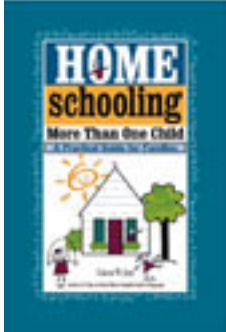


The difference between joining a homeschool support group and participating in one are as great as admiring a dessert and eating it. While you may have your name on the membership list and may read the monthly newsletters, you will find more enjoyment and get the most out of your group if you jump in and actively become involved. Here are some ideas.

- **Attend the meetings faithfully.** Set aside that day and time exclusively for your homeschool group. Schedule dentist appointments and make other commitments on other days. Once meetings become a habit, you will hate to miss them.
- **Join in on the discussions and activities.** Listen and contribute when you can. You may be surprised at what you learn and at how much in common you have with these other parents.
- **Offer to host the group.** Whether your homeschool group alternates among the members' homes or meets in a central location, cheerfully take your turn hosting the group or bringing supplies. Your enthusiasm and energy will spark the same in others.
- **Volunteer to serve in an official capacity.** Although you may not want to run for president of the group right away, you can certainly volunteer to serve as field trip coordinator or part of the clean-up crew.
- **Find out what needs to be done, and offer to do it.** The leader would probably welcome a little help now and then. Or you may see a need that others have overlooked and that you are perfectly suited to fill. If that's the case, jump in and take the initiative!
- **Suggest some new crafts, stories, games, field trip locations, or speakers.** What are you or your children interested in learning more about? Most likely, the other parents and children would be interested too. What fascinates your child right now? Although the other children may not be as obsessed with fire trucks as your son, they would surely enjoy a tour of the fire station.
- **If you have served on a certain committee for a long time, try a different one for a change.** Contribute to the group in a way you never have before. You may find some hidden talents you never knew you had!
- **Introduce yourself to one or two of the other parents and try to get to know them.** If you attend a large organization, you may get lost in the shuffle. It's up to you to reach out just a little more. You have shown up for the meeting, so the least you can do is take it a little further and talk to two other parents. In a small homeschool support group, you may still need to make the first move to strike up a conversation with one or two other parents.
- **Invite another parent and her child over one afternoon to bake cookies or to play at the park.** The only way you will make friends is if you spend time with these other adults. If you click with someone else or if your child plays really well with another child, plan an activity together before the next meeting. Then you and your child will feel even more comfortable at meetings and field trips because you will know someone else just a little better.

You have a different perspective and unique skills and talents to bring to the group. All organizations welcome fresh ideas and new approaches, so share your thoughts and ideas. Don't be just a name on the membership roster. Jump in and actively participate. Devour that dessert! That's the best way to make the most of your homeschool support group.



About the Author:

Carren W. Joye is the author of *Homeschooling More Than One Child: A Practical Guide for Families* (ISBN 0-595-34259-0), *Alabama State History Curriculum for grades K-9*, and *A Stay-at-Home*

Mom's Complete Guide to Playgroups

(ISBN 0-595-14684-8). A homeschooling mom of four children, she has founded four successful

playgroups, a homeschool support group, homeschool co-op and homeschool covering. For more information on her books and state history curriculum, visit her web site at

www.carrenjoye.com

www.carrenjoye.com