

# Cornerstone Tutorial Family Handbook

*May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who loved us and by His grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.*

*II Thessalonians 2: 16 – 17*

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## **Preface**

The Cornerstone Board provides this *Family Handbook* as a guide to students and their parents. A handbook, by definition, contains rules and procedures expected to be followed by students and parents. Since we cannot anticipate every situation, the board reserves the right to waiver, adjust or interpret these policies as needed.

Cornerstone is a community of students, parents, and tutors where the actions of each person effects all. We fervently desire to make Cornerstone a safe place where students grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We pray that students grow not just academically, but spiritually, emotionally, and socially. In order to foster an orderly, safe academic environment where everyone is shown respect and honor, the Board of Cornerstone Tutorial establishes a set of policies for families to follow.

Parents and students should be familiar with all policies outlined here. Enrollment in Cornerstone implies concurrence and willingness to comply with all rules and procedures recommended by the Board of Cornerstone Tutorial.

# Mission and Beliefs

## Mission

Cornerstone is a non-denominational Christian tutorial service supporting homeschool families by offering once-a-week courses to homeschooled children at the high school level. **Cornerstone parents are responsible for supervising their children's progress in all subjects and are further responsible to meet state and county requirements.** Cornerstone typically offers courses that are best taught in a group setting or those requiring special equipment or knowledge.

The mission of Cornerstone is to support the parents in the homeschool philosophy of education in which they work with the student to develop a mature and discerning follower of Christ. Our goal is to enhance and extend the homeschool experience at the high school level. We provide group opportunities for tutoring including quality educational experiences that support parents in their God-given responsibilities to educate their children.

## Statement of Faith

1. We believe the Bible, the inerrant Word of God, is the guide for all Christian faith and life, and therefore, for the activities of this group.
2. We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
3. We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ; in His virgin birth; and in His sinless life; in His miracles; in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood; in His bodily resurrection; in His ascension to the right hand of the Father; and His personal return to power and glory.
4. We believe that for salvation of the lost and sinful man, regeneration by the Holy Spirit through the person of Jesus Christ is absolutely essential.
5. We believe in both the resurrection of the saved and the lost; those that are saved unto the resurrection of life and those that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.
6. We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.
7. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a Godly life.
8. We believe that parents are responsible for the total education of their children and that their influence and example are either for good or for evil. Christian parents are commissioned by God to "Train up a child in the way he should go." (Proverbs 22:6). God says this of His commandments: "And you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up." (Deuteronomy 6:7)

# Enrollment

## Eligibility

All Cornerstone students must meet the following eligibility requirements:

1. Students must be between the ages of thirteen and eighteen on December 31 of the current year in order to register for classes.
2. Students must have been homeschooled under their parents' direct supervision for the entire previous academic year.
3. At least one of the student's parents must agree with Cornerstone Tutorial's statement of faith.
4. Parents must support the mission of Cornerstone Tutorial, and be willing to abide by the Cornerstone policies and procedures.
5. The student's family must actively participate in a local body of believers and provide a letter of reference from their pastor confirming their involvement.
6. Acceptance into Cornerstone Tutorial is determined by an interview process. Each family (both parents) and individual student must be interviewed by the Cornerstone Board of Directors prior to registration.
7. A family is considered to remain in good standing, not requiring a repeat parent interview, for no more than a 3 year lapse between students being enrolled at Cornerstone. Each new family student will necessitate an interview upon their start at Cornerstone tutorial
8. If, at the discretion of the board, any student or family is not meeting its obligations to the tutors or other families of Cornerstone, the board may declare that student or family ineligible to attend Cornerstone for the next academic year. Declarations of ineligibility shall be made in writing. Any student or family declared ineligible must reapply and submit to an interview before the board will consider readmitting them in subsequent years.

## Interviews

Prior to registering for a class, each prospective student—including a new student of an existing family—must be interviewed and accepted by the Board of Directors of Cornerstone. The Cornerstone Board announces interview dates and posts them on the website prior to registration. Contact the registrar to schedule an interview.

**Under no circumstances will any student—including a new student from a currently enrolled family—who has not met all eligibility requirements be registered.**

## Class Registration

For registration considerations, a student's age is determined as of December 31 of the current year. For example: 15 – year olds are students who will be 15 on December 31 of the current year.

Eligible students aged fourteen and older may register for up to four classes; younger students may register for no more than two classes. Priority may be given to upper classmen at time of registration. For further clarification, see registration documents.

Many tutors have prerequisites for their classes. These prerequisites must be **completed and approved by the tutor prior to registration**. Any student not pre-approved by a tutor who has the above requirements may not register for that class.

Families who register early (by 30 June 2014) will pay a reduced Family Fee of \$140. Families who register after June 30th will pay the regular Family Fee of \$240.

Late registrations, after the June 30th deadline, are currently accepted on an “as available” basis. A late registration fee may be assessed.

## Fees

All fees are collected at registration. Fees consist of a non-refundable registration fee that covers administration, building, and study hall costs. In addition, families pay a class fee that is passed on directly to the tutor. The current schedule of fees is listed at [www.cornerstonetutorial.org](http://www.cornerstonetutorial.org). Class fees are only refundable under limited conditions as listed below.

- Seventy-two hours after the student registration is submitted, a drop fee may be assessed for each class dropped.
- Because registering for a class is a commitment to the tutor, students withdrawing from a class will not be refunded the class fee unless another student fills the slot by adding the class.
- If the class slot is filled, the class fee (less the drop fee listed on the fee schedule) will be refunded to the withdrawing student's family.
- Students who are already registered may register for additional classes until two weeks before classes begin without paying late registration fees.
- **The registration fee will not be refunded under any circumstances.**
- **Once classes begin, no refunds will be given** unless Cornerstone cancels the course.

## Time Payments

For a small charge (listed on the schedule of fees) Cornerstone fees may be spread out from May to December by opting for FACTS, an automated payment system that provides the convenience of direct, monthly debits from a checking account. FACTS payments are set up at registration. Please contact the Cornerstone Treasurer if you have questions.

## Academic Information

### Grades

**Cornerstone is not a school.** It is a tutorial service for homeschooled students and their parents. We connect students with tutors in a structured environment that benefits students and tutors. Because Cornerstone is not a school, we do not assign grades, provide transcripts, or have any grading policies. Parents are the teachers, and they are solely responsible for assigning all grades to their students. Each tutor will provide parents with written feedback concerning the performance of each student or scoring based on class assessments.

### Reporting to the State

The State of Maryland has laws which every homeschooling family must follow. Cornerstone is not an umbrella group, and you are responsible to register with your county and comply with the *Maryland Home Schooling COMAR Regulations*. Families who are not in compliance with current Maryland state laws may be removed from Cornerstone.

## Business Meetings

### Back to Cornerstone Night

Back to Cornerstone Night is a **mandatory meeting for the parents**. It is usually held the week before classes begin. In a short group meeting, parents are apprised of new policies and procedures for the upcoming academic year. After the group meeting, parents meet with each of the tutors from their students' classes. Tutors talk about requirements for their class and supplies students will need. Parents meet with each tutor in the same order in which the students attend classes. This offers the opportunity for parents to ask questions of the tutors. Parents with more than one student will find it helpful to attend together.

If a parent has a conflict and is unable to attend, another **adult** family member may attend as a substitute.

### Meet the Tutor Night

Meet the Tutor Night is a meeting for parents and students held in early spring before registration. Each tutor describes his classes and is then available to answer questions concerning the classes. We highly recommend attending Meet the Tutor Night and speaking to the tutors prior to registering for a class.

## Student Conduct

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law... If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.*

*Galatians 5:22, 23, and 25*

Some rules are required in order to provide students with a Christ-centered learning environment that supports the mission of Cornerstone. Ideally our rules encourage the students of Cornerstone to live each day walking in the Spirit of the Lord. We pray that each Cornerstone student will exhibit the fruits of the Spirit and be self-disciplined, modest, patient, honest, and respectful.

### General Behavior

Students are expected to be respectful to the tutors, the study hall monitor, parents, and each other at all times. Students who are disrespectful to adults by exhibiting disregard for an adult's authority may be removed from class or removed from Cornerstone for the remainder of the day.

The following actions violate biblical principles or distract from the academic environment, and will not be tolerated (see section on Discipline process):

- Public displays of affection in the context of boy/girl relationships are not permitted at Cornerstone or on SPEP church grounds.
- Inappropriate or immodest dress
- Disrespect or unkind speech
- Profane language
- Any form of dishonesty including cheating, stealing, and lying.
- Plagiarism - Plagiarism is “to appropriate the writings, graphic representations or ideas of another person and represent them as one’s own, (that is, without proper attribution). Plagiarism is a form of intellectual property violation.” (From <http://onlineethics.org/glossary.html>)
- Possession of obscene materials
- Possession of alcohol, tobacco, controlled or illegal substances.
- Any form of physical assault or aggressive behavior.

### Class Room Behavior

To effectively teach, tutors must maintain a classroom environment that is conducive to learning and free from distractions. The tutor is in charge, and students shall show respect for their authority. Disagreement with a tutor should be handled according to the Conflict Resolution Process outlined in this handbook.



## Dress Code

We are the Lord's temple and as such Cornerstone requires students to dress accordingly. Modesty is essential in order to honor God and maintain an appropriate educational environment. Please read the following section very carefully.

Cornerstone Tutorial defines a standard of dress which is consistent with Scripture. (*I Timothy 2:9, Matthew 5:28, I Corinthians 6:19-20, Matthew 18:6*)

The following policies which apply to all students are set forth.

Modest clothing is to be worn at all times while on Cornerstone/SPEP property, and at Cornerstone sponsored events, including field trips.

- Excessively tight clothing will not be permitted.
- Tops must cover all skin and undergarments from shoulders to midriff. No exposed bare midriff. No cleavage may show (either when the student is standing, sitting or bending over). No undergarments may be exposed at the midriff.
- No halter tops, tube tops, spaghetti strap tops, tank tops or muscle shirts.
- No skirts or shorts which are above the knee. Hems must fall at or below the knee.
- No low-riding garments at the waist. **The rise on pants, skirts, or shorts must be sufficient to cover all undergarments.** Pants and skirts must show neither skin nor underclothing at the midriff.
- No obvious rips or tears in clothing which would expose aforementioned skin to be covered. This includes clothing which may be inconsistent with daytime garments, such as pajama pants or sweat pants.
- No hats or hoods may be worn indoors.
- Clothing with a message inconsistent with the Cornerstone statement of faith is not permitted.

If a tutor, study hall monitor, or Cornerstone parent feels that a student is not in compliance with this dress code, the student will be given a suitable piece of attire to wear for the day. This alternate clothing is the property of Cornerstone, and must be returned clean the following week. Repeated violations of these guidelines may be grounds for dismissal from Cornerstone, with no refund given, and re-enrollment for the following year at the discretion of the board. Parental cooperation in ensuring that these guidelines are kept is expected.

## Illegal Activities

Civil or criminal violations may be referred to local authorities. Students are also subject to disciplinary actions by the Cornerstone Board. Illegal actions that may warrant informing the authorities include physical assault, possession of drugs, and underage drinking.

## **Discipline Process**

Tutors, board members, and study hall monitors will correct disruptive students using the following process:

1. For minor offenses, an adult in authority may instruct a student privately regarding inappropriate behavior.
2. If the student remains unrepentant or the misbehavior is too dangerous or disrespectful for a warning, the adult will call upon the parents to instruct their student and exercise discipline.
3. If a student continues to misbehave or commits a particularly egregious breach of the rules, the Cornerstone Board will intervene. The board may undertake any disciplinary action described below that it feels is appropriate.

## **Disciplinary Actions**

A student who commits a serious breach of the rules, or who fails to respond to corrections by an adult acting on behalf of Cornerstone Tutorial may be subject to disciplinary action at the discretion of the Board of Directors.

### *Disciplinary Probation*

Disciplinary probation is the strongest warning the board can give that a student is in imminent danger of dis-enrollment or expulsion. Students placed on disciplinary probation are permitted to continue attending classes, but they may be dis-enrolled or expelled for subsequent infractions of any rule. Disciplinary probation is always given for a specific period, but may be renewed at the discretion of the board

### *Dis-enrollment.*

Dis-enrollment is action taken by the board when continued disregard to improve egregious behavior for which the student was placed on probation is not resolved. Upon a meeting of the Board, dis-enrollment may be recommended for the remaining period of the current semester. Re-enrollment for the following semester will be determined based on a joint meeting with the student, parent(s), Board and involved tutor(s) if relevant. A renewed commitment to uphold the policies set forth by Cornerstone must be demonstrated by the student and parents in order for re-enrollment to occur.

### *Expulsion*

Expulsion is the most severe disciplinary action the board can take; it represents a total break in the relationship between Cornerstone and a student. A student who is expelled is immediately removed from all Cornerstone classes. An expelled student will not receive a refund. An expelled student is usually not eligible for re-admittance to Cornerstone.

### Conflict Resolution for Students

If a student disagrees with a tutor, the best procedure to follow is that laid out in Matthew 18. It is important that your conflicts be resolved in a Biblical manner and kept confidential between the student, tutor and his/her parents.

- First, a student should discuss the matter with his/her parent, and then approach the tutor directly either individually or as a family.
- If the conflict is not resolved, the family may contact the board to act as a mediator between the family and the tutor.

### **Attendance and safety while on the property**

There is a clear correlation between dedicated student learning and consistent, prompt attendance in class. The richness of classroom discussions, exchange of ideas with peers and tutors, opportunities to defend one's ideas, and the viewing of films and videos is critical to continued learning. A student who misses a tutoring session must take the initiative to make up the work and cover the material presented during the absence; however, they have lost an opportunity for increased learning and skill development through peer exchanges and tutor direction.

While at Cornerstone, students must attend all of their classes. While not in class, they must be in study hall under the supervision of the study hall monitor. Wandering the building or remaining outdoors is not permitted. Cornerstone cannot be responsible for students who are outdoors unattended.

**Unless they have written permission from a parent or guardian, students must remain on the grounds** of Severna Park Evangelical Presbyterian Church from the start of their first tutorial through the end of their last tutorial. This includes the lunch period. The study hall monitor administers this policy to ensure that students are under Cornerstone's direct supervision while in attendance.

The parking lot is a busy confined space with cars coming and going throughout the day. Many drivers are young and inexperienced. For their own safety, students should not loiter in the parking lot.

Only registered students or family members with a student enrolled in the class may be on the premises. Friends of students may not be on the premises if they are not enrolled in a class. The Board is available to guide prospective families through the Cornerstone process without intruding on individual classes.

## **Care of the Facilities**

The Severna Park Evangelical Presbyterian Church kindly allows us to use their building. Intentional vandalism is a serious offense and will be dealt with severely by the board. In addition to possible disciplinary action by the board, the student's parents will be responsible for any damage and cost incurred.

Each student must accept responsibility and exercise good stewardship towards the building. Everyone should cleanup after himself. Our goal is to always leave the building in better condition at the end of the day than we found it in the morning.

Accidental damage to the building should be reported to a tutor, study hall monitor, or board member so we can make restitution to the church.

## **Electronic Equipment**

Electronic devices are an unwelcome distraction to others and may not be brought to the facility except in instances outlined below.

- Students may use laptop computers for academic purposes with the permission of their parents to Study Hall monitor and, if appropriate, the tutor. Misuse of this will result in disciplinary action. Inappropriate, disruptive, or non-academic use of the internet will result in loss of privilege.
- Cell phones are permitted, but must remain out of sight and turned off in all areas of SPEP with the exception for the Study Hall as listed below.
- Students may use their personal cell phones in Study Hall, but may not use them for voice communications. Students will use headphones to avoid disturbing other students, and no ring tones are to be activated. Electronic devices may not be shared.
- MP3 players or iPod devices may be used when the volume is directed only for the student utilizing the device through the use of headphones and not heard or disruptive to others.

Unapproved electronic devices will be confiscated including, but not limited to: electronic games, electronic musical instruments and other devices not mentioned prior.

# Parental Responsibilities

## Academic Oversight

Because Cornerstone is a tutorial service to homeschoolers and its students are homeschooled, the parents bear primary responsibility for their student's education. They are responsible to monitor their students' progress and assign the final grade for each class. This includes ensuring the student is prepared for class, returns assignments on time as requested by the tutor and completes assignments with integrity. Tutors may provide answer keys and ask parents to grade assignments or tests.

### *Academic Probation*

Students who experience great difficulty in doing the work assigned for a class, despite their best efforts and those of the parents and tutor, may be placed on Academic Probation. If the student continues to experience difficulty and frustration, he may be removed from the class at the discretion of the tutor and parents if it is determined that this is in the best interests of all concerned. The student's limitations will have to be considered in registering for future classes. Academic Probation is not an issue of behavior or attitude but is a matter of a student's ability to perform work at a certain level.

## Cooperative Participation

Cornerstone is a cooperative effort that functions most effectively when everyone contributes.

Parents and their students participate on a rotating basis in the daily setup, lunch monitoring, and takedown tasks. The parents are required to sign up for various duties at registration. It is the parent's responsibility to find a substitute if he or she cannot perform the assigned duty date for any reason. One adult per family must be in attendance for the duty function to be fulfilled. Students are expected to serve alongside their parent where appropriate.

As additional duties arise, the Board may ask each family for support. In keeping with our mission statement, we hope that every Cornerstone family will have a servant's heart in these matters and will actively seek opportunities to volunteer.

Eligibility of families selected for Cornerstone participation is dependent on your cooperative participation. When obligations are not upheld, a family's eligibility to register for the succeeding academic year may be jeopardized.

# **Tutors**

## **Tutor Qualifications**

The Board selects tutors to teach at Cornerstone who exhibit expertise in their subject area, are able to express evidence of an active Christian faith, and have a willingness to work with students and parents of homeschooling families. The Board interviews and conducts background checks of all prospective tutors before accepting them.

## **Tutor Absences**

If a tutor must miss a tutoring session, the tutor will attempt to find a qualified substitute. Alternatively, the tutor may schedule a make-up session to compensate for the missed session. Lunchtime or a mutually acceptable alternate period may be used.

## **Tutor Responsibilities**

To assist parents in educating their child, tutors will keep parents informed of student progress, and provide them with at least one written evaluation per student per semester. In addition, tutors should return (in a timely manner) any work they collect.

Tutors are eager to help struggling students and will usually provide additional support through email. Tutors may establish times when students may call for their help with problem areas. If additional instructional time is needed beyond that which is provided under Cornerstone's auspices, the parent and tutor may arrange for private tutoring at additional cost.

Parents are responsible to communicate questions or concerns directly with the tutor.

## **Grievance Procedures**

Open and honest communication between parents, students, and tutors is essential to achieve the full value of Cornerstone participation. Parents who are dissatisfied with a tutorial class should first speak directly with the tutor about their concerns. If they are dissatisfied with the tutor's response, they may contact the tutor liaison and arrange for a three-way conversation with the tutor, the parent and the tutor liaison or another member of the Cornerstone Board. Should there still be a lack of satisfactory resolution, the parents may write a letter to the Board or the tutor liaison may present the matter to the Cornerstone Board.

## **General Procedures and Other Information**

### **Study Hall**

The study hall is a place for students to study quietly. It exists for the convenience of parents whose students have a free period between tutorials. An adult monitors the study hall at all times to maintain good order and discipline. Students must respectfully obey the study hall monitor.

The Study Hall Monitor will maintain a list of students in attendance for each class period. Students are responsible to sign-in on the list at the start of each class period. A student leaving the Study Hall early must sign-out on the list.

Parents should ensure their students have a study plan for effectively using their study hall time.

### **Lunch**

Students may eat lunch in the study hall room from 1:00 to 1:30. Please note that there is no refrigerator, no soda machine, and no microwave. About once a month Cornerstone will have Pizza Day at which students and tutors can purchase pizza by the slice. Pizza days are usually held on the last Monday of the month, but the day may vary due to holidays. Check the website calendar. Food is usually not sold at Cornerstone except for occasional fundraisers.

Students must have written permission from their parent to leave the grounds for lunch.

### **Inclement weather policy**

Cornerstone follows the Anne Arundel County Public School policy in the event of inclement weather, or other emergency, as follows:

- Cornerstone will close if AA County Public Schools are closed due to weather.
- Cornerstone opens on time if there is only a delayed opening for AA County Public Schools. Please note this difference.
- If AA County schools close early, Cornerstone will close at 1:30. Students may be picked up earlier, if desired.
- Information concerning closures or schedule changes will be posted on the website.

### **Email**

Cornerstone maintains contacts with families through the use of email. It is imperative that each family have a working email address which they check on a regular basis. If the family email address changes, the registrar and all involved tutors must be alerted.

## **Website**

Cornerstone maintains a website at <http://www.cornerstonetutorial.org>. Class descriptions, schedules, assignments, and other important information are posted on the website.

The website functions as a key conduit for information. Please check the website regularly for information regarding closings, assignments, and information about Cornerstone happenings.

## **Student Mailbox**

At the beginning of the academic school year, each family is assigned a folder in the file box located in the Study Hall. These folders are used to pass on written information between families and tutors of Cornerstone. If you have questions, please ask the study hall monitor for help.

## **Student and family directory**

As a convenience for families and tutors, Cornerstone publishes a directory with contact information for each student. In order to protect each student's privacy we ask that this directory only be used for Cornerstone purposes and that it not be distributed to other organizations or used for solicitations of any kind.

## **Contacting Students in case of emergency**

Students should normally not be contacted while at Cornerstone. In the event of an emergency, you may contact the **Study Hall monitor at 443-454-3173**. Please be aware: reception at the Church is poor and the phone may not always ring.

## **Un-sponsored Events and Activities**

Although not run by Cornerstone or endorsed as official events, dedicated parent volunteers usually organize the following activities during the academic year for the benefit of Cornerstone students.

It should be noted that these functions are **not under the supervision of Cornerstone**, and are provided by the parent volunteers who choose to participate. These functions serve to enrich students' academic experience, and are only made possible by the generous support of willing parents.

## **Pictures**

Pictures may be arranged by parent volunteers for the benefit of Cornerstone students. Other family members are also welcome to have their pictures taken.

## **Yearbook**

The Yearbook is arranged by dedicated parent volunteers for the benefit of Cornerstone students. Students are encouraged to volunteer to help with this effort. Cornerstone allows fund raisers to help finance the cost of the yearbook.

## **Graduation and Senior activities**

Cornerstone is not a school and therefore does not offer graduation. Several local groups pool their resources to do senior activities and interested families are encouraged to contact these organizations directly.