



# Policy Guide and Bylaws

Adopted March 2024

The purpose of this Policy Guide is to provide clarity of our collected values, order for the structure and functionality of our cooperative and a framework for future progression.

## Name and Location

The name of this organization is Blackfoot Synergy Homeschool Society.

Synergy occurs when combined elements produce a greater impact than the sum of individual contributions: or  $1 + 1 = 5$ . Our purpose is to create a synergistic community where each member can contribute with their personal strengths. Each member has specific roles and responsibilities; they operate with a clear understanding of how to succeed within those areas. The personal, meaningful, investment in Blackfoot Synergy Homeschool Society will, ideally, be outweighed by the return we receive from participating in it. Ultimately, participating in Blackfoot Synergy Homeschool Society supports the core education we do at home.

We meet at Blackfoot Christian Fellowship at 2550 Rose Rd, Blackfoot, ID 83221, under the pastoral leadership of Kevin Olivarez.

We meet on Tuesday from 9:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m.

Our website is [www.blackfootsynergy.com](http://www.blackfootsynergy.com) and email is [blackfootsynergy@gmail.com](mailto:blackfootsynergy@gmail.com).

Our organization is insured with Church Mutual Insurance. Our agent is Aaron Bradley; 1-208-770-0888. The use of cooperative insurance for individual members is limited to special circumstances.

## Values and Motto

### Values

We are committed to education. We respect each other. We work together, recognizing that we can be unique and unified simultaneously. When we meet together, we choose to prioritize learning and harmony.

We are nondenominational. We focus on our shared goals while honoring personal beliefs. We agree to adhere to Blackfoot Christian Fellowship's statement of faith; thus, classes are academic and skill-based. No doctrine of any specific religion will be taught. We strive to follow values including love, perseverance, self-control, and curiosity.

Joining together as home educators, our goals are to

1. Create a unified, supportive and loyal home-educating community.
2. Nourish an atmosphere of open, respectful learning where we can value differences.
3. Build scholarship, leadership, and friendship in students. Develop a connected group of older students (ages 12+).
4. Synergize: inspire each other and participate in opportunities that are more difficult to do alone (discussions, plays, leadership skills, etc.).

### **Motto**

“Nourishing growth, education, and relationships” refers to our personal and interpersonal growth, education, and relationships that we can all gain by working together.

### **Safety**

We prioritize the physical, emotional, and spiritual safety of all people in our group. We aim to create a safe environment to share ideas and become better people. We value communication. We recognize that difficulties arise in relationships and believe that these circumstances can make our group stronger and more understanding. If you have a concern with another person involved in our group, please address those issues individually and with kindness. If you have questions or concerns about these policies, please contact a member of the executive committee.

Parents and guardians are responsible for their children at all times. This includes being aware of their schedules, actions, and adherence to our policies. If a student is disrupting the learning or safety of a classroom, teachers may ask the student to rejoin his or her parents where they are serving. The student is welcome to rejoin the class when able.

### **Physical Safety**

- All applicants and teachers will be screened with a background check. No one with a history of abuse will participate in our cooperative. If a family member or spouse has a history of abuse, Blackfoot Synergy Homeschool Society will form a contract with that family clarifying that if the person is on campus or cooperative activities, their family will immediately lose membership. This contract will be in our filed documents, but will remain private information.

- All classes will have at least two teachers at all times. If a teacher needs to leave the room briefly, the door will remain wide open.
- The classroom doors will remain unlocked at all times. When possible, the classroom doors will remain ajar.
- The doors to the main building will be locked at 9:30 when class time begins.
- There will be hallway monitors assigned for each hour. These people can fill in as substitute teachers or helpers if another adult is needed.
- No form of abuse or bullying will be tolerated.

### **Emotional and Spiritual Safety**

- When we are together, we commit to being invested in the present task and act with respect. We honor the strengths that each person can contribute.
- Contention is not the same as working through differences. Belittling others in any way diminishes our ability to synergize.
- Our classes will be academic in nature. We respect the spiritual beliefs of each other and encourage conversation, open-mindedness, and charity. While using the building, we adhere to the statement of faith and use for Blackfoot Christian Fellowship.
- We strive to be unified while unique. This means that we can work together, refine each other in good ways, and grow from our individual approaches to education and life. We seek win-win situations.

### **Educational Safety**

- We seek to create a secure learning atmosphere that allows people to expand their horizons. Sincere questions, research, and exploration are invited. Please keep these within the realm of the class or in a free space so that the class as a whole can progress.
- Registering for a class is an agreement to engage in class material and to communicate clearly to the people involved if an issue arises (such as tardiness, not understanding content, hurt feelings, etc.). If you do not plan to invest in a class, do not register for it.
- Evaluations and reflections on classes and learning will be available each semester. This is an opportunity to improve. Improvement requires change that is not always comfortable. Suggestions for growth are not the same as defaming or complaining.
- Distractions to learning are not tolerated. Disruptive behaviors and bullying in any form are not acceptable.
- Mobile and other devices are not welcome in the classroom unless specified by the instructors.

## Problem Solving

### Behavior Expectations

All people are accountable for their own choices and behaviors. Parents and guardians are responsible to ensure their children understand and follow the policies of our cooperative and building. We strive to communicate with clarity and kindness to avoid misunderstanding. If a conflict occurs between children or parents, those families are responsible to resolve their conflict privately and quickly.

If a student disrupts during class, they will be given a moment to calm down in the hall and decide to rejoin the class. If the student refuses to redirect, or continues in disruptive behaviors afterward, they will be sent to their supervising guardian for the remainder of our time together. If the child has to leave class for disruptions for three days, the student may be asked to take a leave of absence until the end of the semester. Other family members are welcome to continue to come. Refunds will not be given in this case.

Unacceptable behaviors include

- Distracting actions
- Rude or disrespectful language
- Rude or disrespectful clothing
- Bullying and/or name-calling
- Any other disruptive behavior that prevents learning from occurring

Unless specified by the teacher, electronic devices are not welcome in class. They can distract from our shared educational experience and cause people to disengage. Teachers can confiscate devices and give them to guardians as needed.

## **Punctuality**

Arriving prepared and on time shows that you value the people and organization of our group. Please be respectful. If you are late, please contact the people acting as hall monitors; the doors will be locked (see “Physical Safety”). Families arriving more than 20 minutes late more than three times in a semester, without emergency circumstances, will be asked to take a leave of absence until they are at a place in their lives where they are able to. Emergency circumstances can be taken to the administrative or interpersonal managers.

## **Participation and Responsibilities**

Blackfoot Synergy Homeschool Society a cooperative. It is not a drop-off program. If a student is on campus, he or she will have an adult responsible for him or her also actively participating on campus.

Upon joining, each adult member will hold a teaching position and a committee position. Older students (ages 12+) are invited to participate in committees as well. We understand that life and circumstances do not always allow for additional responsibilities. If an applying family is currently unable to fulfill the necessary commitments for the synergy of the group, they will be invited to join during another semester. Once a family has joined, if they are unable to fulfill the agreed-upon responsibilities or uphold the policies in place, the executive committee will ask them to withdraw for the welfare of their family and the balance of the cooperative.

As agreed in our contract with Blackfoot Christian Fellowship, building rules will be followed. We will clean the building after using it. Each family will have a cleaning assignment to fulfill as determined by the building committee. In most cases, this assignment will be limited to specific dates and areas.

Whether at Blackfoot Christian Fellowship, on field trips, or in other areas, we will treat people and spaces with respect. Families are responsible for their own belongings.

## **Fees and Refunds**

To participate in the cooperative, members must be completely up-to-date on payments for family fees and classes. The deadlines for those fees will be posted via text, email, and on our website.

The family fee is currently \$50 per semester. The family fee covers donations and supplies for the building, insurance, website maintenance, showcases, celebrations, and other needs as they arise.

Class fees can range from \$5-\$50, with the average being around \$15-\$20 per class. Class fees cover supplies, activities, and projects for that specific class.

Fees are due one week after registration opens or one week after a family registers if they join at a later time. Late fees of \$5 per day are assessed following that period. Class fees may be paid all at once with cash, check, or Venmo. They may also be paid with three post-dated checks given all at once, before the deadline. Checks will not be processed until the week before we meet. Refunds will only be given in extenuating circumstances after clear communication. The family fee is nonrefundable.

Teachers can submit a form with a receipt for reimbursement. Teachers may also reimburse personal items used, such as paper, with itemized descriptions. The items need to be clearly connected to the work done in the class. Money not reimbursed will be added to the cooperative family fee fund.

Parents and guardians are responsible for their children. If a child breaks something, the guardian will be required to make arrangements to repair or replace it.

## **Organizational Structure**

### **Application Process**

Before a family joins Blackfoot Synergy Homeschool Society, they will fill out an online application addressing their approach to education, working with others, and their expectations of a cooperative.

The executive committee reviews applications and invites families to join based on (1) willingness and ability to contribute based on our defined values and policies (2) order of received family application, and (3) space in classes for their children's age. Families with older children may be prioritized.

Interviews may also be held to clarify expectations on both sides. We want all members of Blackfoot Synergy Homeschool Society to feel positively about their choice to join, even if it is only for a semester.

Applying families will be notified of the status of their application before class proposals open. This will usually occur in May and December. Other inquiries may be made via the website [www.blackfootsynergy.com](http://www.blackfootsynergy.com) or email [blackfootsynergy@gmail.com](mailto:blackfootsynergy@gmail.com).

## **Class Structure**

Younger students will follow a traditional class structure. They will be in their class of choice for 50 minutes followed by a ten-minute passing period. This pattern will repeat for the three hours that we meet together. Parents are responsible for ensuring that their students are in the appropriate classes on time.

Classes for older students will adjust to meet their needs. Teachers of the older students will meet together with the student council to determine how to best use their time. This could mean one three-hour course for a certain period of weeks. It could mean a two-hour course off-campus, followed by a one-hour course. It could follow the traditional structure. This will be determined semester by semester based on the courses available, teachers, and student needs. These meetings will generally be held in May and November.

If desired, we may have some teachers operate as rotating specialists. This could include a music, art, literature, or physical education specialist. That will be determined based on needs.

Students will be organized by age, determined by the current needs of the membership. In general, there will be classes designated for the following ages

- 2-4
- 5-7
- 8-11
- 12+

## **Semester Structure**

Each semester will be 12 weeks long, divided as determined by the committees into 12-, 6-, or 4-week segments.

## **Field Trips**

Field trips will be held during the semester during our regular Tuesday meeting time. These will be led by the field trip committee. They will be calendared into each semester. Depending on the field trip, people who do not participate in Blackfoot Synergy Homeschool Society may be invited to come.

## **Teaching**

Each participating adult will teach at least one class per semester. When not teaching, the adult will help as a class helper or hall monitor. If a teacher needs to be absent, they are responsible for coordinating a substitute.

Teachers will express the age range(s) that they desire to teach in the initial application. Each semester, they can adjust that intent when they submit ideas for classes that they would like to teach. Class ideas will be reviewed by the committees and chosen based on the needs and resources of the group.

Before the beginning of each semester, teachers submit at least one class proposal, describing the subject, scope, and age range for the class. Teachers also note how many weeks their class will take, generally six or twelve. They note if there is someone with whom they would like to work as a co-teacher or helper. If teachers submit more than one proposal, they state which class they prefer to teach most. Class proposal deadlines will be posted in advance on multiple venues of communication. They will usually be due in early June and late November.

Teachers are ultimately responsible for their class content. By agreeing to membership in our cooperative, they also agree to teach within those expectations to nourishment growth, education, and relationships. Teachers can receive training and guidance from the class coordination committee.

## **Registration**

Please remember: registering for a class is a commitment to participate respectfully. Classes are meant to “nourish growth, education, and relationships.” This requires preparation and engagement from teachers and students. Families should only register for a class when they are willing to fulfill this contract. If a student is not interested in a class at a given time, they can go to the quiet study space or help their parent.

Registration opens for the fall semester in early summer. It opens for the spring semester at the beginning of December. Class schedules and descriptions will be available in advance on the website.

Registration is online. When registering, honor the age and ability levels noted in the class description. If you have a question, contact the teacher. Waitlists will be used as needed. Priority for full classes will go to children of the specific age range first, then in order of registration time.

Classes can be canceled due to low registration or other concerns.

## **Committees**

Each parent will rank their desired committee position in the initial application. Each semester, they can adjust that role as necessary. The communications manager will organize the information received. All members are expected to rotate through the committees based on



interest, ability, and time. All roles are necessary; some roles are more appealing than others. We will each do our part to maintain the functionality of our group synergistically.

Each committee has specific responsibilities. Within the committees, each role is defined so that a person knows what is expected and how to succeed. Each of us needs to understand what “finished” is so that we do not burden others or do too much. If in doubt, we will communicate.

Committees will determine a place and time to meet. Each committee will meet in person or virtually every six weeks to ensure that their responsibilities are being fulfilled. A committee member will send a written report to the communications manager.

Committees and roles may be adjusted to accommodate the membership needs of each semester. For example, if there are 12 members of the cooperation, then they will prioritize the 12 most necessary roles or compress some responsibilities. If there are 35 members of the cooperation, then some roles may be expanded or shared. When short on numbers, we will still have an administrative manager, tech manager, treasurer, and field trip coordinator.

### **Executive Committee (4-5 people)**

This committee ensures the functionality of the co-op including general organization, legal and financial needs, and communication. They are responsible for maintaining the overall policy and direction of the organization. They review applications and invite families to join Blackfoot Synergy Homeschool Society.

In extreme circumstances when individuals cannot create a win-win solution between themselves, the executive committee enforces policies fairly and compassionately, considering the well-being of all involved. They listen to concerns and sponsor proposed changes to the policies and procedures of the cooperative. This should be a very rare occurrence.

### **Roles**

- **Administrative Manager:** Manages legal and building needs, background checks, helps to smooth issues as required. Welcomes new members and focuses on in-person communication with individuals and groups. Directs members to information including, but not limited to, contact information, bylaws, documents with their personal and family responsibilities, and cooperative directory.
- **Tech Manager:** Reviews and approves website and informational material. Manages application submissions and responses. Manages email. Oversees registration.
- **Communications Manager:** keeps records, manages each semester’s directory and class lists, sends texts and emails, etc. Helps the tech manager send welcome letters and keep track of waitlists. Maintains a list of best practices for future executive committee members.

- **Treasurer:** manages finances, including budgeting, reimbursements, donations, etc.

### **Building Committee (3+ people)**

This committee is the liaison with the church. They ensure that we honor our contract with Blackfoot Christian Fellowship. They make cleaning assignments, coordinate, train, and remind people who clean the building. They ensure cleaning is completed. They are responsible for building storage, organization, and restocking necessary supplies for the church and for the co-op.

#### Roles

- **Building Coordinator 1:** Maps and defines cleaning assignments. Coordinates with families when and where they will be cleaning. Oversees cleaning to ensure it happens well.
- **Building Coordinator 2:** Helps map and define cleaning assignments. Trains families in their assignments. Oversees cleaning to ensure it happens well.
- **Supply Master:** Organizes supplies, tracks supply gaps, and restocks supplies. Tracks how many building supplies we use from the church (soap, toilet paper, paper towels, etc.)

### **Class Coordination Committee (4-5 people)**

This committee solicits and gathers class descriptions, ensures that each class has a space and at least two teachers at all times, manages substitutions, organizes hallway managers, and manages registration.

Based on membership, this committee may split into two committees. In that case, one committee focuses on the needs of older students and another committee focuses on the needs of younger students. They will work with the treasurer and tech manager for registration.

#### Roles

- **Class Coordinator 1:** Manages class submissions and coordinates positive matches for helpers. Coordinates training opportunities. Directs teacher appreciation and training. Prevents teacher burnout as much as possible. Coordinates substitute teachers as necessary.
- **Class Coordinator 2:** Collects class descriptions and prices for registration. Ensures that classes have 2-deep leadership. Collects feedback and reflections on the successes and struggles of classes each semester. Coordinates substitute teachers as necessary.
- **Space and teacher organizer:** Manages class proposals, coordinates positive matches for helpers, and manages locations of each class. Collects and synthesizes feedback on classes.

### **Connections and Inspiration Committee (6+ people)**

This committee connects parents with each other, organizes field trips, activities, and celebrations, supports relationship building of students and parents, and is over community outreach.

Based on membership, this committee may split into two committees. The parent connection managers and celebration managers can be combined into event coordinators.

#### Roles

- **Parent Connection Manager 1:** Determines ways to help parents connect (classes, socials, etc.) and makes those happen
- **Parent Connection Manager 2:** Works with parent connection manager 1. May coordinate trainings, retreats, and refreshers for parents.
- **Celebration Manager 1:** Coordinates co-op kick-off party, and end-of-semester celebration (perhaps always the last day of co-op?), organizes other at-co-op activities as desired by the community (showcases, fairs, etc.)
- **Celebration Manager 2:** Works with celebration manager 1. Over milestone (grade or otherwise) activities. Dances.
- **Field Trip Coordinator(s):** As desired by the membership, organizes and leads field trips.
- **Photo/Yearbook Master:** Captures and collects photos during the year. Organizes the photos into a gallery for membership use and a possible yearbook or showcase.
- **Outreach Manager:** Invites others to join, helps coordinate multi-co-op gatherings, over publicity and Facebook. Coordinates contact people for people volunteering, working, or teaching from the community if desired.
- **Activities Mentor:** Guides and trains the student council and helps them fulfill their responsibilities and activities.

### **Student Council**

A group of older students to help survey, serve on committees, offer and collect feedback, build classes, direct activities, and serve in meaningful ways. They will all be members of equal status who define their individual responsibilities together.

### **Decision Making**

Each adult member of Blackfoot Synergy Homeschool Society will have the opportunity to discuss and vote on the progression of our cooperative. There will be 1-3 standing meetings during the year to reflect, review, and refresh as needed. Notice of all meetings shall be provided

to each voting member by text, email, or website notification at least one week before the meeting. Email, text, or video chat are all valid methods of communication.

Votes can be in person or absentee. Unity and progression motivates our decisions. When a final decision cannot be determined by the adult members collectively, the executive committee will vote on how to best proceed.

### **Actions That Require Group Approval**

- Major policy changes including, but not limited to,
  - Time or date change
  - Location
  - Major fee changes

Members of Blackfoot Synergy Homeschool Society are responsible for communicating their concerns. If any personal conflict occurs between members of the group, they will be expected to peacefully resolve their concerns outside of our cooperative time and space. They will be reminded that we are creating a compassionate, open-minded community where differences can exist without contention. Each person is responsible for their behavior, words, and impact on our cooperative. Concerns and difficulties should not become large problems if they are dealt with privately and within the stated values. Quality, content communication matters. If unable to resolve their conflict, both parties will need to recess from attendance.

### **Trainings**

A training will be held each summer before the fall semester starts to review values, address the structure of the upcoming year, and help us all become better teachers.

A winter refresher or conference will also be held, focusing on home educating, and relationship building.

Blackfoot Synergy Homeschool Society will participate in regional workshops with other cooperatives as desired.

### **Conflict of Interest**

Blackfoot Synergy Homeschool Society is a cooperative. As such, no individual has sole policy-making power. All finances belong to the cooperative. Reimbursements can only be made to individuals with proper documentation, usually including a receipt and description of the cost. Contracts of labor and time will be created and kept on file as needed. Individuals on any committee who misuse funds must make amends and will no longer participate in the cooperative.

## **Additional Provisions**

- a. Upon the dissolution of Blackfoot Synergy Homeschool Society, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for public purpose.
- b. Blackfoot Synergy Homeschool Society is organized exclusively for charitable, religious, educational, and/or scientific purposes under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. No part of the net earnings shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to its members, directors, officers, or other private persons, except that the organization shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in the purpose clause hereof.
- c. No substantial part of the activities of Blackfoot Synergy Homeschool Society shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the organization shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.
- d. Notwithstanding any other provision of this document, the organization shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by an organization exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or (b) by an organization, contributions to which are deductible under section 170(c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

## **Conflict of Interest**

Section 1 – Whenever a director or manager has a financial or personal interest in any matter coming before the board of directors, the affected person shall a) fully disclose the nature of the interest and b) withdraw from discussion, lobbying, and voting on the matter. Any transaction or vote involving a potential conflict of interest shall be approved only when a majority of disinterested directors determine that it is in the best interest of the corporation to do so. The minutes of meetings at which such votes are taken shall record such disclosure, abstention, and rationale for approval.

## **Current Executive Committee**

(alphabetized by last name)

Kelynn Blatter, Member

Adrienne Groll, Member

Cassie Keller Cole, Member