

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

Do you allow children to say The Pledge of Allegiance?

YES and we have not changed it! We are STILL ONE NATION UNDER GOD!

Do you require a statement of faith from participating families?

We do not require participating families to sign a statement of faith. We have somewhat of an open enrollment policy, where any family willing to genuinely respect and diligently abide by our [Guidelines For Participation Handbook](#) may be involved. God has encouraged/required us in this ministry to remember to be the example of Christ's love and compassion and to be sensitive to serving the needs of others. The Handbook may be read at: <http://www.ArkHome.Org> and families will be asked to sign an acknowledgement that they have received, read and understand the contents of the handbook.

Is the Ark and Abeka Academy Partnership a new model of education?

The Master Academic Program for Pre-K through 12th has been successfully used in classrooms since 1985 and there are now more than 600 ministries, schools and churches successfully using this program around the country. The Abeka Master Teacher DVD program is a ministry of Pensacola Christian Academy in Florida, and has been developed to bring a high standard of Christian education to places they could not otherwise operate or afford to hire all the teachers specializing in each area of "master" experience and study.

How does the Ark work in partnership with Abeka?

The Ark provides the classroom, on site resources, books, personal guidance and interaction, along with teacher evaluation and assessment, visual aides, hands on discovery tools, and ABEKA provides outstanding curriculum coordinated with the Master Teachers classroom [via Dvd from Pensacola Christian Academy] to provide qualified instruction in each grade level and specialty course.

Abeka has a program for home school families. How does this compare and what would the advantage be at The Ark?

The home school program may only be used by one individual student at a time, at your home. While this works for families wanting to stay at home, The Ark offers a "Modern One Room School House" atmosphere, on site instruction, guidance, class participation and interaction with others. Age groups are partitioned off during grade-specific instruction, and the partitions can be moved after the school day is over for group homework or other academic enrichment, arts, music or other cooperative play experiences. For parents who need to work, or would like their children to learn the dynamics of group cooperation, The Ark provides a perfect atmosphere, like a modern one room school house! With the option of flexible scheduling, The Ark supports home schooling families, as well as those looking for a high quality option to public or expensive private schools. A comparison of actual costs would have to be done on an individual basis.

What is Accreditation?

Accreditation is a more formal process of accountability where the child's tests go to Abeka for report cards, transcripts, all leading to documentation and diploma from an Accredited Academy. If a family chooses not to enroll in that Accredited program, we will still have our own report cards, diplomas and records at The ARK. At any point a family would want to switch to the Accredited program, that would simply mean we submit our records to Abeka [or yours if you were attending somewhere else or your home schooling records] to enroll in that Accredited program. Forms may be viewed on website.

How can tuition for a full grade be so reasonable in price?

Since this is a 'new program' in our area and not a conventional 'school' we need to make it very affordable for families to see the value and weigh the benefits of a high quality personalized education program. Abeka suggests certain "tuition guidelines" however we have to be realistic in comparing the suggested guidelines to our community, what other full service education centers are charging. While some day the vision is to be a full service school in the area, we are just beginning to grow this program at The Ark. We need to make it affordable to accomplish the goal through a cooperative effort of like-minded families who understand the benefit of high standards in education that honor God in the process.

What type of background do the on-site teachers have and what standards do you use to choose them?

In our information packets we have a sheet introducing the on-site administrative teachers, support teachers and staff. Each person on our team has been chosen because of their commitment and genuine desire to see an improvement in education options for children as well as to see Godly principles instilled through the education process. The primary academic instruction is delivered by the Master Teachers at Pensacola Christian Academy, Pensacola Christian College in Florida, and brought to our location here, with our on site teachers, parents and aides providing personal instruction, guidance and overseeing the program.. The Ark provides a complete teacher training library for on site teachers and staff to instruct them on using the Abeka program and making it an efficient and effective tool for success for students on site.

What does Tuition Donation mean?

The "tuition guidelines" are simply the suggested donations if you were going to do a full grade or individual course for a student from PreK to 12th. The 'tuitions' are guidelines that, if a family can afford it than we ask them to do so. If not, than we hope to work out a "scholarship" or work exchange arrangement. We expect that families will be honest as to what they can afford, and if they can't afford the 'suggested donation' than together we can figure out a workable solution. Our "scholarships" are documented so that as a Non Profit 501c3 Illinois Charity, we can show we are actively doing something charitable and that our "intention" is to genuinely help people, and not profit. However, without those who will make the tuition-donations, we cannot afford to operate this program! We genuinely appreciate your support!

We want to register for Drama, Choir, Arts, PE. Can we attend for Enrichment, if we are not in any Academic Courses?

Absolutely! The Ark has a multi-purpose mission and is a ministry to home schooling families, those who feel God is calling them out of the public school system, those who may not be able to afford the tuition or travel time to private school, and those not quite sure about taking on the home-schooling task all by themselves. We are preparing to serve families through several levels of involvement; full-grades or individual courses, enrichment, resources and several other activities. As we begin our other activities like PE, Arts, Drama, Music, Choir, Outdoor Ed, Business & Missions, and a Camp Virtue Awana-type program, we will do these activities after the academic day is done with. There will be many opportunities within the academic day, as well as after-school times for enrichment and intellectual interaction. We are now securing our professional teachers for things like Choir, Musical Drama and other activities that we'd like to provide a professional experience for the students and families.

We have been told our child should be tested for 'Giftedness.' Will this Academic program challenge our child?

We have considered using the word 'Gifted' in our descriptions, however, the word "Gifted" is faced with so much presumption; We chose not to label our program 'Gifted' for those parents who may not call us because their child has never been 'formally' tested. Then, there are those who say their child is so 'gifted' that they cannot be disciplined. Our "philosophy" is that all children have unique qualities and gifts. Their abilities may hinge on whether they have opportunity for their 'qualities and gifts' to be developed and appreciated. In our FAQ section on a child possibly being ready to move up a grade, we discuss how that situation would be handled.

We have been home schooling but are concerned our child may not be progressing. How would the Ark help?

Children have different learning styles and sometimes need a different approach to learning facts.. While home schooling IS a different approach, we may not always know that more specific approach a child needs. Our hope at the Ark is to be available to serve those needs, to offer encouragement and a degree of flexibility to help children embrace their learning style while expecting them to do their absolute best. Many families calling about the programs at The Ark are in a similar predicament of one kind or another, and would like a little more real support getting this job done

We've been home schooling, but aren't sure what grade level our child is really at. Can you help?

While we have the option of specific testing using WRAT4 or other formal testing methods according to average standards, unless there is an indication we need to do special testing, we would start in a basic framework with the full grade level a student has been working at. We would see where the child's strengths and weaknesses are and through individually working with the child, focus on turning the weaknesses into strengths. There is the option of placing a child in a lower grade level until they have comfortably mastered that level and then move up as they are progressively ready for it. If a student surpasses their grade level and can easily complete the work, they may move up to the next level.

There is emphasis on "Flexibility" and "Creativity". We are concerned about a lack of structure in the Academics.

When we speak of creative solutions, it is in things like solving a real 'problem' - never at the expense of short-changing the quality of the academic program. For instance, how to make our giant blocks of different shapes stack up against the wall. Four young children may have a different way to accomplish the task and all may be 'right' in their different approach to get the task done. Older children might brainstorm about a product or service to solve a problem in the world. One of our 'creative' programs are the "Market Missions" projects. While they require creative thought, nothing 'above the norm' is achieved without extreme discipline, determination and willingness to learn above and beyond trial and error. These good habits can begin in the elementary school room. The ARK itself was born from seeking "solutions" to problems such as poor-quality schools in many locations, private schools being too expensive, and home schooling families asking for more specific help. This solution was not easy to accomplish and it took many years [well over 15] just to get to an active starting point. What started as thoughts about a problem, eventually became a solution. It is our goal to give children the opportunity to be a part of that creative 'invention and resolution' process, while first equipping them with the excellent academic tools and foundation of faith they'll need to 'run the race with endurance.'

What if my child struggles in certain subjects?

The daily lesson plans are prepared in the sense of introducing concepts to students and offering ample opportunity for comprehending material. There is a combination of interaction, group discussion and participation, and there are always opportunities to ask questions of on site supervising teachers as well as to personally contact the actual Abeka teacher for questions, by phone or email. The master teachers and support staff are available to 'distant learning' students as they are to the students present in the recorded classrooms at Pensacola Christian Academy. If a student still struggles with concepts in any academic area, he would receive more individualized help working through the lessons at a pace the student can adapt to. If this was not successful, another approach to the subject will be addressed. A student may comprehend a subject that is difficult through utilizing a different approach. Through a well-rounded system of reinforcement and creative approach, we hope to help students grasp absolute concepts of what they are learning.

Does Abeka have special needs curriculum?

Abeka curriculum can go the pace of a child. That is the advantage of this particular delivery system-- where you can start a child who is "behind" in ability at a lower grade level using the lower curriculum. A student can progress at his/her own pace, instead of placing a child who is behind at a grade level they are not really ready for and having to special tutor them to catch up to others in their grade level. With the program at the Ark, it will be evident by discussion and working with a student if they are comprehending the material or if they need more time with a certain subject or learning process. With some book-work and literal subject matter 'testing' we will see what the student knows, what information they are comfortable with and where they begin to struggle. We start working at that point, and when the student is confident, we move on. If there is an additional struggle, we have one or two persons spending a greater amount of time with a particular student on these subjects. They will be able to see his/her progress or lack thereof in various areas. Students will be worked with on an individual basis and as needed, we will adapt the curriculum to the needs of the student.

What if my child needs more one-on-one attention, for example in complex or higher math subjects?

The Master Teacher DVD program is a foundation for us to offer different learning approaches to students. The next step is for us to address the educational needs of individual children, as they arise, in one subject or another. While we have certified teachers available to oversee the educational programs at The Ark, we have support staff and teacher's aides who are trained and present for personalized one-on-one assistance. Optional one-on-one professional tutor time can be scheduled. As a 'Master School Ministry' we have a 60 hour training library which trains teachers/parents/volunteers how to most effectively use and teach the different courses guided by the Master teachers. There are training sessions on each subject, specifically guiding how to use the materials to most effectively benefit the students in the classrooms on site at The Ark. Between our support staff, open lines of communication with the Master Teachers who are providing instruction via Dvd, and utilizing the extensive on site training library, we are also developing a list of professional teachers in the area who specialize in the more complex subjects, who will be on call for tutoring students.

Would the cost be the same no matter how many days my son participated?

Yes, the cost for a grade or course would be the same, whether 2 or 5 days a week. The courses are designed to do some each day, but they can also be as flexible as you need to make them. If a course is scheduled for a certain time period each day, and a student is not able to make it, they can be made up on a flexible schedule also. Depending on your schedule and driving distance a student can do viewing participation a few days a week, and then do homework at home on the off days. With gas prices, we will need to make these kinds of options available for people who cannot drive each day, due to time or financial constraints.

Will there be any labs and experiments in my child's Science or Biology classes?

For example, one course in Science may have 360 minutes or 35 Lab experiences which would be included in the course cost. The student at the Ark participates along with the class in Pensacola, except it is viewed here. If we chose to do a hands-on experiment where we needed to purchase special supplies, everyone in the course who participates would share in the cost of materials. Parents would be notified in advance in order to approve these extra activities.

Will the different age groups work together at any time?

Whenever possible, our plan is to have groups work together in activities, when the situation allows. One of our main goals, along with the extras like drama, music, arts, math & spelling bees, are to have class projects where kids learn to work together in different scenarios and capacities with children of varying ages.

When will a schedule be available on what and when everything is offered?

Our Academic Calendar should be available by the beginning of August for the 2008/2009 year. The majority will begin classes the start of the school year, which we anticipate beginning September 8th. While committed registrations as of the end of July will determine a base schedule, the program can be flexible to meet the needs of various families with different schedules. With this Abeka program, a student can go on a traditional or flexible schedule. All classes will be available; Registered students for a particular class will determine the first starting date for that class.

Are there any scholarships for Home School Families or other Families with Special Needs students?

At this time, all families needing a 'scholarship' will have to state so on the registration forms. We are developing a network of professionals available for evaluation and special helps. We are also an Affiliate Member with HSLDA [Home School Legal Defense Association] which allows us to get connected with special evaluations groups and guide families who become members to all manner of other special help through the HSLDA Foundation.

What days and hours do you meet?

Since this program will cover all subjects for certain students, there will be a traditional five day schedule available at the traditional hours. If a family needs more flexibility, they could come only on certain days to participate with the class here. If someone wanted to 'design their schedule' where one student in the family was doing 3rd grade math, and one was doing 10th grade math, they can do that at a time that suits their family. While the courses are designed for daily progress, for a more intensive study, several lessons can be done in one day, and homework for those days assigned to do on the days at home.

Can my child just take one or two classes, and can the schedule be flexible?

For families that want only certain courses, like Math or English, they can either come during the day when the full grades are in progress and join the class, or can schedule at a time that is convenient for their family. A family would have the choice how many days they would want to come and actually participate on site. The Academic courses are either a full year or semester long. They are a full course of instruction, which allows for about an hour class per day. If a family only wanted to attend one or two days, the child can do a more 'intensive instruction' fewer days, and take the book-work home to do for the rest of the days. Support is available to students by phone, email or fax. The flexible program, is just that. If part of the goal was to be in an English class with others, those 'flexible families' would need to agree on what is the best flexible time for them so they can be together. Very soon, we will have a time schedule made up based on who is registered. Others will be able to register to join those classes, or schedule a time beneficial for their family.

Certain schools don't believe in correcting mistakes, for example, in Math or Spelling; they say "they don't want to damage the child" or "stifle their creative spirit." They also do not insist that students show respect to teachers.

What is your thinking on these issues?

We cannot claim to explain other educational philosophies. However, one thing for certain is, that we cannot base our "standards" on the world's lack of them! With subjects like Math, Spelling, etc. there are absolutes and they are not negotiable. While $2 + 2$ always = 4, $3 + 1$ can also = 4. $3 + 2$ never = 4 without taking 1 away. As for spelling, even though we may not always be able to explain the "rules" of English language and spelling to children in a way that makes sense (like 'silent letters' and why PH, GH, and F, all can sound like F) our general rule in spelling is that the dictionary rules. Spelling is a challenge to the mind more than anything else. Without rhyme or reason, there is a right way and a wrong way, according to dictionary writers, and that has to be our guide. We will use dictionaries, double check the 'spell checkers' on our word processors, and gently work towards excellence in all areas of academics, conduct, and thought. This being said, we need to be responsive to when a child is doing their absolute best and acknowledge them for it. Even if they are working at a different 'level' than another child is working at, both may be doing their very best and both should be equally praised and encouraged. Somewhere between expectation, inspiration, determination and hard work, a child embraces their time and place to grow.

As for respect, as old-fashioned as it may seem, we believe good manners are still fashionable and there is a lot to be said for expecting children and adults to nurture their intellect in a way that encourages considerate, determined, polite thinking patterns. We have high expectations that all students, teachers and volunteer parent staff will treat one another with high regard and integrity. We have a policy of consideration. If you view our Guidelines For Participation Handbook on the web site <http://www.ArkHome.Org> you will read the specifics of what is expected by all, and the methods we will use to remedy matters of disrespect.

How will you handle discipline?

By reviewing our Handbook, you will see that we are striving for a conservative and rather disciplined environment. Through such an environment is the only way to create an atmosphere conducive to learning, exploring the possibilities of being an independent, creative and wise thinker, while learning consideration for others. While the artistic, creative endeavors are valuable and essential, they cannot happen at the expense of quality academic instruction, or without the discipline necessary to finish a task to completion. We expect to stress the value of both ends; To carry out the task of training children to master both sides of the brain, without disregarding how their heart fits into the whole picture. For addressing disagreement or conflict, there are specific methods which we will take explained in the handbook, to achieve an atmosphere of peace. We intend to work together with families to accomplish this. The handbook does explain that we reserve the right to remove a student from the group if he or she proves to be a continual distraction to the other students. However, this is an end that we would not choose and can be prevented by all of us adhering to expectations of consideration, kindness and constructive conflict resolution.

What about teaching Health issues that we feel should be taught at home and not in a classroom?

As a ministry, our goal is to cooperate with parents and invite their involvement as much as possible in their child's education. Parents will have the decision if they want to provide certain Health information at 'school' or at home. We can be certain that Abeka holds extremely conservative views on all issues concerning all phases of health and that they will cover these subjects thoroughly through a biblical view point. With this method of Master Teacher instruction, parents can view in advance, all the material their child will view in the classroom, or view it together with their child. They can choose for their child not to view the material, or they can choose to be the one to guide them through the course. For each subject in the Abeka curriculum, the Scope and Sequence chart gives an overview of topics they will cover in each subject. We also have access to view every subject at every grade level, at a parent's request.

The Dress Code seems severe. It's hard to find clothes at stores that fit those guidelines. What about uniforms?

The dress code is a guide that should be respected by all students and parents as closely as possible. There are ways to improvise with what is sold at stores. We understand, with those choices, a lot of improvising will need to be done. We assume people can understand the code, and will dress accordingly. Those who do not, namely any student or parent, will be asked to put on a cover or get a change of clothing. Please read the dress code carefully. It will be strictly enforced. Uniforms are expensive but certainly welcomed. If the dress code is consistently compromised, we may choose to go to an all uniform environment. (One suggestion was for us to design and make our own clothing through a creative endeavor! Please speak up if you are an accomplished seamstress!)

How would my child learn a Foreign Language from the Abeka Program? As answered directly from an Abeka teacher:

"On the 50 minute, daily, Spanish DVD your child will watch Mrs. McLamb teaching a class. The students in the class will be interacting with the teacher and we encourage on site students to participate also. The students watching should sing the songs, repeat the words, answer the teacher's questions, recite the verses, participate in the teaching games, etc. There are times when Mrs. McLamb will address the students watching, and will tell them how to do the assignment in their situation. The average class is set as follows: Introductory questions by Mrs. McLamb, conversation in Spanish, verses, pronunciation, grammar review, vocabulary practice, new grammar lesson, and then workbook assignments, quizzes, or tests. For conversation section, your on site students and staff, will read the questions and answers out of the book to each other. As the year goes on, Mrs. McLamb will use more and more Spanish directions in her teaching, so that students are learning to hear and understand the language better. If a student or your on site teacher has a question about anything on the DVD, assignments, quizzes, or tests, they may call me, Susan Schemmer, Spanish Instructor at Abeka Academy. I lived and worked in Mexico in the past and have also taught Spanish in a private school."

Our child was taught evolution in public school. How do you teach Creation without confusing the child?

We personally want to be sensitive to all children, understanding that they have often been removed from an environment where 'The Pledge of Allegiance' and even prayer is not welcomed. The environment of a God-honoring learning center will indeed be different than one who denies the very existence of a Creator, which is a primary reason you will choose to enroll your child at The ARK. We believe that the Abeka Book curriculum adequately covers the subject of Creation in a way that gives a foundation to our very existence on earth. While we can teach OF the 'scientific' debates in society concerning these issues, we will respect and support the presentation of Creation through the Abeka curriculum. The teachers of Pensacola Christian Academy and College are also available for us to ask questions of by phone, email or fax. Our job is to use a curriculum that supports Scripture, so that hearts are encouraged to know they can find peace and answers -- as well as genuine contentment in the not knowing "all the scientific facts" that perhaps we are not necessarily supposed to know.

Do we have to notify the school system that we are withdrawing our child?

A Letter of Withdrawal to schools is primarily a recommended procedure of consideration because if the schools have a Letter of Withdrawal or something in writing from you, they will not continue calling [or in some cases harass] families every year asking when, if, or why you haven't registered your children yet. Each individual school and district will have their own policies on contacting families they expect to be registering. If the school you are withdrawing children from has nothing in writing concerning the student withdrawal, they will most likely keep calling each year as part of their policy. While there are extreme cases where families are specifically harassed, depending on the district, if they call to ask about why you have not registered a child yet, and a family does not respond, the family may be red flagged for truancy and a report made to DCFS for suspected negligence, or other state agencies governing schools in their area could be notified.

Yes, in the case of home-schooling, if they are members of HLSDA they will have legal defense and recourse to prove to the District or State, that by law the family is not required to report to the schools and that they have done nothing wrong. However if there is a report of neglect, DCFS can make their own inquiries. Lack of parental response to general inquiries by a school is sometimes translated by such agencies as neglect or abuse when their request is not fulfilled to know that children are being educated and cared for properly. HLSDA's position is that a lot of hassle can be saved by sending in the forms when you know you are removing your children from the system and in keeping proper educational records.

Can parents request their child's school records when withdrawing from the public school?

Parents can legally request that all school records of their children be released to them, by writing a letter and submitting it with or separately from the Letter of Withdrawal. The Student Withdrawal and Records Release forms do not have to tell the school any details about where or how the children will be schooled, just that the parents are guaranteeing their child's education, that the children will receive the proper 'branches of instruction' according to the law, and will receive this instruction in the English Language. The Illinois and Wisconsin Letters of Withdrawal and Parent Authorization for Release of School Records forms are available to view on our web site at <http://www.ArkHome.Org>