

Chapter Five:
What's in a Name?
Names, Missions and Purposes

O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?

Deny thy father and refuse thy name;

What's in a name? That which we call a rose

By any other name would smell as sweet;

—Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare

Although Juliet hoped that Romeo's name would not define him, in reality names are meaningful. For your homeschool organization the choice of your name is very important in establishing your co-op's identity!

What's in a Name?

Dual Names

Your organization will probably have at least two names: a legal title and a Doing Business As (DBA) name. For legal purposes, a name should be very distinct so your group will not be confused with another co-op or a school. My co-op's legal name is Mason Ohio Educational Home School Organization. That is quite a mouthful. On our checking account we are called Mason Home School Co-op, while members know us simply as Mason Co-op. Why the difference? In the state of Ohio, use of the word "co-op" in a legal name is reserved for corporations who file under the Cooperative Corporation Law. The name co-op can be only used by an organization that follows Ohio's law's for co-ops. These usually apply to electric co-ops or rural co-ops involving things such as sharing profits, membership voting, etc. Since my homeschool co-op does not want to follow those guidelines, nor are we a corporation, we cannot use the word "co-op" in our legal name. In our DBA name, however, we use the word "co-op".

List some DBA names for your homeschool co-op here:

Legal Name

Why do you need a legal name? For one, your group needs a legal title to open a bank account. In addition, if you want to be recognized as a non-profit organization by your state, you will need a legal name.

Also, if you want to pursue 501(c)(3) tax exempt status as an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) recognized charity, you will need a formal name. I discuss nonprofit corporation and 501(c)(3) status in Chapter Ten.

You may first encounter the need for a legal name when you apply for an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the IRS. EINs are needed to open bank accounts, hire employees, and file for 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. An EIN is like a social security number for businesses. Actually it is misnamed because you do not need to be an employer to obtain an EIN. They are offered for free by the IRS. Go to www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc755.html for more information on EINs.

Record some ideas for your legal name here:

Picking a name

If for no other reason, your homeschool co-op needs a name so your family can call it *something*. A title will also let the homeschooling community know you exist! There are all kinds of names to chose from. Biblical names and themes are popular for faith-based co-ops such as Koinonia, which means fellowship, or Veritas, which means truth. Other examples include Wisdom's Gate, Agape, Alpha, and Lighthouse. Acronyms also work well. Here are some:

- Parents Offering Inspiration, Nurturing, and Training (POINT)
- Creative Home Educators Support Services (CHESS)
- Higher Extension Learning Program (HELP)
- Homeschool Eclectic Lifelong Learners Organization (HELLO)
- Life-long Education And Discipleship (LEAD)

- Home Educators Applying Righteous Teaching (HEART)
- Home Oriented Unique Schooling Experience (HOUSE)
- Life Education And Resource Network (LEARN)

As an alternative to an acronym, many homeschool co-ops prefer to use the name of their town in their name. My co-op is called the Mason Home School Co-op. This type of name is distinct and simple to identify. Some groups do not use the word “co-op”, so they might call themselves Tuesday Group, Leaves of Learning, Learning Tree or New Horizons. Also phrases such as “Extension Program” and “Resource Center.” are popular. One group named Providence Extension Program, goes by the affectionate acronym PEP.

Brainstorm some acronyms or other names here:

Not a school

I recommend that you avoid any word that would confuse your co-op with a school. Often, I see the word “academy” or “school” used in names of homeschool co-ops. These terms name might imply that you are a full service school. Homeschool co-ops are not schools because schools have a lot of regulations that homeschool co-ops do not need to follow. In choosing your name, do not pick anything that might confuse your potential members or the homeschooling community at large.

Not already taken

You need to make sure your name has not already used by another organization. Typically, using your city and state name in your legal title

helps to avoid duplication. If you decide to become an IRS-recognized charity you will need to do a name search to be sure your name is not already taken. Visit your Secretary of State’s website. Most states offer name searches for free. Also, you can visit the IRS’s tax exempt web site (www.irs.gov/eo) and do a name search there.

Defining Your Mission

Mission statements are a concise way to state your organization’s purpose. They help focus and clarify the goal of your organization. Mission statements must tell others who you are and remind your leaders and members of your focus.

Who and Why

A mission statement answers two questions:

Who are you? Are you defined geographically, by religious affiliation, by age of students, by skills, styles or by curriculum choice? Who is your target audience? Do you want to attract parents, kids, athletic students, musical students, high school students, etc?

Why do you exist? Is it to encourage parents, support students, offer information, conduct classes, promote homeschooling or provide field trips?

Write down your WHO answers here:
