

Forming a Homeschool Co-op

Organic Beginnings

Co-ops often form organically when children are young, and mothers seek to connect with others for playdates and park outings. These early connections are crucial because new mothers often have more space in their social networks to build meaningful friendships with other moms. As the group of moms begins to form, regular park playdates and outings like hikes help them grow closer. Often, one mom will suggest organizing group learning activities for the kids, and the group will rotate teaching responsibilities. If one mom has a particular talent or interest, she may be encouraged to take the lead, with others offering support.

These early childhood connections are vital in laying the foundation for future collaboration. At this stage, all the moms are present and engaged with the children, offering support and sharing advice. The bonds of trust and friendship formed in these playgroups can later evolve into a strong homeschooling co-op.

Examples of co-op in the early years:

Beginning at the Park

Parks and outdoor locations are great starting points for co-ops. Being in nature provides a soothing environment, and park playgrounds or post-gathering hikes offer fun social opportunities for kids. This type of setup is flexible and allows many children to participate without requiring a single family to host, making it an example of an "open co-op."

Host Home

A smaller, more private co-op may involve a "host mom" and a "teacher mom." The host mom provides her home and snacks, while the teacher mom leads 1–2 hours of learning activities, crafts, and play. If the playgroup meets regularly, teaching responsibilities can be shared among moms, with each mom taking on a different role:

- Host mom
- Dough activities (ages 3–8)
- Storytime
- Islamic learning
- Arts and crafts

Part-Time Working Moms with Their First Child

For part-time working moms, a group of four children works well. The group might consider hiring a full-time teacher to lead learning activities and care for the kids. Each family can take turns hosting for two weeks to a month, with the home ideally having a backyard, an accessible bathroom, and an indoor playroom. While the host mom work from home, the hired teacher provides primary supervision, with the host mom stepping in if needed. This model has been successful in the Berkeley Moms Network for over 15 years.

Full-Time At-Home Moms with Multiple Kids

When all the moms are full-time with multiple children, kids can be grouped by age. Two or more moms can lead separate learning sessions to ensure that each child is engaged at an appropriate level.

Suggested Class Topics for Younger Children:

- Math games
- Form drawing (to develop hand-eye coordination)
- Storytelling (ELA)
- Seerah (Islamic history)
- Arabic language
- Art

Project-Based Learning Co-ops

As kids grow older (around 2nd or 3rd grade), they can sit for longer periods and engage in more structured activities, making it a good time to introduce academic classes that require sustained attention. The group of moms might decide to hold an official weekly co-op learning day with a monthly theme. A rotational teaching schedule is created, with each mom taking a turn teaching a themed class.

The designated teacher leads an in-depth lesson, and parents supplement learning at home through reading, library visits, or informative videos. The learning could culminate in creating a project, writing a report, or presenting a performance related to the theme.

A key challenge at this stage is accommodating the different ages and abilities of the children. When kids are at similar developmental stages, it's easier to focus on academic topics. However, if there is a wide range of abilities, a non-academic, hands-on approach may be preferable. Regardless of the method, the primary goal of a homeschooling co-op is to provide families with social and emotional support on their homeschooling journey.

For children under 9 years old, the focus should be on learning through hands-on activities that engage the senses and promote tactile development. Young children benefit greatly from physical interaction with their learning. Play is essential for children of all ages, and it should remain a key part of the learning process.

No matter how a family chooses to homeschool, children benefit from group learning and activities. Parents, especially moms, also need the support of other moms. A homeschool co-op provides valuable connection and support for families, and a place for children to learn to be together, and work out social group dynamics in natural interactions.

Segway into Official Co-op:

Ask for Guidance

Allah is the best of planners. As you explore homeschooling options, research each one thoroughly, and pray istikhara before making any decisions. Your prayers and duas are your most valuable tools, and they ensure that your decisions are well-informed and aligned with Allah's plan.

Assess Demand

As you observe your child's early friendships and social interactions, you may find a few families interested in forming a homeschooling co-op. However, around ages 4 or 5, some families might opt for public or private school instead. In this case, you may need to invest more time connecting with other homeschooling families.

To gauge interest in an Islamic homeschooling co-op, talk to other parents in your community. You can spread the word through word of mouth, by setting up a table after Jumu'ah prayer, creating surveys, posting in local social media groups, or engaging at community events. The best way is to talk to moms in-person to see if there is a likeminded connection and ease of communication.

Reasons for Homeschooling

Homeschooling is typically a thoughtful decision, not a spontaneous one. Families who choose this path do so with intention, believing that it offers greater benefits than traditional public or private schooling. Some of the common reasons for homeschooling include:

- Preserving a child's fitrah by avoiding negative influences in traditional school environments.
- Incorporating Islam into all aspects of education.
- Keeping children away from learning that contradicts the family's values.
- Accommodating a family lifestyle that includes frequent travel.
- Supporting a child with medical needs that would be overlooked in a traditional school system.

- Ensuring that a child's practice of Islam is supported in their everyday learning environment. Many muslim children are very isolated in a school setting that does not have support for their developing deen.

Positive Attitude

A positive attitude and strong belief in the value of homeschooling are central to its success. Parents need to be confident that homeschooling is the best choice for their children's development, especially since they will face external pressure from relatives, friends, and even strangers who may question or criticize their decision. **There may be many outside forces that question why the kids are deviating from what is considered mainstream school.** It's important to maintain inner strength and conviction in your decision to homeschool, even when faced with challenges.

Leadership

Strong leadership from the parent team is essential for a successful homeschooling experience. Ideally, both parents should be on the same page regarding homeschooling and work together. Even if mom handles the teaching and organizing, dad can provide crucial support, whether by assisting with transportation to and from classes, helping with field trips, or watching siblings at home.

If one parent is committed but the other is skeptical, it can create a divided dynamic, which children will likely sense. In such cases, the skeptical parent could agree to give homeschooling a trial period, without making negative comments during that time. A quietly observing parent is far more beneficial than one who openly opposes the decision.

Conversely, if a dad is enthusiastic about homeschooling but mom feels unsure, it's important for her to be ready and willing to take on the responsibility. Mom needs to feel confident that homeschooling is the best choice for both her and her children. To support her, dad can give her breaks during the week, allowing her time to recharge, whether by taking an online class or participating in a halaqa. This ensures that mom can return to her homeschooling duties refreshed and balanced.

Personal Health

Typically moms will handle homeschooling. It is essential for the homeschooling mom to be in good physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health so that she can truly give the child(ren) the best of homeschooling. This means that mom will need to carve out the time she needs to thrive as a homeschooling mother. Do not skip this step. For some, it will mean staying up at fajr for quiet time before the family is away for reflection, a cup of tea and breakfast. Others will have halaqas and work-out classes during the week away from the children, to keep themselves recharged. And for many many moms, gathering in a co-op with other homeschooling families

so moms can connect can be an easy to recharge and let the kids develop friendships. Whatever the pieces that provide mom sanity and a small break to collect herself, whether it be daily, weekly or monthly, it must be defined and the family (especially the husband) needs to support, if mom needs to be away for an hour or two to take care of herself. The taking care of self means there is a happier, better mom to homeschool the kids and the entire environment will thrive.

Research and Plan:

Understand Legal Requirements

Every state (or country) has different homeschooling laws, so it's essential to research local regulations to ensure compliance. Familiarize yourself with homeschooling laws, co-op regulations, and any requirements in your area. Reach out to your local school district to inquire about legal requirements, including whether you need to register your homeschool students. You can also ask if the district offers a homeschool program or if there are charter schools nearby that support homeschooling.

For example, homeschooling in Texas is much more flexible than in California. Texas does not regulate homeschooling and generally allows for homeschooling under the parents' autonomy, whereas in California, it has more parameters. In California, the intent to homeschool needs to be declared through filing an annual Private School Affidavit (PSA), or registration with a private school or public charter school homeschooling program. Then, attendance needs to be kept (though it can be a simple letter stating that the child is in school X number of days in the school year) and the state technically has the right to audit families to check their homeschooling records to make sure the child is being schooled. So keeping some samples or student work from each year is a good idea.

Here are some websites about the legal requirements of homeschooling depending on which state you are in:

<https://hslida.org/legal>

<https://www.leaders-in-law.com/homeschooling-laws-in-the-usa-a-state-by-state-guide/>

To learn more, join local homeschool communities on Facebook or other platforms. Engaging with homeschooling veterans in these groups can help guide you through the local regulations.

Deciding to Homeschool Through a Charter School or PSA (Private School Affidavit)

In California—particularly in the San Francisco Bay Area—many families choose to homeschool through public charter schools. These schools receive government funding and offer support services such as:

- Assigned educational advisors or teachers
- Attendance tracking and school record keeping
- Sample work submissions
- State-mandated standardized testing

Families enrolled in charter homeschool programs also receive an annual stipend (educational funds) that can be used to pay for approved materials, classes, or tutors. These programs are a popular choice because they combine flexibility with structured oversight.

Private School Affidavit

Alternatively, some families choose to homeschool independently by filing a **Private School Affidavit (PSA)**. This option allows for complete autonomy in curriculum and scheduling but does not include government funding or formal support from the state.

This option offers the most flexibility for homeschooling in California. When a student is in 9th grade, they are normally permitted to take up to 8 community college units with a local college as part of their studies, with the community college fees per class waived. **However, with a PSA, a parent would register as a private school and could sign off for the student to take a full course load of college classes.**

Community College classes while in High School

Once a child is ready for community college level classes, many families find it beneficial to have their child begin taking one or two courses at the local community college, so that they can begin to earn college credit that may transfer towards university graduation requirements. Typically these are general education courses that are needed to receive the diploma. Universities typically want entering students to take the classes in the student's major at the university.

Community college readiness usually means the child is at least 14 years old and in 9th grade, and that they are mature enough in their academic work to have complete autonomy in their studies without a parent checking in to make sure homework is completed and turned in on time, and the student is on top of studying for exams and such. A key element of readiness is that the student is interested in trying out a community college class and knows the grade will be permanently in their academic record.

Universities will typically look at the community college grades and take that into account in admission decisions, scholarship eligibility and honors or program placement. A strong grade can help the university application and a weak grade can raise questions.

Students need to treat the community college class seriously because it becomes part of your permanent academic record

This takes a bit of initiative on the student's part and can be a little intimidating. Parents can support this process by letting their child test the waters at community college through taking an academically lighter course, or an elective course, like graphic design, or a foreign language that the student has some experience with in high school.

After a semester at community college, when the student gets comfortable with the online platforms for communicating with the professor, attending office hours to ask questions or get extra help, then the student can begin with more academic classes in science, math and English.

Homeschool through the local school district

Oftentimes, local public schools will have a homeschooling branch. The parent teacher has access to the school's standard textbooks for use to teach the classes at home. A teacher is assigned to meet with the student on a regular basis and administer assessments as scheduled by the school district. In this set up, the student may have access to school fieldtrips, and sometimes in the middle school and high school stages, the option to take a few classes at the public school, with the option of homeschooling the rest.

Building a Structured Homeschool Co-op

Once you've formed a strong, committed group of families whose children get along well, you can build a more structured homeschool co-op. This structure can begin with as few as three to four families.

Define Your Mission

Clarifying your mission for the co-op is key to making it successful. This involves a self-evaluation by all participants to determine what they want out of the co-op. If the group's goals align, that becomes the foundation for launching the co-op.

Taking time to develop a clear mission statement is crucial. It helps everyone involved understand the purpose of coming together to homeschool. For some families, the main focus is easing the burden on moms by hiring instructors for core subjects like ELA, Math, Science, History, and Islamic Studies. For others, core subjects may be less important, and the main goal is to offer socialization opportunities for the kids through activities like PE, art, or hands-on classes such as woodworking. Some families might come together to divide the responsibility of teaching all subjects so that each mom only needs to teach one subject, ensuring their child receives a full course of study, with shared load.

Having a focused mission that resonates with every family will help keep the group on track. It's also important to re-evaluate and update the mission statement annually to reflect any changes in the co-op's goals.

Bay Area Co-op: An Example of a Larger, Structured Homeschool Co-op

Here's an example from a successful co-op in the SF Bay Area, with 16 families and 28 children in its first year, and 30 families and 60+ kids in the second year.

Prior to a Co-op with Organized Classes

The families in the Bay Area Co-op had known each other for up to eight years through park playdates, hiking outings, field trips, and consistent mom-to-mom support. While they had shared many informal gatherings, they had not yet organized formal academic classes together.

Most families in the Bay Area Co-op were enrolled in public charter school homeschooling programs, while a few had filed a Private School Affidavit (PSA). All of the moms had previously homeschooled independently, juggling multiple children, individualized curriculums, tutors, and a mix of online and in-person classes.

This decentralized model required frequent driving and placed children in classes with unfamiliar peers, limiting opportunities for consistent friendships in classes. Despite being busy, both moms and kids often felt isolated.

A Successful Co-op Needs A Clear, Shared Purpose

Bay Area Co-op decided to organize classes for their co-op with the following goals:

- Offer classes not easily taught at home (public speaking, advanced science labs)
- Create a Muslim learning environment that supports shared Islamic values
- Provide high quality classes for multiple children all in one location
- Maximize the use of charter school funds by working with approved vendors
- A sense of consistency and community for both students and parents

Establishing a Focus

To coordinate effectively, the group defined a core goal for the co-op. Science labs—especially at the middle school level—became the anchor. These hands-on lessons were challenging for families to manage individually, so the group collectively hired a science teacher.

Structure of the Science Offering:

- The teacher was already a vendor with one of the charter schools

- Bay Area Co-op requested the teacher become a qualified vendor for other charter schools to meet student needs.
- There was a required minimum of 8 students and a maximum of 12 students.
- As enrollment increased, the cost per student decreased—incentivising a larger class if possible, to keep costs down.

Once this core class was scheduled, Bay Area Co-op coordinated additional classes for younger siblings to fill out the rest of the co-op day.

Focus Classes in Place for all Students

Continuing on the science theme, several skilled moms from the co-op volunteered to teach elementary-level science classes simultaneously:

- One mom with a strong science background taught the lower elementary group (10 children).
- For the upper elementary group, three moms each led a 5-week science session, covering different science topics.
- These science classes served as the core draw for attendance.

Benefits of a Structured Co-op

Children enjoyed learning alongside friends in a social environment, helping meet emotional and social needs often unmet in solo homeschooling. The co-op offered a mix of classes:

Enrichment Classes:

- Public speaking
- Bricks 4 Kidz (LEGO-based learning)
- Ceramics
- Storytelling
- Islamic studies
- Quranic tafseer

Academic Classes:

- Chemistry (middle school level)
- Marine biology
- Human body systems
- Earth science (upper elementary)
- English Language Arts (ELA)
- Pre-Algebra

Steps to Setting up the Co-op Day:

Location Logistics

A central location was sought in the community and after several inquiries at masjids and Islamic organizations, a space was found that had several classrooms, and a commercial kitchen which had a hood for science experiments.

One designated person handled the logistics, which included:

- Managing rental contracts
- Collecting and filing signed **liability waivers** from all participating families, releasing both hosts and organizers from legal responsibility

The site had **four** classrooms and lunch areas available. Bay Area Co-op worked out a location compensation which was acceptable to the location host. Families were given three options to contribute toward use of the facility: (Which was an Islamic Relief Organization, specializing in local aid)

1. Pay \$400 per family per year
2. Volunteer for 30 hours
3. Lead a charitable project for the Islamic Relief Organization as pay-in-kind

City Codes that May Apply to Location

Building Occupancy Requirements for Homeschool Co-ops

The building used for a homeschool co-op must fall under one of the following California Building Code occupancy classifications:

Group A – Assembly Occupancy

Used for civic, social, or religious functions, including:

- Places of worship
- Recreational facilities
- Theaters
- Amusement venues
- Sports arenas
- Concert halls

Group E – Educational Occupancy

Used for educational purposes through 12th grade, including:

- Schools
- Daycares

Co-op Operations and Permitting Guidelines

When No Special Permit Is Needed:

- If the co-op has fewer than 50 students and adults combined.
- If classes are held only 2 days per week or less.
- If the building is already classified as Group A or E occupancy.

In these cases, the city typically considers the activity similar to "tutoring," and no special use permit is required.

Fire Code Considerations

- Once more than 50 people (students and adults) are present, fire safety requirements may apply.
- The space must have two or more exits to comply with fire code.
- Buildings already classified as Group A or E are generally designed to meet these requirements for group gatherings.

When a Use Permit May Be Required

- If the co-op uses the space more than 2 days per week.
- Even if the building is a Group A space, increased frequency may shift the use to an educational occupancy, triggering the need for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP).

To determine whether a permit is needed:

- Contact the City Planning Office.
- Staff will review the zoning district of the location and provide guidance on applicable regulations and permit requirements.

Setting the Calendar

As a Muslim homeschool co-op, the group adopted a 15-week semester schedule, with a planned break for Ramadan and Eid:

- 3 weeks off for Ramadan
- 1 week off for Eid

This schedule allowed homeschooling families to make the most of their Ramadan with the kids.

Site Supervision

Having too many moms on-site could be disruptive to the students' focus. To maintain order and safety, an On-Site Supervision Team was created to set up the site supervision schedule and requirements.

On Site Volunteer requirement:

- For every 1 hour a student spent in class per week, the family owed 2 hours of parent on-site volunteering per semester
- A maximum cap of 26 hours per family was set to avoid overburdening families with multiple children

If a parent couldn't fulfill their assigned role, they were responsible for finding a substitute within the co-op.

Handling Finances

To remain compliant as a **homeschool co-op (not a private school or microschool)**:

- **No money was collected to pay instructors directly**
- Families only pooled funds to cover **shared expenses like classroom rental fees**
- All teaching payments to vendors were handled **individually** by families, typically using charter school funds, or paid to the teacher out-of-pocket.

Welcoming New Families into the Co-op:

Screening and Onboarding Process

To maintain a cohesive and functional environment, Bay Area Co-op established a clear set of requirements for prospective families:

- Must be nominated by a current co-op member
- Must share similar religious values
- Must already be homeschooling
- Mom must commit to both on-site supervision and behind-the-scenes organizational responsibilities

To support this onboarding process:

- A video presentation was created to explain the co-op's mission, expectations, and volunteer structure.
- Prospective families were invited to park playdates, where current members could meet them informally and share feedback or concerns.

This nomination-based system helped ensure alignment in values and goals, but even with this process, challenges occasionally arose:

- Some moms were enthusiastic and aligned, but their children required additional attention in the classroom for disruptive behavior.
- Others had cooperative children, but the parents couldn't meet volunteer commitments.
- Families transitioning from public school often struggled to adjust, and their children sometimes viewed co-op classes as forced or unimportant, leading to inattentiveness or disruption.

Trial Participation for New Families Instead of Joining Co-op Directly

To address these issues, the co-op introduced a trial period:

- New families could join just one class in the co-op, (when there was a need to add students.)
- This allowed both the family and the co-op to evaluate fit before fully integrating them.
- This strategy also helped fill under-enrolled vendor classes without needing to cancel classes due to lower enrollment and having gaps that needed to be filled in the schedule.

Factors Considered Before Admitting New Families

- Working or full-time moms often had limited time for volunteering or planning.
- Families involved in multiple co-ops sometimes prioritized other groups, impacting reliability.
- Newly transitioned homeschoolers, especially those just leaving public school, were not committed to homeschooling and after signing up for classes with Bay Area Co-op, were likely to return to traditional school, leading to inconsistency and late drops in enrollment.
- Experienced homeschoolers tended to adjust more smoothly and respected the co-op structure.

Common Issues with Recently Transitioned Students

Children recently withdrawn from public school frequently:

- Misused devices during class for non-academic purposes
- Viewed co-op as "babysitting" instead of a valuable learning opportunity

Adapting for Different Age Groups:

Younger Elementary Students

- Best served by non-academic, exploratory classes
- Benefit from exposure to big-picture topics rather than specific skill-building
- Vary widely in reading, writing, and math levels, making academic grouping challenging
- Quran memorization with tajweed in a small group setting

Upper Elementary & Middle School Students

- Ready for more structured classes like:
 - Speech & debate
 - Digital design
 - Calligraphy
 - Advanced art or science
 - Academic rigor in subjects like ELA, or History—within a Muslim peer group
 - Quran Tafseer
- These subjects help develop critical thinking and fine motor skills

Supplementing Learning with Online Resources

Online homeschooling classes are a useful supplement, especially for older children.

When to Use Online Resources:

- Ideal for 4th grade and up, when children have the independence and focus to engage online
- Younger children (K–3) need in-person instruction or direct adult involvement during online lessons to stay engaged

What Online Options Offer:

- Academic subjects: math, ELA, science, history, math
- Creative and skill-based electives: drumming, knitting, doll-making
- Outschool is a recommended platform for a wide variety of classes (parents need to be nearby during classes to screen what is being taught is appropriate for their family's values.)
- Joining local homeschooling groups or listservs helps for discovering regional offerings and tutors

Interviewing and Hiring Teachers

Initial Outreach: To streamline the hiring process, the co-op began by distributing questionnaires to a wide pool of potential teachers. This allowed the team to screen candidates efficiently.

Follow-Up Interviews: Responses were followed up with phone calls and Zoom interviews, conducted by a team of 3–5 moms. These group interviews allowed the team to evaluate candidates based on teaching style, subject knowledge, and alignment with the co-op's values.

Community Input for Special Classes: If a teacher offered

- A unique topic
- A specialized teaching method, or
- Charged higher-than-usual fees

...then a co-op-wide parent meeting was held. These meetings allowed all parents to ask questions and build buy-in before launching a new class. This was especially important for Bay Area Co-op to meet minimum enrollment requirements, and ensure that if a class was scheduled, it would not need to be cancelled due to low enrollment, and create a gap in the schedule.

These meetings improved parent confidence and boosted enrollment, especially for classes with higher costs. For lower-cost, general interest classes (e.g. art), the co-op usually proceeded to place them on the schedule without extra consultation.

Working with Vendors

Two Business Models Observed:

1. Owner-led: The business owner was the primary teacher (sometimes with an assistant).
 - Usually better quality: Experienced educators, strong rapport with students.
2. Staff-led: Businesses sent trained college students or recent grads.
 - Consistency was a concern: The co-op requested the same teacher for the entire semester, but often due to students having different schedules, the teachers were changed a couple of times through the 15 weeks of classes.

Clear Expectations on Values:

Bay Area Co-op clarified upfront with potential vendors that the teacher in the classroom needed to align with the co-op's religious and moral values. This was not a problem with vendor interviews in the owner-led model, however when the business model was staff-led, and the interview was not with the instructor who would be coming to teach the classes—it was an important point to note. Most vendors were respectful and supportive—some were already

working with religious schools. Only one vendor declined to continue working with Bay Area Co-op due to discrimination concerns.

Late Policy and Standards

To encourage punctuality:

- Paid vendors were fined for late arrival.
- Volunteer moms were given a 2-minute grace period and asked to self-report tardiness. Peer reporting was discouraged to maintain trust and accountability. However, if tardiness was an issue, a co-op admin would have to have a conversation to discuss the problem caused by repeated late teacher arrival to class.

Co-op Participation

Every family was required to participate both on-site and off-site.

On-site participation consisted of either site supervision role, or teacher role.

Site supervision role:

- Setting up the sign-in table, name tags, lunch crates, class signs, and re-arranging tables if needed.
- The disadvantage to this role was that since sign up was by lottery, one couldn't always get the preferred shift time and the shifts were inconsistent from week to week.

Teacher role:

- Teach a class of your preference
- Required a lot of prep-work
- The advantage was a set schedule each week, and bonding with the kids in your class.

Off-site role involved working with one of the organizational teams:

- All members had to participate in at least one off-site team.
- The participation on teams would change every 2 years.
- In the long run the hope was that everyone in the co-op would become familiar with how the co-op works and could take on any of the off-site roles.

Sustainability

The Bay Area Co-op leadership recognized that after one or two years, key volunteer administrators often experienced burnout. To prevent the collapse of the co-op due to responsibilities resting only on a few members, the team gave careful thought to how the work or the co-op could be distributed.

Their goal was to create a system where every member becomes a leader or leader-in-training. While in smaller co-ops, one mom might be able to manage the weekly schedule alone, larger and more structured co-ops require a sustainable system to ensure long-term stability and shared responsibility.

Bay Area Co-op Leadership Structure

Main Organizational Teams:

1. Education Programs Team
 - Class scheduling, vendor coordination, academic calendar, field trips
2. On-site Engagement Team
 - Site supervision schedules, supplies, classroom logistics
3. Co-op Connection & Wellness Team
 - Social events, member support, student behavior follow-ups
4. Strategy & Planning Team
 - Long-term planning, admissions, budgeting, board coordination, incorporate new ideas for co-op growth

Each team had a Lead and a Co-lead, with an experienced Advisor (someone who had worked this role most recently). A system of rotating leadership cycles over a 2 year period was put in place for knowledge transfer and to prevent burnout.

In the first 6 months, the advisor actively guides the leads, and oversees the leads' work to make sure the knowledge needed to complete the duties is continuously passed on.

Then after 6 months, the Lead and co-lead will be guiding the team, with any questions directed to the advisor.

In the last 6 months, the Lead will become the Advisor, the Co-lead becomes the Lead, and one of the team members will step into the co-lead role.

Board of Operations

- Co-leads from each of the first three teams
- Two Board Administrators

The two Board Administrators served as the first point of contact for the Co-op. Their role was to respond to all inquiries, emails and deal with any last minute issues on the day of classes, as well as to coordinate between Teams and make sure there is follow through on any questions.

Responsibilities:

- Resolve cross-team issues
- Handle major concerns (student behavior, space logistics, family support)
- Communication across teams via a dedicated Telegram channel
- Organize weekly meetings for the Board of Operations to discuss co-op issues. Admin meets weekly and other Teams join in the beginning of the semester for a few weeks and as needed later in the semester.
- Organized the Annual Planning Meeting in February for the following School Year.

School Year Planning Team

- Planned the academic calendar
- Worked from a charter school-approved vendor list and encouraged new teachers to apply for vendor approval when needed.
- Created a strategic class schedule, alternating vendors to have two class sessions at the co-op, with one session for older kids followed by a second session for younger kids (or vice versa) in order to make the vendor's time more worthwhile.
- Organized a Mandatory Registration Meeting each semester, prior to opening the registration for classes, to let parents preview the schedule, answer any questions, to help ensure a smooth registration process.
- Set up a Teacher Sub List with one or two subs for each class, so when a teacher needed to be absent, there was a procedure.

On-Site Supervision Team

Determined the on-site supervision requirements needed for the semester and checked to see if the below system would work, or tweaked it a bit if needed:

- 1 class hour/week = 1 volunteer hour/semester
- Cap of ~26 hours per semester to avoid overburdening families with multiple kids enrolled full time.

Volunteer Sign-Up Process

- Once a semester-long spreadsheet with open slots was created, a lottery system was used to assign shift pick order. Families chose 3 shifts at a time and rotated to allow everyone a fair chance to select shifts.
- Buyout Option: Parents could pay for someone else to cover their shift.
- Sub Pool: For each month, two moms were assigned to be in a sub pool for on-site duties. If the person initially assigned the shift couldn't come for any reason, they would reach out to the two moms in the sub pool first to cover their absence.

Training for Site Supervision

- For the **first three weeks**, site supervision was handled by the core Board of Operations Team (8 moms).
- Afterward, all the other moms either:
 - Completed hands-on training, or
 - Shadowed a full shift before being assigned.

Supervision Setup:

- One site supervisor oversaw classroom halls during class hours.
- Multiple supervisors were needed during recess if kids were spread across areas (e.g., lunch hall, outdoor space, classrooms).
- In the Bay Area Co-op case, the co-op met in a public masjid, increasing the need for vigilant supervision during recess and lunch times due to open access points.

Wellness and Social Support

The Co-op Connection & Wellness Team managed:

- Social events: park playdates, Ramadan iftar, Eid party, End-of-year parent/teacher luncheon
- Student behavior: conflicts, disruptive behavior, peer issues
- Family support: illness, life events

Since many events were already centered on volunteer service at the Islamic Relief Organization, additional social gatherings were intentionally limited to avoid burnout.

Annual Planning Meeting

This mandatory meeting requires significant preparation from the Board of Operations Team. The team creates a slide presentation outlining the agenda and prepares a Google Form to collect real-time feedback during the meeting. This input is essential for setting the co-op's direction for the upcoming year.

The meeting includes the following elements:

- A look back at the previous year's accomplishments, successes, and areas for growth
- A review and revision of the co-op's Mission Statement, if needed
- An assessment of whether members' expectations were met
- An in-person opportunity for each member to share feedback with the group
- A general feedback session to understand family experiences and needs
- A discussion of future directions for classes, activities, and interests
- A review of the organizational structure, including role transitions and time for leads to prepare for hand-offs
- An open floor to address any unresolved or outstanding items

