



# **RIVER CREST ACADEMY PARENT HANDBOOK**



## **RIVER CREST ACADEMY**

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## ABOUT RIVER CREST ACADEMY

River Crest Academy feels that each parent has the best interests of their children and their children's education at heart. We believe that each parent knows his or her child and their habits, better than anyone and therefore, is the only teacher that a child needs. In keeping with this philosophy, we are a "hands-off" cover school, which allows you, the parent, to guide your children in the direction, and at the pace, in which you feel best suits the needs of the child. We ask for only what the law requires while offering support in several ways, including a database of quality resources and moral support, to aid each family in their endeavors.

### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

1. We will provide a legal covering for any family who chooses to home educate in the state of Alabama, regardless of race, financial standing, teaching methods or religious beliefs.
2. We will provide resources, which may aid families in their decision to home educate.
3. We will provide resources, which may help each family in their homeschooling journey.
4. We will help to enable parents to take responsibility for their children's academic, emotional, and moral growth.
5. We will provide quality social and educational activities including field trips, along with information to those who choose to home educate, whether through our cover or another.

### WHAT WE OFFER

- Legal Church School covering, statewide.
- A year round, 365 day calendar that allows families to learn in a natural and flexible manner.
- **Year-round enrollment – Families may enroll at any time during the year, fees will not be prorated and re-enrollment will be due by the following August 15th, regardless of start date.**
- Local field trips
- Unlimited access to the River Crest Academy website, which contains additional educational resources at [www.rivercrestacademy.com](http://www.rivercrestacademy.com).
- A Facebook page for field trip notifications and helpful information at
- Full support of all teaching methods including but not limited to eclectic, traditional and un-schooling
- Diplomas issued by following the same standards, or higher, as set by the State of Alabama
- Official transcript for graduating seniors (additional fees apply)
- Official diploma for graduating seniors (additional fees apply)
- Formal Graduation Ceremony

### RIVER CREST ACADEMY DOES NOT REQUIRE

- Membership in HSLDA is not required. We leave that decision up to the parent. If you would like more information about HSLDA visit their website at <http://www.hslda.org/>
- Interview process
- Detailed record keeping, (such as hours per subject, hours per day)
- Exit exams at graduation
- Standardized testing
- Monthly fees
- Lesson plan approval
- Curriculum approval
- Mandatory parent meetings
- Statement of Faith (We do not require a stamen of faith to serve your family, however, we are a ministry of a Hope Hull United Methodist Church and we function as a ministry. We serve all families no matter what your religious affiliation. We do believe that the Word of God is truth, and that the Holy Bible is the Word of God. All activities or event will have prayer and will always speak to the statement of the church. Follow Jesus. Change the world.)

Please remember that we are here to support you in your decision to home school your child/children; however, it is the **responsibility** of you, the parent, to acquire your entire curriculum, educational materials and child care. River

Crest Academy **IS NOT** responsible for choosing, purchasing or providing your curriculum, nor are we responsible for child care or teaching.

### ATTENDANCE REPORTS/PROGRESS REPORTS

River Crest Academy desires in every way to uphold to the Alabama State Law requirements for church schools. In following Alabama State Law, River Crest Academy **does not** require a monthly attendance record. However, we do require that an attendance record be turned in, at minimum, **once per year** and when the student is transferring from River Crest Academy to another educational facility or graduating. We require reporting of all unexcused absences from learning. State law does require that children of compulsory school age attend school for a minimum of 180 days. River Crest Academy follows the State's requirement of 180 instructional days. Because we have a year round schedule, and you have 365 days to learn, there should be no unexcused absences.

### General Guideline for Home Education

This set of guidelines is to help your family make a decision on whether or not home education may be the best choice for them. It is not meant as legal advice in any way, expressed or implied.

#### TAKING THE STEPS TO BEGIN HOME EDUCATION

Home education is a legal alternative to public education. To take on the responsibility of homeschool is a decision that families are making more and more in the United States. It is not a decision to come to lightly and without thought. Following the steps outlined below will help you make an educated and well thought out decision of what may be best for your child and your family.

1. **Research and understand Alabama State Law regarding church school.** You will find Alabama State requirements listed below.
2. Research available church or umbrella schools so that you may make a decision based on what they offer to your family and understand the requirements which they make on your family.
3. Find a support group or create one of your own. We work in conjunction with Elmore County Homeschool Organization (E.C.H.O.). <https://www.facebook.com/elmore.county.homeschool.organization?fref=ts> or [onlineecho.com](http://onlineecho.com)
4. Find a play group or a group with activities for children in the age group of your child(ren).
5. Decide if a cooperative is the right fit for your family. We work in conjunction with Central Alabama Homeschool Cooperative. You can find further information on them at [https://www.facebook.com/centralalabamahomeschoolcooperative?ref=aymt\\_homepage\\_panel](https://www.facebook.com/centralalabamahomeschoolcooperative?ref=aymt_homepage_panel) or [centralalabamahomeschoolcoop.com](http://centralalabamahomeschoolcoop.com)
6. Research teaching methods and learning methods. Remember your first year will be a learning year for both you and your child(ren).
7. Be flexible and open minded. Just as you learn best in a particular way so do your children. As parent-teachers we are parents first, teacher second. Therefore, we adjust our teaching to best fit our child(ren) learning style. Observe your child through play and learn their learning techniques.
8. Avoid grade level thinking.
9. Avoid turning your home into a traditional school.
10. Talk to your child to find out what they would like to learn about.
11. Make use of the many free and low cost homeschool tools that are available online, at local libraries, etc...

#### ALABAMA STATE REQUIREMENTS

**Teacher Qualifications:** No qualifications required to teach in a church or private school. A private tutor must be a state-certified teacher. Ala. Code § 16-28-5.

**Standardized Tests:** Not required by statute.

**Freedom from State Regulation:** "Nonpublic schools, including private, church, parochial, and religious schools, offering educational instruction in grades K-12, as well as home-schooled students, are

not subject to licensure or regulation by the state or any political subdivision of the state, including the State Department of Education.” Sec. 2(b), Act 2014-245.

**College Anti-discrimination Provisions:** “Any provision of law to the contrary notwithstanding, no public two-year or four-year institution of higher education in the state may deny admission to or otherwise discriminate against an otherwise qualified student based on the consideration, whether in whole or in part, that the student attended, graduated from, or is enrolled in a nonpublic school, including private, church, parochial, and religious schools, or was home schooled.” Sec. 6, Act 2014-245.

**Religious Freedom Act:** Alabama Constitutional Amendment No. 622

The Religious Freedom Restoration Amendment (RFRA), passed with the help of HSLDA members, gives religious home educators another legal means to protect their right to home school. If the parents’ free exercise of religion is substantially burdened by having to comply with the homeschool law, the parents may use the RFRA as a defense or file suit against the state. Under this statute, the burden is on the state to prove that its requirement "furthers a compelling state interest" and is the "least restrictive means" of fulfilling its interest that children be educated. This Act restores the highest protection of the individual's right to freely exercise his religious beliefs taken away by the U.S. Supreme Court in its 1997 City of Boerne decision. 521 U.S. 507

Please remember that enrolling in a church school **IS** a legal option under Alabama State Law. Local schools, teachers, employees, counselors and the principal are **NOT** in any way legally entitled to any documentation regarding education in your home. While you should always be respectful to school officials, you are not required to give them any paperwork other than the request for school records. If the school has policy, it is exactly that, the schools policy. Because you are enrolling elsewhere, you are not bound by their policies anymore.

Should a Truant Officer or an Attendance Office come to your door inquiring about your child’s enrollment, you may:

- Ask if they have checked with the County Board of Education in an effort to obtain a copy of your Church School Enrollment Form. This is where that document should remain on file.
- If extremely persistent, you may show them a copy of the Church School Enrollment Form, however, you are not required to give them a copy. Should they demand anything other than the Church School Enrollment Form, request that they put it in writing and mail it to your cover school.
- Always ask for a name, official ID and business card **and write it down or take a picture.**
- Make sure that you are familiar with the law and that you are aware of, and can provide what is legally required of you.
- Politely excuse yourself from the truancy officer letting them know that you are calling the County Board of Education to check if they have your Church School Enrollment Form. If the Board of Education has lost your Church School Enrollment Form, offer to mail a copy to them. Mail them a copy immediately through certified mail.
- Should you require legal counsel, please contact the HSLDA. We have never had or known anyone to experience this here in our area. However, it is always good to be prepared.

## ENROLLMENT WITH RIVER CREST ACADEMY

### ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS

1. Read and understand the handbook for River Crest Academy.
2. Fill out one **(1) Family Information Form, per child.**
3. Fill out three **(1) Church School Enrollment Forms per child**, making sure to sign **BOTH** parent/guardian signature lines, in blue or black ink only. Each Form **MUST** have original signatures, in blue or black ink. *Copies are not accepted.*
4. Fill out two **(1) Request for School Records Forms, per child**, taking care to name the public or cover school that you are transferring from. Place only one school name on each form.
5. Mail all forms to River Crest Academy within **5 days** of signing. Upon receipt, River Crest Academy will process and return a signed copy to you, along with an acceptance letter. If you do not receive an acceptance letter within 30 days of mailing, please contact River Crest Academy at 334-.

## RE-ENROLLMENT

Re-Enrollment occurs annually and should be received in the office no later than August 15. To re-enroll, simply pay the yearly enrollment fee online. If there are any changes to your information please fill out the correct form with the correct information and mail it in. Re-enrollments received after this date will incur a \$25.00 late fee. Please inform River Crest Academy should you plan to enroll elsewhere as we are required by Alabama State Law to send an official letter to your local Board of Education, stating that you are no longer enrolled in River Crest Academy. **If re-enrollment is 15 days past due**, this letter will be mailed without further notice. **Please be advised: It is the parent's responsibility to make sure that re-enrollment is completed in a timely manner EACH YEAR. River Crest Academy DOES NOT automatically re-enroll your child(ren).**

## WITHDRAWAL

Withdrawal is allowed at any time; however, there will be no proration or refund of fees. Should you decide to withdraw in December and re-enroll in February, you will be treated as a new enrollment and registration fees will have to be paid and all forms completed again.

All records held by River Crest Academy belong to the parent/guardian of the student and will be mailed to them at their request, free of charge. If a student transfers from River Crest Academy prior to graduation, official transcripts will be sent to the parent along with all previous records. A ***Transcript Request Form*** must be filled out and delivered to the administrator. This form can be found on [www.rivercrestacademy.com](http://www.rivercrestacademy.com).

## TRANSCRIPTS

A transcript is an official form which lists courses, grades (and grade point average for high school students). This form is needed when enrolling in a different cover school, public schools, private schools, at the time of graduation or enrollment in colleges as part of the enrollment process. Transcripts must be requested using the Transcript Request Form, available on the website, and must be made ***no less than 14 days prior*** to needing them. Transcripts needed on a rush basis will require rush fee of \$20.00. Upon graduation, one set of official transcripts will be sent to the parent in a sealed envelope. Additional sets can be mailed to the school or college of your choice, upon written request by the parent, for an additional fee of \$5.00 per set.

***Please be advised, transcripts cannot be provided if all necessary information has not been received. This includes attendance, grades and curriculum information. All outstanding fees must be paid prior to release of transcripts.***

## DISMISSAL

River Crest Academy does not discriminate against families based on skin tone, economical stature, religious beliefs or political beliefs. We do, however, reserve the right to **dismiss** any family that has presented River Crest Academy in a negative light due to illegal activities, non-compliance of policies, non-payment of fees, dishonesty in matters relating to River Crest Academy or poor conduct. Should a family be removed by River Crest Academy, there will be no proration or refund of registration fees.

## FEE SCHEDULE

### ENROLLMENT/RE-ENROLLMENT FEE:

- \$75.00 per family, per year if paid during the traditional school registration season. (July 16<sup>th</sup> – April 30<sup>th</sup>) There are no prorated fees and fees paid are not refundable.

### EARLY ENROLLMENT/EARLY RE-ENROLLMENT FEE:

- \$65.00 per family, per year if paid during the summer season. (May 1<sup>st</sup> – July 15<sup>th</sup>) There are no prorated fees and fees paid are not refundable.

### LATE FEES:

- A late fee of \$25.00 will be added if your re-enrollment is received in this office after August 15<sup>th</sup> of each year.

### ADDITIONAL ENROLLMENT:

- Adding a child mid-year is accepted, but will require a \$20.00 fee per child added on mid-year.

**TRANSCRIPTS:**

- **One** set of Graduation transcripts are free at the time of graduation.
- Additional graduation transcripts are available for \$5 per set.
- Transcripts will be provided at no charge, to another school should the student transfer from River Crest Academy.
- Rush transcript fees carry a \$20.00 rush fee. A rush transcript is one needed without a 14 day written notice.

**GRADUATION FEE:**

- River Crest Academy offers a formal graduation ceremony located at River City Church UMC in Montgomery, Al.. The ceremony will be a time of recognition of the graduates many accomplishments including, but not limited to scholarships and awards won. We will have an area for light refreshments as well as an area available for the students to display any academic and/or sport related accomplishments earned.
- The graduation fee is \$75.00 per graduating student of River Crest Academy. This fee includes gown, cap, tassel, diploma, diploma cover as well as the use of the church facilities. We are open to all students regardless of cover school for a fee of \$125.00.
- If your graduating student requires an honor cord or stole they are available for purchase for an additional cost.
- Graduation fees are due no later than March 31<sup>st</sup> **NO EXCEPTIONS**. This guarantees that your graduation attire and diploma can arrive on time.
- If you would like to receive the graduation package, but not attend the ceremony the fee is still \$75.00. This will cover all of the items plus the cost of shipping them to you.

**HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS**

You can detailed information about Alabama High School Graduation requirements at <https://www.alsde.edu/sec/sct/Graduation%20Information/ALABAMA%20HIGH%20SCHOOL%20GRADUATION%20REQUIREMENTS.pdf>

You can also find about how to count dual enrollment courses as high school credits at <http://www.alsde.edu/sites/memos/Memoranda/FY15-1014.pdf>

**ELECTIVES LIST**

This is a partial list of subjects that may be considered electives for purposes of graduating elective credits. Other subjects, not listed here, may qualify. Please notify the River Crest Academy if you have any questions about an elective that you are interested in that is not listed here.

ACCOUNTING  
 ACT PREP (1/2 CREDIT)  
 ANATOMY  
 ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS  
 ART HISTORY  
 AUTOMOTIVE REPAIR  
 AVIATION HISTORY  
 BAND  
 BIBLE  
 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT  
 BUSINESS MATH  
 CHEMISTRY  
 CHILD CARE  
 CHOIR  
 COMPOSITION

CONSUMER MATH  
 COMPUTER PROGRAMMING  
 COSMOTOLOGY  
 CREATIVE WRITING  
 CRIMINAL JUSTICE  
 CULINARY ARTS  
 DRAFTING  
 EARTH SCIENCE  
 ECOLOGY  
 ELEMENTARY STATISTICS  
 EUROPEAN HISTORY  
 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT  
 FINE ARTS  
 FIRST AID (1/2 CREDIT)  
 HOME ECONOMICS

HUMAN BEHAVIOR  
INTERIOR DECORATING  
LATIN STUDIES  
MUSIC  
NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORY  
NUTRITION  
PATHOLOGY  
PHOTOGRAPHY  
PSYCHOLOGY  
SAT PREP (1/2 CREDIT)

SOCIOLOGY  
SPEECH THERAPY  
THEATER (DRAMA)  
THEOLOGY  
TRIGONOMETRY  
VOLUNTEER (WITH WRITTEN  
STATEMENT)  
WILDERNESS SURVIVAL (1/2 CREDIT)  
WOODWORKING

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- ***“River Crest Academy is located in Montgomery County, but I live in another county. Can I still use you as a cover school?”***

**YES!** River Crest Academy accepts enrollment from families in all counties of Alabama. You **MUST** reside in Alabama and/or have a permanent address in Alabama in order to be enrolled.

- ***“Do you have online courses or can I have to buy my curriculum from you?”***

**NO**, we do not provide online courses for your student to take. There are many online schools available and you may use them as your curriculum, however, we do encourage you to make sure that the courses offered by any online school are well researched by you prior to signing with them. You do not purchase your curriculum from us. You are free to use any curriculum that best suits your student’s needs and may purchase that from any outlet you choose. We offer support and suggestions.

- ***“Is River Crest Academy accredited?”***

**NO**, as is the case with most church schools in Alabama. Accreditation is defined as follows: *The act of accrediting or the state of being accredited, especially the granting of approval to an institution of learning by an official review board after the school has met specific requirements.*

These requirements include, but are not limited to class size, subjects taught and by whom, number of fire exits, and a lot of things that home educators do not encounter because we are not in a classroom setting. Furthermore, the **Code of Alabama 1975, 16-28-24 states, there is no statutory authority authorizing or requiring any state or local authority to regulate church schools, which may conduct classes in any manner they see fit.** There is no requirement that church school teachers be certified or that a church school be accredited by the state or any private agency. No state or governmental agency has the authority to regulate a church school.

To become accredited, River Crest Academy would be told what subject to teach, what curriculum to teach it from and for how many hours per day, etc. Many home educators enjoy the right and the ability to teach their child when and what they, the parent, feels is best.

- ***“We are moving. When do I need to notify you of our new address?”***

**AS SOON AS YOU MOVE.** If you are moving to another address within the State of Alabama, please notify River Crest Academy as soon as you know your new address. If you are moving to a different county, new Enrollment Forms will need to be completed in order to notify the county of your residence. **PLEASE REMEMBER, IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO NOTIFY US OF YOUR NEW ADDRESS AND/OR PHONE NUMBER.**

- ***“Do I have to turn in grades and if so, when are they due?”***

Turning in grades is not a requirement of the State of Alabama. However, if you want to participate in River Crest Academy’s graduation ceremony you are required to turn in by May 15th the year of graduation.

- ***“When enrolling with River Crest Academy, when should I withdraw my child from his/her current school?”***

Alabama law states that a student **cannot be enrolled in two schools at the same time**, therefore, when filling out enrollment forms for River Crest Academy, you should withdraw your child from the current school upon completion of our enrollment documents. If mailing your documents, you may withdraw them on the same day that you place your forms in the mail. If delivering by hand, you should withdraw your child prior to delivering the documents.

Please remember, if your child/children is between 6 and 17 years of age, they **MUST** be enrolled in school, whether it is Public, Private, Church School or taught by a State Certified Tutor. Failing to register and report the child’s registration is in violation of the State of Alabama Truancy Laws and can result in fines and/or jail. For more information, visit [www.HSLDA.com](http://www.HSLDA.com).

- ***“My grandchild lives with me and wants to homeschool. What do I need to do?”***

You **MUST** be the legal parent or guardian in order to enroll a child in our program. If you are a caregiver without legal guardianship, you cannot enroll the child. Likewise, if you are a step-parent, without guardianship or legal adoption, you cannot enroll the child.

- ***“Can I drop my child off for classes at River Crest Academy?”***

**No, you cannot.** River Crest Academy does not offer on-site classes. We are a portal which allows you, the parent, to home educate your child, legally. This means that you, the parent, are the teacher and the world is your classroom. You may teach your child in the manner that you see fit, with material that you see fit. However, River Crest Academy works in conjunction with Central Alabama Homeschool Cooperative. You can

- ***“Can my homeschooled child still get into college?”***

**Yes!** Many Universities and Colleges actively seek out home educated children. Testing has shown that home educated children achieve higher test scores and have the ability to study in a self-sufficient way, which are two assets that higher education facilities want to see. A college or University will look at the students SAT/ACT scores for admittance.

- ***“I have been told that my child cannot get into the Armed Forces if he/she is home schooled. Is this true?”***

**NO.** Homeschoolers are recruited at Tier 1, just like any other high school student. While this has not always been the case, the Armed Forces have corrected this and all students are recruited as equals.