

Homeschool Co-ops Blessing or Curse?

Homeschool co-ops can undoubtedly be a blessing especially if you are uncomfortable teaching a specific subject and the co-op offers that. It can also be an excellent place to feel connected, meet new people and possibly make lifelong friends.

However, getting into a co-op that is a wrong fit for your family can be devastating. Many co-op's have a non-refundable fee to join and will expect you to invest your time and teach a class. This is great for your creative juices to flow but what if you discover that the co-op isn't a good fit for your family? If this takes place you may feel stuck and devastated. You were counting on this to help you with teaching your child(ren) the subject you hate or that you don't feel equipped to teach.

For many, the idea of leaving a co-op is a difficult one because they have invested so much into it (time, money, excitement to teach something they are passionate about, and the disappointment from others).

If you find yourself in this situation, breathe and know that you are not a bad person. It's just not going to work out for you and your family.

So, what do you do? That's simple; simply keep it simple by letting the leadership know that the co-op isn't going to be a good fit for your family. Let's face it not everything works for everyone.

Typical reasons for a co-op not working are:

- Bullying (which in many cases is conducted by or encouraged by the leadership's children).
- Cliques (children and adults). They smile and say hello but will not accept the new people in the group. They are outsiders.
- Different world views.
- The co-op is too religious.
- The co-op isn't religious enough. -The co-op is too rigid.
- The co-op is chaotic.
- The co-op introduces your child(ren) to sex, devil worship, situation ethics, and the list goes on and on.

I strongly recommend 1 or more visits to the co-op you are thinking about joining. Many co-ops have a meet and greet day where everyone has their best face on but this is an event and not the regular schedule. If you want to know what it is really like, you'll need to go to the co-op when it is in session and see for yourself.

Before the day of the visit comes make a list of what you want out of a co-op for your child(ren) and yourself. While there be observant and take notes. Remember this is a regular day, if you see something in question ask those in charge about it. You may also want to take notes of how the leadership reacted to your question(s).

Then weigh out the pros and cons of joining the group. What are they teaching, what is the atmosphere like, how did the teachers interact with their students, how did the leaders interact with the parents, is the structure rigid or flexible, and so on.

If the co-op will not allow you to visit on a regular day ask why? In most cases, if the answer is no, they have something to hide (meaning in some cases they just want more adults to fill the teacher role and don't want to scare you off), they are very rigid and want absolute control or the co-op is complete chaos.

Remember there is nobody better than you to decide what is best for your child's education. Don't accept pressure to do what everyone else is doing or not doing. The best thing we can do for our children is to train them into the people they will become and not give that responsibility to someone else who doesn't have the same convictions or beliefs as you do.