meetings
- By mail: ERCHA ~ PO Box 770430 ~ Eagle River, AK 99577-0430

ERCHA membership is \$25 per school year (mid-May through mid-May depending upon the date of the ERCHA May Meeting). Dues will not be pro-rated.

Since ERCHA is composed entirely of volunteers, the successful functioning of our organization is dependent on our members' willingness to step-up and get involved. The participating parent is required to sign up for one member responsibility for membership to be accepted. The fulfillment of that responsibility is expected by all members. A list of committees and needs required for the functioning of the group has been compiled and can be found in the membership packet. If you would like other member responsibilities added, please submit your suggestion to the Board.

Membership is required to participate in ERCHA events (Tuesday Clubs, Field Trips, Graduation, etc.).

Returning Members: Registration and payment will take place at the May Membership Meeting. If it is impossible for you to attend the meeting, you may have a representative attend to sign you up for a member responsibility and turn in your form and payment. Returning members may also join at the January meeting, however they will miss the opportunity to participate in events which require registration prior to January.

New Members: (those who are new to homeschooling, have just moved to the area or homeschooling families who were not ERCHA members during the last 12 months) are encouraged to join at the May, September or January meeting. If you are new to homeschooling or the area, please contact the Chairman or Co-Chairman for additional information.

Payment may be made via check or cash.

ERCHA publishes a directory for members in June. This directory will be posted on the ERCHA Members Yahoo Group and may be mailed or emailed to all members. The information in the directory is only for ERCHA member use and is not to be shared with non-members or used for business, political mailings or solicitations. Members may opt to keep their information private and not be listed in the member directory by selecting the appropriate box on the membership form.

If your mailing information or homeschooling status changes during the year, please inform the Membership Chairman.

Policies and guidelines, of which this section is a part, have been established to facilitate the effectiveness of ERCHA as a support group. Failure to abide by these Policies and Guidelines may result in revocation of ERCHA membership.

3. MEETINGS

Group meetings are at least once a quarter at Eagle River Grace Church (formerly known as Grace Brethren Church of Eagle River). Meetings are open to all families. Inquiries can be directed to the Chairman of the Board.

4. COMMUNICATION

Conscientious efforts are made to alert members of upcoming activities and events through meetings, electronic and printed announcements, and the ERCHA Members Yahoo Group. If you have questions about ERCHA communications please contact the Chairman of the Board.

ERCHA Newsletter

Newsletters will be published if there is a volunteer to fill that role. If that is the case, a newsletter will be sent by e-mail and posted on the Yahoo Group site. Please email all submissions to the newsletter to the Communications Coordinator.

ERCHA Member Yahoo Group

A Yahoo Group has been established for current ERCHA members. While not required, we do encourage members to join as the Yahoo Group is a helpful tool which enables families to stay informed, access messages and newsletters that are archived, and view the online event calendar and ERCHA directory. Members are also encouraged to post information or opportunities that might benefit homeschooling families.

ERCHAMembers is a restricted list and the general public does not have access to what is posted. If forwarding a message from another individual or group that includes personal contact information, please obtain permission from the individual to pass on the information. Delete any header information from the email and note that it is a forward from another list. Please have the same courtesy before forwarding an ERCHA Members Yahoo Group message to another individual or Yahoo Group.

ERCHA does not control nor necessarily endorse any class, person or product advertised on the Yahoo Group website.

There are two ways to sign up and use the Yahoo Group:

1. *Subscribe* - Send a blank email to ERCHAmembers-subscribe@yahogroups.com. With this option you will be **subscribed** to the Yahoo Group. You will be able to post and receive messages through your own email provider, but you will not be able to sign in to or have access to the features of the ERCHA Members Yahoo Group (archived messages, calendar, files, or database).
2. *Join* - Go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ERCHAmembers/> and click "Join This Group!" With this option you will **join** the ERCHA Members Yahoo Group. You will be able to sign in to the Yahoo Group and will have access to archived messages, files (archived newsletters), database (music teacher list; youth resource list; services and products offered by ERCHA families list) and ERCHA event calendar. You can also have messages sent to the email address of your choice and choose how frequently to receive the messages.

Yahoo Group Guidelines

Subject line

Please clearly state the content of message in the subject line for ease of use for all members (i.e. "Bowling this Friday", "History Resource", "Prayer Request", "Curriculum for Sale", etc.).

Activities/events

Members may plan and/or post events. Field trips and activities with on-going participation (class or club) require approval through the ERCHA Board before posting. Please send requests to the Social Activities Chairman for social activities, Field Trip Chairman for field trips, and the Education Chairman for educational activities.

Replies

By clicking "reply", your message will be sent to the ERCHA Yahoo Group. Before doing so, please determine if it will benefit the entire Yahoo Group to read your response or if you should reply to the individual privately. Please refrain from emailing group-wide messages containing only words of congratulations, agreement or thanks.

Advertising

As a courtesy, please include the words "for sale" or "want to buy" in your subject line.

ERCHA members may list their occupations or home-based businesses in the "database" section of the Yahoo Group if they would like to make their services known to other members.

Content

Only messages and legislative alerts that directly pertain to home education are allowed on the list. Forwarded messages from HSLDA (Home School Legal Defense Association) and APHEA (Alaska Private and Home Educators' Association) are permissible. The ERCHA Yahoo Group is not a venue for promoting a lifestyle or personal agenda. Political campaigning is not allowed.

If you have a question about something you wish to post, please send it to the Chairman. The ERCHA Board reserves the right to moderate messages and/or remove a member or message from the Yahoo Group if guidelines are violated or the content of the messages is not for the encouragement of ERCHA members.

For further explanation of the benefits of becoming a Yahoo Group Member please visit our Yahoo Group Page.

5. EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

Events and field trips are Board approved but member directed. If you are interested in coordinating an event please contact the Social Activities Chairman or download the Event Form from the Yahoo Group Files section, fill it out and email it back to the Social Activities Chairman. If you are coordinating a field trip, please contact the Field Trip Chairman or download the Field Trip Planning Worksheet from the Yahoo Group Files section, fill it out and email it back to the Field Trip Chairman.

Board members are available for ideas, support and consultation. ERCHA-sponsored events are for members only unless otherwise specified. Please contact the coordinator of the activity or the Social Activities Chairman if you are in doubt.

Fees. All venue fees are the responsibility of the parent. Advance collection is at the discretion of the coordinator; correct change is always appreciated.

Communication. Coordinators will make a best effort to notify attendees of any changes either by phone or email. When in doubt, however, contact the event coordinator.

Good impressions. Do consider that our actions reflect not only on our group, but on homeschoolers in general. Please follow these simple rules of participation:

1. Arrive on time - We understand that unexpected events happen. However, please call the event or field trip coordinator if last minute changes to your schedule prevent your family from attending. There may either be a wait-list or the event may have a minimum attendance limit.
2. Children must be accompanied by a parent. Parents are responsible to ensure that their child maintains proper behavior: obeying instructions, respecting the facilities being visited, and staying with the group. Parents unable to attend must ensure that another adult accompanies and accepts responsibility for their children.

6. CLASSES AND CLUBS

The goal of clubs and classes is to facilitate educational experiences in a group setting that would not ordinarily be possible for an individual family to participate in on its own.

ERCHA clubs and classes are Board approved but member directed. Length is determined by the parent leader and generally are six to nine weeks long per session, but could continue throughout the school year. Any member interested in forming a club or teaching a class, please contact the Educational Activities Chairman or download the Class/Club Form from the Yahoo Group Files section, fill it out and email it to the Education Chairman.

Board members are available for ideas, support and consultation. ERCHA clubs and classes are for members only unless otherwise specified. Please contact the club/class coordinator or the Educational Activities Chairman if you are in doubt.

Fees. Parent leaders volunteer their time but may collect a small fee to reimburse photocopy and supply/material expenses for the class. All club and class fees are the responsibility of the parent. Payment is due on the first day of the club or class or as directed by the parent leaders; correct change is always appreciated.

Communication. Coordinators will make a best effort to notify attendees of any changes or cancellations either by phone or email. When in doubt, however, contact the class/club coordinator or the Educational Activities Chairman.

Room Staffing Requirements. At least two adults must be present in each classroom used by a club or class. A club/class may be cancelled if there are not enough volunteers signed up.

Participation Guidelines. Participation is welcomed and expected in the group by both parents and children. As the number of people who join in and participates increases, so will the strength of the group. Not everyone will choose to participate in all activities all of the time for any number of personal reasons so please choose the activities in which you can participate and volunteer your time and assistance.

1. ERCHA clubs and some classes are held in a place of business. Courtesy for the working staff is appreciated.
2. Be courteous by arriving on time.
3. Be respectful of the parent leaders and the facility where you meet.
4. Parent leaders reserve the right to ask a family to leave due to disruptive behavior.
5. Parents are expected to remain in the building and assist with their child's club or class or to assist in another activity which benefits the class.
6. Stay in designated instruction areas only.
7. Church office equipment and supplies are not to be used without prior arrangement*. Please do not make photocopies at the church.
8. Equipment, such as a VCR/DVD player or overhead projector, may be used with prior arrangement*.
9. Sign-in sheets are requested of all ERCHA clubs and classes.
10. Use of outdoor playground requires adult supervision.
11. Leave the area clean. Clean up after activity, vacuuming if needed. Full trash bags should be taken to the shed.
12. At least one parent leader will have a church key. Please ensure doors and windows are closed and locked and that the lights are off before leaving the building.

*To make any arrangements as listed above, contact the Educational Activities Chairman.

7. LIBRARY

A collection of homeschooling materials, CDs, DVDs and reference books are available for loan to ERCHA members.

Checking out materials: Loans are for one month. Items are generally checked out during the monthly meetings and returned the following month. You must be a current ERCHA member to check out items. A sign-out clipboard is located at the library table during meetings and in the ERCHA cabinet at other times.

Returning materials: Self-check your items back in by recording the return date for each item on the clipboard and place your items in the return box.

Lost or Damaged Items: Members are responsible for items they check out and will be asked to replace or compensate ERCHA for any which are lost or damaged.

Donations: All donations should be cleared and given directly to the Chairman or Librarian. Please do not leave any materials at Eagle River Grace. Contributions to the ERCHA library that encourage or instruct homeschooling parents are welcome. Some teaching materials which can be used in less than one month may be accepted.

8. GRADUATION

Purpose

Each spring, ERCHA hosts a graduation ceremony for its member families' graduating seniors. The purpose is to honor the graduates and their parents for this milestone accomplishment. The ceremony is intended to recognize the achievements of these students and also to inspire and encourage homeschool families, their extended family, and friends.

The graduation ceremony is not an endorsement of any one educational program or a validation of individual success in the completion of any courses of study. Rather, ERCHA provides the opportunity for parents to present diplomas to their graduates in a meaningful Christian venue. The intention is to let our light so shine before men that they might see our good works (home education is a good work!) and glorify our Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

ERCHA Graduations are to be guided by Christian principles and the components of the ceremony should be those that represent Christian values. Recognizing that the planning will be done by several families with different ideas, gifts, talents and resources, all involved are encouraged to work together and "Be kindly affectioned to one another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another." (Romans 12:10).

Requirements for Graduation

1. Families of participating seniors must be ERCHA members.
Returning members need to re-join ERCHA at the May meeting.
New families must join ERCHA before November 30.
2. Graduation registrations, with a non-refundable \$50 deposit (payable to ERCHA), are due by November 30.
3. The decision to accept any graduation registrations submitted after November 30 (only by families new to ERCHA) will be made by the ERCHA Chairman and Co-Chairman.

Registration

Download a copy of the Graduation Registration Form from the ERCHA website or the ERCHA Yahoo Group.

Completed forms can be emailed to the ERCHA Chairman, Co-Chairman or mailed to ERCHA, PO Box 770430, Eagle River, AK 99577.

Should it be necessary for a student to withdraw from participating, please let the Graduation Coordinator know as early as possible. Many decisions are made based on the total number of graduates and since expenses are shared, money contributed may not be able to be refunded.

Planning

The planning process will be a collaborative effort between the graduates, their parents and the ERCHA Board. Graduates are encouraged to attend all planning meetings and required to attend the rehearsals. Board Advisors, whose child(ren) have participated in the past, are also available for consultation.

A Graduation Coordinator will be selected by the graduates' parents (aka Parent Team) by consensus and may be one of the graduate's parents or an ERCHA member who is willing to serve. If you wish to serve as the Graduation Coordinator, please contact the ERCHA Chairman. You will be asked to submit a brief summary as to why you would like this position. Your statement will be sent to all registered graduating families before the first meeting so that an informed vote can be made at the first planning meeting.

A Graduation Planning Guide is available to assist parents and graduates in the planning. As a matter of policy, there are certain elements of the graduation that are standard:

1. Prior to extending invitations to speak, keynote speakers are to be confirmed by the Board.
2. Traditional caps and gowns are worn over dress clothes with the choice of gown and tassel color to be determined by the graduating group.
3. Out of consideration for the audience, the ceremony should be planned for a length of 90 minutes or less.
4. The Parent Team reviews all student speeches. They may also request to preview any musical or other presentations.
5. If planning a slide show presentation as part of the ceremony, the goal is to keep it under 15 minutes. The Parent Team is in charge of confirming accompanying music selections for the ceremony with any lyrics provided to them in writing.
6. Please include the following statement in the graduation program for clarification purposes:

Eagle River Christian Homeschool Association (ERCHA) is a local homeschool support group offering encouragement, advice and fellowship for families who have made the decision to educate their children at home.

ERCHA's purpose in hosting this graduation ceremony is to honor the graduates and their parents as well as to inspire and encourage homeschool families and friends by providing a meaningful opportunity for parents to present diplomas to their graduates. This event is not an endorsement of any one educational program or a validation of individual success in the completion of any courses of study.

Calendar

The Coordinator will develop a calendar with the graduates and their parents that lists meetings, deadlines and rehearsals. Graduates are asked to make every effort to meet deadlines so others are not held up in the completion of their tasks.

A draft program, transcripts of student speeches and a DVD of the slide show should be submitted to the Board at least three weeks prior to the ceremony.

Finances

Expenses associated with graduation are financed primarily by the participating families. ERCHA will contribute a portion each year to help offset these costs. A treasurer should be selected from among the Parent Team in order to collect all contributions and to keep records of receipts and reimbursements.

Recordkeeping

A Secretary should be chosen from among the Parent Team to take minutes of each graduation meeting and submit for correction/ approval to families and ERCHA Chairman. These notes will also be helpful and beneficial to future Planning Teams.

9. ERCHA BOARD

The ERCHA Board consists of 3-7 members who make an annual, voluntary commitment to serve the needs of ERCHA. Their job is to provide leadership and support to the membership of ERCHA, which exists to strengthen homeschooling families in this community.

Board Responsibilities

The Board has the responsibility and authority to establish and revise policies and guidelines as well as make decisions pertinent to the operation of ERCHA. Changes to existing policies and guidelines will be agreed to by the ERCHA Board (simple majority), approved by the Eagle River Grace Church Elder Board and then announced to ERCHA members via electronic transmission or printed format.

Appointing Board Members

Board Members serve a one year commitment (May-May) and may continue to serve the following year with other Board members in majority agreement.

Positions are reviewed each spring; anyone interested in serving may make his/her wishes known (in writing or via email) to the current Board by the deadline posted each year. Candidates may be interviewed by two current Board members. The new Board will be appointed by the current Board then approved by the Eagle River Grace Elder Board. The majority of the ERCHA Board must regularly attend Eagle River Grace.

A Board member must:

1. be a professing Christian.
2. agree with the ERCHA Statement of Faith.
3. be currently residing in Alaska and an active member of ERCHA for the six months prior to serving.
4. provide a letter of recommendation from your pastor, if requested.

Available Board Positions

Chairman of the Board

Responsibilities: Provide oversight for ERCHA, conduct board meetings on a monthly or as-needed basis, facilitate quarterly meetings for members, serve as ERCHA Board facilitator and Yahoo Group moderator.

Co-Chairman of the Board

Responsibilities: Act as communication liaison between Eagle River Grace Elder Board and ERCHA Board, provide quarterly activity summary to ERG Elder Board, provide oversight for ERCHA with Chairman, assist in quarterly meetings for members, serve as Yahoo Group moderator.

Membership Chairman

Responsibilities: Register new members, provide information to new homeschooling families.

Financial Chairman

Responsibilities: Maintain record-keeping of finances, provide regular financial reports to the board and manage bank accounts.

Communications Chairman

Responsibilities: Maintain Yahoo calendar and communication with member families and serve as Yahoo Group moderator

Educational Activities Chairman

Responsibilities: Facilitate Tuesday Clubs. May not necessarily be a member of the board.

Social Activities Chairman

Responsibilities: Facilitate social activities/events (i.e. bowling, ice skating, summer hikes, Hillberg Ski Days, quarterly service project, etc.). May not necessarily be a member of the board.

Field Trip Chairman

Responsibilities: Facilitate field trips by communication with members who have signed up to lead a field trip. May not necessarily be a member of the board.

Veteran homeschool parents who have been active with ERCHA may also be invited by the Board to serve.

10. PROBLEM RESOLUTION

Eagle River Grace Church has a registered peacemaking team with Peacemaker Ministries (www.peacemaker.net) and ERCHA. Members will resolve conflicts in accordance with Peacemaker conciliatory clauses and principles.

If someone in the group offends you:

1. Wait 24 hours and re-evaluate the issue.
2. If after 24 hours the issue still needs to be addressed speak, in private, only to the person directly involved about the offense, doing so in a calm and professional manner.
3. If you cannot resolve the issue directly, contact the ERCHA Chairman, who will coordinate a meeting with the ERG Peacemaking Team to resolve the issue.

Further resolution principles can also be found in the Eagle River Grace Church Doctrinal Statement.