

Starting a TRISMS Cooperative (Co-op) Group

What is a TRISMS co-op?

A group of students and their “lead” teacher meet together weekly to do enrichment and learning activities using any of the TRISMS volumes as the core curriculum.

How many students do you need for a co-op?

Class size can vary from 6-30 students. We have found 18-23 students is a good number depending on how much parental involvement you require.

What age of student is a TRISMS co-op for?

History's Masterminds is for 5, 6, and 7th grade

TRISMS High School: Discovering the Ancient World, Expansion of Civilization, and Rise of Nations are for 8th -12 and Age of Revolution is for 10th-12th grades.

What to do with siblings of TRISMS students?

We sometimes have classes for these younger students and have tried to introduce them to some of the same topics and time periods that their older brothers and sisters are studying in TRISMS. There are many hands-on projects, costumes, and historical novels for this younger age group.

Parents take turns teaching these classes when it's not their turn to help in the TRISMS class.

What is the role of the parents?

A really good way to keep the parents involved is to share the teaching responsibilities. If the co-op is an academic co-op, meaning you grade the students work, then the parents also will take turns grading.

The class time can be split between several teachers depending on what they like to teach. An example would be, one to do vocabulary review, games and testing, another in charge of the humanities sections; the study of an art, music or architecture selection. Then you could have someone present the history and mapping activities. And for those not teaching that week they would be responsible for grading and recording the grades.

Divide the work as much as you want.

Also, consider a lead teacher who does it all for a few units and then trade off and let someone else do the next few units. The purpose of having the co-op is sharing the teaching and grading. Or if you don't want a shared teaching situation, you could just have someone who loves to teach do it all and the rest help out as agreed upon at the beginning of the school year.

Lastly, parents should support the “teacher” and encourage your student. This is a time for parents to allow the student to accept responsibility for their grades, organization of time and materials.

What are the advantages of TRISMS Co-ops?

Students:

- Experience a classroom situation.
- Enthusiastic teaching inspires learning.
- Exposure to other people teaching them instead of just their parents.
- Accountability by being graded and kept to a schedule.
- Positive Peer Pressure encourages a standard in completing their work and doing well on their assignments.
- Practice taking tests and quizzes in classroom setting.
- Audience to present their semester projects, literature presentations, classroom presentations and oral book reports.
- Classroom discussion groups.
- Experience working in groups as a team.
- Projects are more enjoyable when they are shared in a group.
- Projects allow the student to “shine” with their specialty showcased.
- Opportunity to meet with students with like interests in areas of study.
- Study buddies.
- Group field trips.
- Guest speakers.

Parent advantages:

- Fresh ideas from other parents sharing the teaching.
- Holds us accountable for our student’s schooling.
- We can draw precious resources from others that are gifted differently.
- Encouragement and support for the parents

How long does a TRISMS co-op meet each week?

You can set your own time frame. We have found that three hours once per week is a good amount of time. But if you want to do more intensive projects you could meet two or more times a week. We chose to meet for 31-33 weeks which gives us holiday breaks and some breather weeks.

What is covered during class time?

Most units are covered in two weeks; a week for History and a week for Humanities. We allow time to do Literature discussions, history summaries, vocabulary practice, games, mapping, IEW writing instruction, testing, and humanities enrichment like art projects, listening to music, and architecture studies. The daily schedule varies depending on what the lead teacher wants to emphasize. So every topic isn’t covered every week. TRISMS was designed to mold to your student and classroom requirements. Afternoons can be used for films, study groups, field trips, hands-on projects, and more.

Where do I get teaching ideas?

- Look at the unit assignment grid in your TRISMS volume. The grid lists what the student is covering for that unit.
- At the bottom of each unit page there are additional topics for digging deeper. The students may not have time to cover these each week.
- Choose a topic from the current unit that you would enjoy studying and learning about, and then teach it to the class.
- Check out the TRISMS.com Homework Helps page for the volume and unit you are studying. There are links to help you learn more about the topic.
- Pick a topic from the unit you are studying and Google it. Type in “lesson plans” and then the topic you want a lesson plan for. This will get your brain juices flowing.
- Consult an expert on the topic.
- Ask for suggestions from the other parents and students.
- Be creative and try out new ideas.

What do I do to begin planning for a TRISMS co-op?

- Decide what TRISMS volume you are going to use. Order early.
- Recruit other families, through your newsletters, friends, word of mouth, or e-mail loops.
- Each family will need to have their own TRISMS volume; answer keys and student assignment book, and student pack (research forms and maps)
- All the families involved can meet together and decide what is going to be studied, i.e., make lesson plans for the year or elect a few to meet together and work out the major portion of the planning.
- Each family will need to spend time becoming familiar with the curriculum.
- It is good for one person to take on the role of being the leader of the group.
- We plan on getting ready for next year at the beginning of summer.

What is the key to a successful TRISMS co-op?

- PLAN Allow time to meet together and get down on paper what you are going to do for the complete year of co-op.
- Cooperation, everyone helps out in some way.
- Set a standard for punctuality, classroom decorum, personal responsibility and consequences.
- Everyone becomes familiar with their TRISMS text, the website Homework Helps and resources learning how to work with TRISMS. Join the TRISMS e-loop.
- Stay positive. When school starts don't get discouraged. If this is the first year to use TRISMS your student and you will learn a new way to study and think. It sometimes takes a student a full semester to get the hang of learning how to find research material, mentally process it, draw their own conclusions and communicate them verbally or in writing.
- Flexibility. You may have to change your teaching plans mid-year. Adjust to make your students and teachers successful.