

# You're Going to Do WHAT?!

## (The Dreaded Socialization Issue)

We've all heard it...well-meaning family members and friends are aghast as they ask you, "You are going to do what? Your poor kids! How will they get the socialization they need?" In this article, I plan to cover, from my perspective; three of the most common myths people have about schooling at home.

Myth: Children need to be with 30 or more kids the same age as they are all day every day in order to learn how to interact with others.

Thinking Question: When in your adult life are you ever in that situation again?

Truth: In order to be most productive in society, children need to learn how to interact with people of all ages. They need to know how to address their elders with respect, how to pal around with friends close to their age, and how to interact with small children. All of these types of people are ones that we all come in contact with throughout our life. I have found that my children seem to be quite socially adept at communicating with people of all age levels partially because they don't associate exclusively with people their own age all day every day.

Myth: Children schooled at home are social outcasts.

Thinking Question: Is that the way it really is, or is that a stereotype?

Truth: Children schooled at home are people too! They want to have fun with friends, be accepted, play sports, be musical and artistic, dance, attend parties, go to the movies and all those things that kids enjoy doing.

Myth: Children schooled at home don't have as many friends.

Thinking Question: Are there no lonely children in a brick and mortar school filled with kids?

Truth: A child needs friends, but is there a set number as to how many they should have? A few really great, true friends are better than 100 superficial friends that might be better deemed acquaintances. There are many, many options for children schooled at home to be able to interact with others their age, such as:

- ✓ Team sports, gymnastics, dance, acting and music groups, karate, pretty much anything that interests them.
- ✓ Attend park days.
- ✓ Church can provide a setting for gaining more friendships.
- ✓ Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4H and other things can be great fun as well.
- ✓ Siblings make great friends too. :) Spending time together as a family strengthens sibling relationships. As children become adults, there are few friends that can equal a good friendship with siblings. It is wise to nurture these relationships above others.
- ✓ Can't find what you want? Create it! For example, there didn't seem to be any teen groups around, so we created our own where my teens can get together with other teens for friendship a couple times a month at an

activity. Then they IM and text and phone each other in between times, (probably more than necessary.)

- ✓ Let them go to local football, basketball and baseball games.
- ✓ Have them attend dances.
- ✓ Take them on field trips with other home schooling families.
- ✓ Help them find online friends.

Now, with all that said, is socialization important? Definitely. Is socialization (friends and having fun, climbing the social ladder) the most important thing for our children's lives? Not so definitely. Each of us as parents/guardians must make determinations about what is most important for our children. Sometimes I go way out of my way and even out of my comfort zone to make sure my kids are getting what I feel they need in the friendship department. But, socialization can get out of hand. In my book, there are some things that should get a higher priority than hanging out with friends. Family is one of those things. While I want my kids to have oodles of fun with their friends, sometimes I have to say no to things so that there is room for other important things. Some of us may have heard from our own children, "But Mom, so-and-so gets to \_\_\_\_\_." This is where I have to remind myself of what is important in our family, not "so-and-so's". When my children are adults, I want them to look back on their childhood with many fond memories of activities they did with their friends. I also want them to be firmly grounded in true principles that will make them good, productive members of society (note root word of socialization & society) that will act with virtue and integrity.

Referring back to the question, "How will they get the socialization they need?" My answer is that I hope that my children will grow to be very social without becoming socialites! ;)

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