

Why I Chose a Co-Op

By Jen Weibel, Metzger Community Preschool, February 2019

Growing up, Andy and I both had supportive, involved parents. My mother cooked dinner for us every night, allowed our neighborhood friends to play in our backyard, and was the leader of my Girl Scout troop. My father was a baseball coach and a band booster president. For years, he spent 4th of July week in a fireworks booth, raising money for my brothers' marching band. My parents took us camping and out to our favorite restaurants, they watched TGIF with us on Friday nights, and they knew our interests, our friends, and our grades at school. I have fond memories of childhood, and those memories were of my parents' involvement in our lives.

Adulthood has not been nearly so kind, and while I once thought that I too could be a stay-at-home mom making homemade dinners in my well-kept home after doing Pinterest-worthy arts and crafts with my kid (snort), life just didn't turn out that way and my reality is quite different from how I imagined it would be. I work full time, and there are days when I feel like I am on an ever revolving carousel of work-eat-sleep-repeat. Dinners are delivered in a box and my home is well kept on Wednesdays, every other week, on the day the cleaners come. So how do I reconcile this reality with the one I imagined for my son, the one which my parents provided for me?

When I really think about it, it wasn't the things that my parents did that I remember so fondly. It wasn't the things that mattered to me, or to them. What mattered, and what I want my son to know matters to me, is that they were a part of my world, and I was a part of theirs. When my son tells me what was in the letter box each day and which kids he played with on the slide, I want to be able to picture that in my mind's eye because I've put things into that letter box, I've watched those kids play on that slide. When he says so-and-so's dad was in the rainbow room today, I want to envision so-and-so's dad in that room, playing with those kids because I've done that too, and I know that dad.

Do I look forward to fundraisers and work parties? No, I do not. Do I love being snack parent or chasing down late tuition payments? I don't. But what I do love is my son knowing that his mom and dad are involved in his world, that we know his peers, his teacher, and his goodbye song. I love helping him pick out his letter box items and knowing that while I'm at work, he's on the playground with his dad and his friend's dad playing on a playset that his dad and his friend's dad helped build. We all know that a co-op takes work, it does. And when you're riding on the work-eat-sleep-repeat-go round it can seem like a lot of work. But the payoff is your kid knowing that the people he spends his time with and the places he goes are the people you spend your time with and the places you go too. That matters to me, I think it matters to him, and that's why I chose a co-op.