

Welcome to Empowering
Homeschool Conversations,
your authority in
navigating the world of
homeschooling diverse learners.

Featuring Peggy Ployer from
Sped Homeschool,
Annie Yorty from AnnieYorty.com,
Leilani Melendez from Living with Eve,
Stephanie Buckwalter from ELARP Learning,
and Dawn Jackson from Dawn
Jackson Educational
Consulting and Tutoring.

With over seventy-five years
of combined homeschooling expertise,
experiences and perspectives,
this group is eager to
share their wealth of
wisdom to empower your
homeschooling journey.

So grab your favorite mug,
settle in and get ready for
insightful discussions,

valuable insights and practical tips.

Give your homeschool the
power boost it needs to
successfully educate the
unique learners in your home.

Hi.

Hi, everyone.

I want to welcome everyone
today to Empowering
Homeschool Conversations.

I'm Dawn Jackson, one of the co-hosts,
and I'm just so happy to be here today.

I just want to ask this question.

If you're looking for a safe
community for your diverse learner,
and you're you want to know

if a co-op is a good fit

for you today this is the
podcast for you so if you

have you ever felt once

bitten twice shy from the

trauma of rejection from a

past experience in a co-op

this is a podcast for you

today because today we have molly

Where are you?

Kitzmiller, Pamela Kafer.

Is it Kafer or Kaffer?

Kafer.

And Hannah Larson here from

the Homeschool Community

Builders team to share some

thoughts about how to find

the right community for your family.

And I know personally that I

have talked to many

homeschool families that I

coach with children with

special needs families.

that we that question always

comes up because we want to

get that piece into their

learning that community

piece and they struggle

with it there's a lot of

questions about how do they

perceive what should they
look for and today we are
going to share some of
those um actually your your
expertise on that so in
that field so all right um
let's see we're gonna

Get along here.

And I just wanted to ask you, ladies,
how did you start this?

I'm curious myself.

How did you get into this
part of your really mission
that God has put you put in your hearts?

How did you start this?

Where did this come from?

Well, I can try to speak for all of us.

We have been, each of us,
homeschooling for quite a while.

And Pam and I specifically
have had experience kind of
leading different kinds of groups.

We led a mom support group.

We have led our co-op.

And then Hannah is a

director of our co-op.

And so we...

had this sense that there

just wasn't a lot of

support for homeschool

leaders and that they're

really in need for more

cooperative efforts because

homeschooling on your own

is very difficult and even

more so with a special needs learner,

I would think.

So our passion is to try to

equip homeschool leaders to start co-ops

give things that they need

to know before they go and start a co-op,

help them along the way.

And so we kind of started

this podcast together

knowing that we have different gifts,

the three of us,

and that in order to guide other people,
You have to really, as a leader,
pull in other people around
you because you can't do it on your own.

And that's kind of the
message of a homeschool co-op.

Let's not do this
homeschooling thing on our own.

We want to do it in community.

How can we do that well?

And we feel like...

Community makes our
experience home schooling
so much more effective, more joyful,
more doable.

And so we try to encourage
people to establish communities that,
we're going to be talking
about this later,
but that would welcome
people that learn differently.

That community piece is so important.

If you want to last as a homeschooler,

you have to have support.

So anyway,

we can talk more about what that

looks like specifically

with diverse learners,

but that's where we're coming from.

That's a really great point.

Can someone explain what is a co-op?

For those maybe people who are, you know,

they've heard the term co-op,

but they don't exactly know.

And I know it's different.

Different co-ops can be run differently.

But how would you say that

are the basics of a co-op

and what someone can expect from that?

Mm-hmm.

You have to have people.

You have to have a group of

people that come together

for a common goal and purpose.

And that can look any number of ways.

It can be academic.

It can be social.

It can be

electives or fun things, fun gatherings.

I mean,

there's nature group co-ops and

academic co-ops.

It can be parent led.

It can be drop off.

I mean,

there's any number of ways that can look,

but ultimately it's a group

of people that are coming

together for a common purpose and goal.

And in this instance,

it's to homeschool our kids.

Okay.

And to build a support network, you know,

within that group.

Mm-hmm.

Yeah, that's good.

Okay,

so we're going to continue on here

and I wanted to ask you,

if a family or a person is
looking for a co-op that
supports diverse learners,
what do they need to ask?
What do they need to look
for and what are the
questions they need to ask?
What are some good questions
to ask along the way?
I think one of the things
that we found is that one
of the very first things
and something that we
talked to a lot of the new
leaders who are building
their homeschool co-ops is
to figure out what is their
mission and vision for their co-op.
And so if you have a diverse learner,
and it can be a scary thing
to come into a co-op not
knowing if these people are
going to support you or if

they're going to be on the
same mindset as you when it
comes to how and the way that you learn.

So starting off with
figuring out what is your
mission for your family and your vision,
and then making sure that
it aligns with the vision
and the mission of the
leadership that is at the
co-op that you're going to.

I think that's a really good
place to start.

And usually, like for us,
one of the things that we
do is we have...

people come in and we do an interview.

And the whole purpose of the
interview is to make sure
that we are in alignment
with those things.

So it's really good to,
that's a good place to start right there.

Yeah, I like that.

One of the things that we- Yeah,

I think that's-

Really important, Pam,

because if you have a

learner that you know needs

a lot of freedom to move, maybe,

or you know that your child

maybe doesn't have the reading skills,

you're not going to want to

join a co-op where the goal is to

maximize the academic output

of this child and they have

to sit still and focus, you know,

in a kind of strict environment,

that's not going to be a great match.

And it's okay that somebody

runs their co-op that way.

It's just good to know up front,

excuse me,

if your child is going to fit or not,

because you don't want to

try to fit them into a

place that is the wrong
environment and vice versa.

The co-op doesn't want to
invite students in if they
don't have the mission to serve them.

So...

Or the heart, right?

Or the heart.

Or the knowledge.

Or the resources.

The resources.

Yeah, that's a good point.

Sometimes the heart is in the right place,
but there lacks the
resources or the know-how
to meet the needs of some
diverse learners.

And that's not to say that
there can't be equipping along the way.

I mean, that's what you do, Dawn, right?

You equip teachers and parents.

Right.

But you want to make sure

that you're doing it well

for these students,

not just fitting them in

where it's going to be a

struggle the whole time.

Right.

I think one of the ways that

a parent can do this and

leaders of co-ops can do this better, too,

is by asking a lot of

questions right up front.

For a parent,

you might want to ask about

that educational philosophy first.

or their behavioral policy.

Because oftentimes,

diverse learners need to be

regulated in different ways

than somebody who's not a

diverse learner.

And so if that behavior

policy and if it does not fit,

then that's something that

you need to discuss upfront.

So

On both sides,

asking lots and lots of questions.

One of the things that we

promote within what we do

is parent-led co-ops.

And so it's a community of

people who are all families,

which can be a good and a

bad at the same time.

It can be hard.

It can be hard because

everybody has their own

opinions of how they want

to homeschool and

how they want to run their

classes and very strong opinions.

That's why we are homeschoolers, right?

It's true.

It kind of goes hand in hand a little bit.

But parents need to know how

long are the classes?

How long is the day?

Do they have breaks?

What is acceptable?

What is appropriate for the
type of co-op that they have?

So

Going in and as far as a
co-op leader would ask questions too,
like what are the needs of your student?

Are they able to sit quietly and observe?

Do they need to move?

Do they need frequent breaks?

What do we do if somebody
becomes dysregulated?

Things like that.

So start by asking about that.

those questions.

I think it's really

important too for a parent

who is wanting to take a

diverse learner to a community,

to a co-op,

that they have prepared ahead of time

that they can know their own student,
know what their needs are,
know what their
shortcomings or their weaknesses are,
know where their strengths are,
and be prepared to be very
engaged with their own
student to help them succeed.

Because coming to a co-op,
most of us are moms that do
not have training
necessarily in working with kids.
student with an IEP or the
different things.

And so we can't expect other
parents necessarily to know
the best way to interact with our child.

And so that is on the parent, I think,
to make sure that they are willing to
speak up to offer
suggestions to be in class,
maybe with their student, whatever it is,
but they have to have this

willingness to be able to
work with the co-op and not
take offense if somebody
doesn't understand their child,
but educate people.

And then we all become
better for that because if
you've never been exposed
to a student that doesn't just sit and
quietly and listen and do their work.

If that's your expectation
of all the students,
then you as a co-leader or
a parent in that co-op are
going to be sorely
disappointed when you're
faced with students that
need to move or need to
process verbally or all the
things that can't stay regulated.

You're just going to be frustrated.

But if a parent is willing
to help educate that teacher

then there's benefit there for everybody.

Well,

there's a level of partnership that's
needed in any co-op with any student,
but maybe more so with a diverse learner.

Because if a mentor or a
teacher doesn't know the
triggers that then leads to
someone being dysregulated,

That's a simple conversation, right?

To equip them.

And it's the kind thing to
do is to have that clear
communication and support.

I mean,

if they want their student to succeed,
then they are going to have
to clearly communicate so
that the teacher or mentor
can do their best, right?

And then there needs to be
lots of grace because, you know,
we're all learning, right?

about all of the,
the variety of students in
our class and how they work
best and what connects with them.
And so as Pam says, clear is kind,
you know,
so clear open communication is important.
Can I give you an example?
So I have two adopted
children and with that
traumatic you know beginning
to life has come some
difficulties with um
regulation my daughter has
severe dyslexia you know
we're dealing with a lot of
things and as a parent
I would go, if I were joining a new co-op,
knowing what my daughter's
weaknesses are and the
scaffolding that she has to have,
I would go and ask,
are you willing to allow her to

maybe not do every
assignment because it's
beyond her ability.

Are you willing to let us use a text to,
or voice to text things for her to,
you know, these kinds of things?

Are you willing to allow me
to be in class with her
so that I can um maybe take
notes because she can't do
it or you know just those
things if you already know
as a parent some of the
things that you have to do
to help your student go in
with that information and
ask the co-op are you
willing to make these
modifications because she's
not a typical learner and so
But I believe it's good for
her to be with her peers
and for her peers to see

that not everybody thinks

the same way or learns the

same way as they do.

It's good for them too.

Can I add too, if a parent has,

for example,

they're working with a

behavioral coach in the home,

I would recommend that

anything that's in place

for that child would be

shared with the teacher as

well because those kiddos

are very keyed into what

the plan is and what the rules are.

But if they go into a

setting where they're not

implemented and not shared

in that setting,

they'll know that they can

have a little bit more wiggle room.

Um, I,

I coach a family online and mom

shares with me often when
the behavioral plans updated,
because sometimes I've seen
certain behaviors, even in a zoom call.
And, you know,
I've had to ask her about them.
She goes, Oh yeah,
we just implemented new behaviors.
And now I know that,
When I'm working with him online,
I can say, you know, something maybe, hey,
I think so-and-so has
earned some great points
today because it's just
gonna be a motivator, number one.
You can even have in your
co-op a checkoff sheet.
So the teacher just signs
off at the end of the day.
You don't even have to say
anything or have that conversation.
But the student can have his
or her own checkoff sheet.

And you just said, yep, full points,
happy face, however you want to use it.

But it's again,
it's another way to
communicate how that person's doing.

And did they meet their
goals for that day?

It's just a side thing.

So do you have,
does your co-op in
particular have a
questionnaire for parents
or a way for parents to
kind of log in or go online
and put in notes for the
child when they sign up?

we do we do a parent
questionnaire and a child
questionnaire um at the
beginning class kind of
saying what are your
child's strengths what are
their weaknesses do I need

to know any maybe even
allergies or um you know what
yeah all those things kind
of what is what is your
goal for your child in this
class so that the mentors
and the parents have that
baseline begin with I think
that's really important to
establish we don't have a
week by week um yeah format
of that but you it's really
important to get that
information out there up
front and I would say as a mentor
if a parent came to me with
a behavioral plan,
that is great because now I
know exactly what to do
with this child and I don't
have to sort of make it up
and figure it out.
Right, it's a great tool.

And also I would just say,

I mean,

part of something I would do in my

coaching is help a parent create that.

Even if you don't have an outside source,

there is a way to create

that and present that to a

co-op to say this is these

are his goals or her goals

that we're working on.

And we're looking for five

stars today or we're looking for,

you know, happy face or whatever.

And it's pretty powerful.

It's pretty significant to just, I mean,

if that's where the child

is in their learning and

that's the thing that they're used to,

why not continue that, right?

Yeah.

Dawn, I feel like that's a great,

you're such a great

connector for homeschool

co-ops and for the parents

because oftentimes parents

have been hurt.

Their kids have been

rejected in situations

because they've put, you know,

and the blame goes to both

sides of it because

oftentimes parents just

want to put their kids in

and they just want to see how it goes.

And that doesn't go well

because there wasn't a plan.

And then they're hurt and

they're offended and they

don't want to try again

because they're afraid

their kid is going to be rejected again.

And oftentimes it means that

they were rejected because

they're not parenting their kid properly.

Quote unquote, because that is, you know,

whatever the the person's

opinion is that they're not
doing it right,
because what worked for their family,
they should do that for your kid,
you know.

So I think that you play a
really crucial role.
part in connecting
homeschoolers with co-ops
because you can create that plan.

You can help them,
the parent to understand, hey,
we need your participation in this.

We need your feedback.

You know best.

You need to tell us.

You can then translate it to
the co-op and help the
co-op to hear our
strategies that you can use as a co-op.

But the one thing I want to
mention is that

The parents also need to

know they're coming into a
place with broken people
who have opinions,
who don't do things right.
And to expect that you will get hurt.
Anybody that comes to a
co-op at some point is
going to get their feelings hurt.
It's going to happen.
But that is what we're a
faith based organization.
organization that we what
we're talking about is
teaching people how to do
it christ's principles and
that means suffering
through when somebody makes
a mistake right nobody's
intentionally trying to
hurt you and your family
nobody's and you know what
I'm saying goes back and forth
Right.

Yeah, it's both ways.

Yeah.

And that's what community is about.

That's why God wants us to be together,

because he gives us these

principles to live by.

You can't do it on your own.

You can't grow in your faith on your own.

You need people to sharpen your iron.

You need one another to do it.

And so when you come into it

with that mindset,

knowing that we're all

going to step on each other's toes,

we're not going to do it well,

we're going to mess up.

And then, like Hannah said,

we need to offer grace to ourselves,

to one another,

and be willing to enter

into that messy space and

work through this together.

So it's got to come from both sides.

That's good.

I think parents of diverse
learners oftentimes might
look at a co-op as a way of escape.
I'm going to take my kid and
it's going to give me a
break from having to deal
with them all the time because it's hard.

And I just want to say
there's nothing wrong with
feeling like you need a
break because I have
definitely been there,
but not to expect that,
to expect that you're going
to have people support you,
but parents are still have
to be the ones that are
involved in guiding what's
happening with their child.

And like you said, Pam,
to not take offense if people don't,
behave the way that you think they should,

or it's not a perfect
solution because frankly,
it's a challenge and it's
going to continue to be a challenge.

But I think in community,
the wins that you see and
the wins that you get,
they may be hard fought,
But they are there.

And I have seen it myself.

Like I said, I have two students,
particularly of my own that
of my own kids that are
diverse learners that have
had regulation challenges,
learning challenges.

And.

The opportunities for growth
are so much more than if I
just kept them home in this
controlled environment and
I can set everything up.

So it's been growth for me, for my kids,

and for the people that are
around them that love them
because they do get loved
by other people.

And then that helps me just relax and say,
my kids are going to be okay.

You know, it's such a journey,
but to not walk that alone,
I think is so important.

And I think parents,
if they could understand
that when you go into a co-op situation,
what I would want to share
with them is not to have
these high expectations
that your child's going to
sit there and look like
every other child.

They're going to behave like
every other child,
but to understand the value of
for them just to be in
community for them to be

exposed to other children

doing the expected behavior

enjoying learning all that

will trickle over into

their their heart and their

soul and their experiences

it but if you can take away

your expected well I want

this take that away

And just really go in with an openness,

an openness that, you know what?

I got to meet some really cool moms here.

My little guy has a new friend today.

And maybe it was a social thing.

Maybe they didn't sit and write, you know,

for so long.

I'll give you a quick story.

I worked with a little guy in third grade.

pretty high up on the spectrum,

very bright,

but could not sit in a group setting.

If he sat with me for

fifteen minutes out of

thirty or ten or five,

I was happy as could be.

And then if he wanted to go

over to another part of the

room and just do what he

wanted to do quietly, not, you know,

making any noise or distracting everyone.

He was good.

He was good.

I was happy.

I got five minutes.

I got ten minutes with him

on task doing what everyone

else was doing.

That I was happy as could be.

And sometimes we have such

high expectations that that

is not like we feel like we

can't do it because my

child can't sit there like that.

But it's OK if they need a break.

It's OK if they want to go

over and sit in a corner

and play with some blocks

or do something different.

I think it's OK.

I'm not,

I'm not distracted by that though.

You may have a teacher that would be like,

Oh no, no, no.

That's going to distract all the kids.

All the kids are going to be curious,

but you can teach your group to be okay.

And to stay focused.

I've done that too,

where I was just working, you know,

with a reading group and I

had that situation and I

was just able to say, it's okay.

We're going to keep doing

what we're doing.

And you just, you just stay on task.

Have you guys ever had a

situation like that?

And how did you handle that?

I can think of an example.

A few years ago,
we had a family with some
kids that had really gone
through some serious trauma
and that came out in their behavior.

You know,
they just lots of attention
getting behavior.

And I had one of these kids
in my class and
And he would just blurt out things,
you know, all the time.

And so we came up with a plan.
We had a code word, basically,
that when he was blurting
and not being appropriate,
we would use that code word.

So it wasn't having me to be
like a direct confrontation with him.

That would help sometimes.
And then sometimes he just
couldn't manage.

And so he would have

permission to go and walk
outside of the classroom
and then come back when he
was able to participate.

It wasn't that he didn't want to be there.

He did want to be there.

But the thing that helped
him the most was having
relationship with the kids
in the class where
where he wasn't feeling like
he was on the outs,
where he was the bad kid.

So if he had enough sense
that he was welcome and
that he was okay with them,
then he did better in class.

And that came from their
interactions like at recess
or at lunchtime when they
were playing together.

So that time can be fruitful
in building relationships

to help that student be
able to interact
appropriately with the other kids.

So, and

Yeah.

So you just,

I think each kid is individual.

You have to have a plan as
you go along and see, does that work?

Well, that's not working.

So let's try something else.

But it's that back and forth
with the family that has to
be able to be there.

Now, Molly,
you know I'm thinking of strategies,
right?

You know I have ideas for that.

Can I just share real quick,
if anyone's in that situation?

One thing is oftentimes
children that are auditory
verbal processors,

where they have to process
what they're taking in verbally,
they'll be big talkers in a group.

So I always share with
teachers to give frequent opportunities
for students to look at
their little friend next to
them and tell them what
they just heard or what
they just learned.

Or the teacher can say, okay,
what are three things we
just gathered from that?

But oftentimes if a child is
overstimulated,
not that you were doing it,
but it could take just a little bit,
they need to kind of regulate by talking.

So when you,
like I do movement breaks with kids,
even on Zoom calls,
when I'm working and coaching with kids,
it's like, okay,

I can see they're getting a
little too overwhelmed.

There's
too much language from me for some reason,
maybe not enough visuals.

So it's like, okay,
let's take a movement break.

And so,
or tell me one thing you heard me
just talk about.

What were we talking about?

And so checking for understanding.

I don't know if that would ever be helpful,
but maybe someone needed that.

So.

One thing I want to add here,
is that in order for what
Molly was saying and for
what you're saying to happen,
that communication is so critical.

It needs to happen.

It needs to happen more than one time.

And I think sometimes on

occasion when there are
situations where a family
or a kid has been rejected
or they've had some sort of
trauma like that,
that it's hard for parents
sometimes to receive
feedback more than one time.
They feel like, oh, I'm in trouble again.
Oh, I'm in trouble again.
So establishing upfront that ability to,
that we're going to
communicate a lot more than once.
And so to not feel like
you're getting in trouble here,
it's we need your feedback
and we need to be able to
give you feedback as to
what's going on if that
parent is not in the room at the time,
you know,
so that so that we can help this
student be successful,

that we're a team together.

And knowing that up front ahead of time,

I think will help increase

the success of that co-op.

But if you're feeling if

you're a parent that's

already feeling like, oh, gosh,

my student,

he's getting all this

attention or she's getting

all this attention because

she's a verbal process.

And then it keeps coming.

Well, they were doing this again.

They were doing this again.

You have to change your mindset.

And you have to know that

you're working together as a team.

And that's where it's

important to understand

what the mission and vision

of the co-op is.

Because if their leadership

is on board with you and they are like,

yeah, we want to do this.

We want your student.

Your student being here is

going to bless our community.

And we need you to be a part

of our community,

but we need to work at this.

It's going to take work,

but in order for all of us

to experience the blessing,

we all have to come to the

table and be part of the game.

I love that.

Yeah.

And parents need to

understand that there is

going to be a learning curve.

If you're in a group for a while,

we've never had a little

guy like this before.

There's going to be a

learning curve for everyone.

And I agree with you, Pam,
that you have to communicate the story.

My question has always been,
how much of a story does a
parent have to tell the
leaders in this co-op?

Because some kids have had
pretty rough histories.

I know as an educator and a teacher,
when I would go into a
classroom for the first time,
I'd have a stack of IEPs
about all my students and I
don't tell anyone,
but I would always do this
thing where I'm not reading those.

I'm not reading them.

I want to meet this child first.

I don't want to meet them
through a history that is
that beautiful or it's
negative or they have a behavioral plan.

I like knowing, OK,

there's a behavioral plan,
but I don't want to focus
on the nitty gritty of all
the horrible things.

So what would you all
suggest that how much
should a parent share?

Right.

Like I remember meeting a
student in sixth grade and
the first thing I heard out
of the teacher's mouth was his story.

Oh,
you should have seen him in kindergarten.

You should have seen him.

You know, no,
that's not who he is anymore.

So how far back should they go?

How much information would a co-op need?

Do they need a copy of an IEP?

I don't think so myself.

But I would say just the
accommodations page,

if they're still relevant for that child,
or that's something that a
parent can write up.

But what do you guys think on that?

Anna, do you want to answer that?

We've never...

I'm with an IEP.

I mean,

we have had some diverse learners
with some challenges that we have,
we work through,

but no one has come with an IEP.

And I think that's more than okay.

For sure.

I think it,

what is helpful for us to know
for this co-op?

Does that mean that we need
to know every trauma that
they've had in their life?

No, but if there are triggers that,

If someone yelling, whether that's,
you know,

in a negative sense or not as a trigger,
that would be helpful to know, you know,
just so that you can take
that information into your class.

What support they need.

I mean, those kinds of things,
like what would be helpful
for me to know in the classroom?

What are the triggers?

How can I support them?

What helps with their regulation?

Those kinds of things,
more so than all of the history, I think.

Yeah, I can speak for my own kids.

I would not share their
whole adoption history with a co-op.

The fact that they are
adopted is rather obvious.

But I would just say, like you said,
Hannah, this is what triggers them.

This is what it looks like
if they're getting dysregulated.

These are the things you can

do to help keep them regulated.

If you see this kind of behavior,

this is what I would suggest.

You know, those kinds of things,

whatever is going to be

helpful to the leaders or

to the mentors and the

teachers in the class.

But I think a student's

private history should stay private.

We don't share those kinds

of things if it's not

absolutely necessary.

I want to add, Molly, too.

I know something in our assessment,

our online personality profile,

it tells us the natural

things that motivate a child.

We like to focus on the

strengths of the child.

This is what my child's really good at.

They're helpers.

They want to help.

So if you want them to pass out papers,
that gives them an opportunity to move,
to kind of connect with other kids.

If you want them to help
clean up at the end,
anything that their strengths are,
or even I know verbal praise,
my child loves verbal praise or,
you know,

Just any kind of acknowledgement or,
you know, a touch on the shoulder.

Good job.

I like what you're doing.

If you're walking around and
you're the teacher checking
the kids work.

But those positive reinforcers,
there should be a list of those.

Yeah,

I think that that's important for
every student, honestly,
to know what motivates and
what connects to all of the

students in your class.

is amazing information

because we want to speak

life and encouragement into

these kids and not just

have our only interactions

with them be critical.

Right.

I mean, that is not life giving.

Right.

And we tend to lean toward

that more like those things

that are blatant.

How can I counteract that with a positive?

Right.

Yeah.

Right.

That's good.

One thing I want to add in

regards to sharing your

story is that sometimes,

and I'm not saying you have

to share all of the trauma

and all of that,
but sometimes when you have
somebody who has no idea about
who has their own opinions
about how things should be
run and how you should
parent your kid and things like that,
that sometimes it is
helpful to share a little
bit of something.

But you,
I would say when you are sharing
to be discerning about what
it is that you're sharing,
you don't have to share everything,
but sometimes,

And sometimes when I know
that I've had friendships
in the past where I have
felt like somebody's
behavior was really bizarre
and I was like, that's silly.

Why do they have so much

fear around this thing?

And I had no idea.

But then when she shared

with me some of her background,

I was able to then have

compassion for her.

I could have empathy.

I could then turn and

understand and love her in

a way that she really needed to be loved.

So, though, I think that, yeah,

you're it's up to you.

You need to discern.

Is this person trustworthy?

Is that is this person worth

the energy and the effort

that it's going to take?

Do they actually want to

learn about your experience?

kid and want to love your kid.

Ask yourself those things

and then decide if you want

to let them have some

insight into what's going

on in your world.

So I would say don't feel like you can't,

you shouldn't share

anything and that

everything should remain private,

but also don't share everything at all.

And I also want to share,

be careful with labels, parents.

I want to say this to our parents,

because if you go into a

new classroom with a new

teacher and you're that sharing parent,

you say, my child has ADHD.

Well, guess what?

ADHD is so individualized.

There's no umbrella like this is ADHD.

So you may have a child that

is quiet and sits there

but it has their imagination

way out the window and

isn't following directions.

And then you call on them.

And every time you try to pull them in,
they're not listening.

And you're thinking they're,
they're just being defiant or whatever.

No,

that could be inattentive and inattentive,
but I just,

and even though I'm a special
education teacher,

I have all the degrees and all that.

I'm still really sensitive
about labels because labels hurt people.

number one and then what if

I say like I said earlier

on the spectrum right like

on the spectrum of autism I

I can like describe that

child and another child on

the spectrum with autism

they're vastly different so

we have to really be more

intentional about who is

the child that's why I love

the self-portrait because
this is a true picture of
who your child of the who a
pretty close picture of who
this child is it gives more insight
to a teacher or or the
person that's leading that
then even if I wrote a book
on my child right but I can
say these are strategies
that work this is what the
environment my child needs
they might get overreactive
if the lights are too
bright and they're sitting
in under these fluorescent
lights for a long time um
things like that you know
just to be sensitive that
even though okay the child is diagnosed
with Down syndrome or ADHD,
they're still an individual
and they have individual

needs and they're just unique, right?

God made us all with

fingerprints that no one else has.

And he made us with beauty

within us that no other child has.

This child is not like this child.

We can't clump them all together.

I don't know.

I think that's part of the

beauty of homeschooling

because I know most people

that I know that homeschool

resist those kinds of

labels because they do see

their kids as individuals.

That's one of the reasons we

homeschool is so we can

meet individual needs and

not just put them through

the same education that

everybody else gets.

We want to

do things differently for

our kids because they have
different needs so I think
that is one of the great
things about not having
ieps because you cannot a
label can be passed along
with your student on an iep
like we don't necessarily
need to know that right and
it's so traumatizing it's
it's been it's it was
traumatizing to me to sit
in an iep meeting and
have a reflection of a
teacher's assessment on a
child that is going in a
report for the rest of that child's life.

And I'm sitting there going, no,
that's not him.

That is not him.

That's not my experience with him.

I see him as gifted.

I see him with all these

wonderful strengths and none of that
was mentioned in a report like that.

So it's a real tragedy and
it's very traumatic.

It was traumatic for me.

And my prayer was, God,

I pray he never sees that.

I pray he never,

ever sees that because the

work that I was doing with

him was vastly different.

And he even said to me one day,

I guess it's because I'm not normal.

And I said, no,

you are normal because you

think out of the box and

you know who you are and what you want.

You know,

and I just had to teach him a

little bit of tolerance for

the things that were boring

and not interesting.

And so, you know, there's ways around that,

too.

But anyway, thank you for saying that,

because it is true.

But I do want to say, Molly,

I have worked with some

parents who are still stuck

in the mindset of trying to

replicate the classroom into the home.

Because that's all they know.

And they don't have a lot of

coaching around that.

That's another piece of my work,

being able to help parents

rethink what is homeschooling.

We do that all the time.

Yeah, I know.

Have you ever told a parent,

stop homeschooling?

just observe your child get

to know your child just

wait will I coach you a

little more before you do

anything else you know and

I had a mom do that and for
two weeks definitely have
said put away the books put
away the books you know yeah

Well,

there's a common advice when moms
reach out like on some of
these Facebook groups,
like I want to pull my kid
from school and jump into homeschooling.

And common after comment is
please give some time and
space to de-school, right?
To let your kids settle into
a new routine for you guys
to find a good rhythm.

Because I think the tendency
is to try and replicate.
traditional school at home,
which is only going to
cause a lot of frustration, right?

Don't try to do that.

It's not the goal of homeschooling.

No.

I'm working with another lady right now.

We're about to do a parent

workshop on trauma from the education,

from the public school,

what kids often go through.

She ended up homeschooling

her daughter when she brought her home

She just picked up and kept going,

but she had to desensitize

and deregulate her

daughter's fears from math.

And she didn't even know how

traumatized she was.

But every day she didn't get

her math done fast enough.

So they put her in the hallway.

during her special and all

the other kids were going

to music she had to sit

like a you know like a bad

shaming her in the hall to

do her math and so when mom

tried to do math with her
she wouldn't do her math
and she was shut down oh no
no she was so traumatized with math
And the mother didn't even
know this was happening.
And this went on for almost a year.
And so there's some of that.
You may see resistance in
your child and you're thinking,
why is there resistance over math?
It's not that hard,
but maybe you need to dive
into their experience.
There's a lot of pieces to that.
Did we get off on a tangent, Pam?
A little bit,
but I was going to say that it's, here,
I'll bring us back in,
is that that's one of the
things that we need to
consider because if
somebody is pulling their

student from public school
and now they're at home and
they're homeschooling and
now they're like, okay,
I'm ready for community now,
they need to keep in mind
that stuff is going to come
with them to the co-op.
And so that's why it's so important.
That's one of those stories
that it might be worth
telling a teacher that
situation so that if
certain behaviors come up,
that they can have empathy
and compassion for the
student and understand that
those things are going on.
One of the things that you
always say is when you have a situation,
rather than trying to
punish the child or discipline the child,
to get curious and ask questions.

Why?

What is going on?

What is behind this behavior?

Instead of seeing the child as bad,

look at the behavior.

The child is made in the image of God,

but they're exhibiting this

behavior for a reason.

What is that reason?

Can we get to the bottom of that?

And then you can actually

solve the problem.

You can actually deal with

the heart of that child

instead of just saying they

are their actions.

They aren't right.

They they're acting in a way

because they have a need

because they don't know how

to express what that is.

And so let's find that.

Let's get to the root of that.

Yeah.

And I think when you have a label, right,
that we were talking about
a few minutes ago,
it kind of chops off that curiosity,
right?

Because then you have a definition.

Well, this is just who they are.

But it's not who they are, right?

And the thing that I really
don't like about the labels is that
It's describing the worst parts,
like the parts that they're
challenged with or
struggling with the most
and then kind of holding
that against them.

Right.

When really they need
support and love through that,
not just to be passed off like, well,
they just have ADHD.

That's just the way it is.

And we're just going to keep
moving forward.

Right.

When you have that curiosity
to try and understand
what's behind their
reaction to something or their behavior,

I think that is just so nurturing.

And I think we see them, right?

At that point, we see who they are.

And they are wonderful
people that in this moment
might be struggling.

Thank goodness there's not a
label for all of my
negative attributes because
it would be quite long.

Right.

And I would not want that
broadcast everywhere.

So, yeah.

Well, that's why I think what is what, Don,
what you guys do is so

important with the assessment,

because I started to

homeschool our students.

our mentor son and we

mentored him for ten years

and when COVID happened I

started to homeschool him

and he needed help and I

wanted a label at that time

because I knew that at when

he came to me I didn't know

what his issues were but he

was fourth fifth grade

level and he was in high

school at the time and

And when he came,

I did not know how to help

him because I did not have

the training and mom did

not want to tell me what the label was.

And so it was really

frustrating and hard for me

because I didn't know what

to look for or how to get
resources to help him.

And I wanted to,
but I felt like my hands
were tied and I was just
throwing things out there.

I had an opportunity to do
an assessment like what you
offer done on him,
then I would have been able
to help him understand
himself where he needs to.

Maybe he just needed more time.

Maybe he just, you know,
maybe he needed different ways,
but I didn't have a label.

I didn't have anything.

And so I felt like I didn't
do him justice at all because he,

I was just information,
maybe more than a label.

Right.

Well, that learning style one,

and then the learning disposition is,

What does a child need?

Do they thrive better in the

morning or the afternoon?

Where's their energy?

What kind of a thinker are they?

How do they approach learning?

Are they curious?

Do they need to learn through moving?

I mean,

all those components can really

change the way you teach

and approach a child.

I mean,

I'm working with a little guy on a

Zoom call.

who is constantly moving so

I have to get out of my

chair and do jumping jacks

with them and all kinds of

things and which is good

for me I don't mind that

but I respect that in him

like I can I can talk to
him for about five six
seven minutes and then we
need a movement break and
he loves it so we do
marching exercises tapping
back feet front feet all
that and he loves that but um

You guys, I'm looking at our question,
my next big one about online co-ops,
which is something that I
was curious about,
but I'm feeling like we're
going to have to maybe do a
part two if you guys are ever open,
because this is such good information.

And I'm sure parents have questions.

And if parents do have questions today,

Feel free to ask your

questions underneath this podcast.

This is a recording that you're hearing,

but we can still go back

and answer those.

And if you think we need a
part two to answer more of your questions,
we would love to do that.

And I just want to say,
we do have a lot of
information on SPED homeschool,
empowering homeschool
conversations where you can
find access to coaches,
where you can find access to
courses and all kinds of
information there that I
think could help you if you have.

But I don't think we have
anything like this on the co-op.

So this is really exciting
to me to bring experts on co-ops.

Can I ask you,
how do you all other than
your podcast and your Facebook page,
how do you do you ever do
personalized coaching with
people who want to start a co-op?

Do you do that as well?

Yeah, we sure do.

In fact,

we love to do that because through

the podcast, you know,

we get to talk to a bunch of people,

but it's great when we can

say what is the specific

need that somebody has and

how can we coach them?

We can give them really

clear guidance and steps to do that.

So we love to coach people.

That's great.

Right.

Well,

I know I know you guys have coached

me a little bit in the past

and it was amazing.

I was like, well, you know,

and I just couldn't believe

the insight and just the

different things I wasn't

actually thinking about,

because it really it's not you know,

we really need each other.

I mean, this is why we're doing this today,

too, because.

We all have just great gifts

that God has given us to

share with the communities.

And and I would just say to

parents to right now, please,

please don't try to do this on your own.

I've had parents literally

tell me I am I am terrified

to let my child into a co-op.

I'm afraid they'll act out.

They'll do weird things, whatever.

Go baby steps,

even if you go in there for

half an hour and you're

just walking around getting

to know people and then you

watch your child.

How are they responding to

this environment?

Because the one thing I do want to say,

and I'll say this in lieu of labels,

Hannah, a child may have a label,

but that label is often.

exasperated in a very

structured classroom

situation where they're not thriving.

But when you put a child in

a thriving environment like

a co-op that is very

nurturing with loving

people that are there to

love each other and help each other,

oftentimes you'll see a

totally different child.

And that's something that we

have to remember that, you know,

just kind of like, well,

when they're at home,

they're kind of wild,

but when they're at grandma's house,

they're really happy.

You know, it's kind of like that, right?

And there's just,

and that's what I noticed

as a resource teacher.

Like my kiddos that were

throwing chairs in the gen

ed classroom were coming in

and they were all sweet and

loving and teachers would

get on the phone.

What is he doing with you?

He was just throwing a chair.

I'm sitting doing his work.

He's really happy here.

And I've had kids report

that as well because they felt safe.

They felt seen and wanted.

And that's oftentimes what

children get in a co-op, often,

most times.

So I would definitely

recommend pursuing it with baby steps.

Maybe it's once a month.

I don't know.

Dawn, may I add, too,

for your listeners out there?

I just want to really encourage them.

If they are listening to all

these different podcasts

and they're trying to piece

something together on their own,

I would just really highly

recommend that they do not do that.

That they get the

information that they need

to help their kid be successful,

help them be successful.

And your SPED homeschooling

will help them to do that.

Your individual coaching

will help them to do that.

So I know that we...

in what we do, we tend to do,

listen to all of the podcasts,

try to figure it out on our own.

And then we,

it just takes so much time and
energy and effort to do that.

And so that's why we offer coaching.

And I know that's why you offer coaching.

And when it comes to
something like your student
and that trauma and the
rejection that is just so
prevalent in the way that
they live their lives,

Get the coaching, get the coaching,
get the assessment, get the information,
be empowered so that you
can help your student, help your family,
help you be successful in that way.

It's invaluable.

And so I really believe in
what you're doing.

And I think that you can be
such a great connector for
homeschool co-ops and for
parents of diverse learners.

So thank you.

Thank you for letting us be
on here and sharing with
you and talking through
some of this stuff.

I hope it's been a blessing.
for you.

You're a blessing.

And I just,

I want to say that about curriculum too,
because I think parents get
super overwhelmed.

I know this is our last minute,
but when a lot of parents
come to me just saying,
I don't know where to begin.

They're overwhelmed.

They're bombarded.

If you look on a Facebook page,
ten people will offer ten
different links to what
they should be doing.

And we personalize that.

We take an assessment,

an online assessment that
the parent or child
can uh figure out and then
we customize and
personalize even if you're
using oh I love the good
and the beautiful okay
let's customize that for
your child and how they
learn so anyway there's
just so many great parts to
that but um do you guys
have any last words you
want to share today or are we good
I think we're good.

Thank you so much.

And just a word of
encouragement to parents
who are out there with
special needs learners,
just get the help that you
need and the support that
you need and you don't have

to do it on your own.

that's so true so yeah well

I hope every I hope

everyone enjoyed this today

and I thank you all again

um if you're interested go

on to empower homeschool

conversations you can reach

out to me at my gmail

account or find me as one

of their coaches um look up

their consultants I'm on

there with some other

amazing people and we all

have different services

that we offer so I just

thank you ladies god bless

you and keep up the good

work hang in there keep

Keep on keeping on.

And if you ever need me,

you know where to find me.

Thank you.

You too.

Thanks, Dawn.

Oh, you're welcome.

Everyone stay right there.

This has been Empowering

Homeschool Conversations

provided by Sped Homeschool,

a nonprofit that empowers

families to home educate

diverse learners.

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