

You have joined room: Lobby

Welcome

Barbara\_Rall: Hi Moderator, how are you?

Moderator> Hi Barbara

Moderator> good

Barbara\_Rall: I'm here to moderate the search and reunion chat

Moderator> ok

Barbara\_Rall: I can take over now and you can go home

Barbara\_Rall: Have a good evening.

Moderator> ok good night see you on friday

Barbara\_Rall: Will I see you on Friday?

Moderator> yes

Moderator has left.

Barbara\_Rall: Welcome to the Search and Reunion chat room

Barbara\_Rall: we are here to discuss any issues related to searching and reuniting in adoption

Moderator has joined.

Moderator> Hi Barbara

Moderator> Welcome to the special hosted chat tonight

Barbara\_Rall: Hi Moderator, welcome to the adoption and th4e schools chat

Moderator> Hi Barbara.

Moderator> Thank you for joining us.

Moderator> Let's wait a minute before we get started

Moderator> Our topic tonight will be Adoption and the Schools

Moderator> This is a perfect time to discuss this topic, since back to school nights are now taking place; I just returned from my son's this evening

Barbara\_Rall: There are so many issues around adoption and school

Moderator> Yes, a big question that seems to come up often with adoptive parents is "should I tell the teacher that my child is adopted?"

Barbara\_Rall: Just deciding how much to reveal about our children's history is one

Barbara\_Rall: You can see I was thinking the same thing

Moderator> Yes; full history is one thing; stating the fact that your child joined your family by adoption is another

Barbara\_Rall: Of course in many cases it's obvious that our kids are adopted

Moderator> Right;

Moderator> I believe that in many instances it is good to share that your child is adopted to your teacher

Moderator> I believe that making this a known fact takes away the "secret" and makes it more "normal"

Moderator> Families are formed in many different ways; there are one-parent families; families with grandparents as caretakers, etc

Moderator> I think one of our jobs as an adoptive parent is to assist in "educating" our educators or teachers in the different aspects or issues in adoption

Barbara\_Rall: I think that's important. I had to educate a teacher about Korean culture when my daughter first arrived

Barbara\_Rall: The teacher was upset that my daughter would not make eye contact. She didn't understand that it's considered rude in Korea to look an adult in the eye

Moderator> With National Adoption Awareness month coming in November, it's a great time to speak to your child's teacher about adoption and explaining to the children how families can be formed.

Barbara\_Rall: It would be great if you can convince your child's teacher to allow you to do a short presentation

Moderator> It's also a great idea to find another parent in the school system or in your child's grade to connect with; this way, perhaps you can assist in educating the teachers on what adoption is, etc.

Moderator> For the younger kids, reading a simple book is great;

Moderator> As a parent, you may want to check with your child's library on age-appropriate adoption-themed books. If they do not have them, then perhaps you can donate a few.

Moderator> It's always wise to ask your child IF he or she would like you to come into the classroom to read a book or discuss how families are formed, which includes adoption.

Barbara\_Rall: I think it's important to check with your child as to what he or she is comfortable with

Ann has joined.

Barbara\_Rall: Hi Ann, welcome to the chat

Moderator> Hi HieFor the okll

Moderator> Hi Ann

Moderator> Welcome; thanks for joining us!

Ann> Hi, hope I'm not late

Barbara\_Rall: Ann, do you have anything in particular you'd like to discuss?

Moderator> No, you are fine!

Moderator> How old are your kids and are they in school?

Moderator> We are just discussing ideas that parents can possibly do to assist in educating our teachers in adoption.

Moderator> Be sure to hit your "enter" key so we can see what you are typing please

Ann> We are a white couple with an 2 adopted sons. One African-Am.7 yrs. and one white 4. How does one correctly say yes, they are brothers and

Moderator> Are there issues between them or in school?

Ann> not have to go into any detail, esp. with ears leaning closer.

Ann> Not yet

Moderator> I think that you can say that they are "brothers"; families are formed in many different ways and forms. The fact that your kids do not necessarily look like each other, does not mean that they are not "family".

Moderator> Is your 7 year old friends say "is that YOUR brother?"

Moderator> Or are those YOUR parents?

Barbara\_Rall: I have two Caucasian sons, an African-Am son and a Korean daughter. they experienced a lot of questions like that

Moderator> Same with me; I have a bio daughter and a son from Latin America

Ann> We know that but am concerned with the "nosey" people who what to learn more Yes, they do! say is that your brother. They don't question parents.

Barbara\_Rall: I spent a lot of time teaching my kids the difference between privacy and secrecy.

Ann> Good point.

Moderator> I think it also depends on the types of questions they are asking you.

Barbara\_Rall: I felt my kids needed to decide how much they wanted to share with friends and friend's parents

Moderator> Some may be just curious, because perhaps THEY were thinking about adoption; some just are nosey..

Ann> Where did you "get them?".... WalMart isle 2 is a good answer. At what age do they "share" and how to we protect them from Nosey versus caring friends.

Barbara\_Rall: Moderator, I think that's really true.

Moderator> I think that is good for your kids to have some control on what is being shared.

Barbara\_Rall: Sometimes our kids need to make mistakes about how much they tell. that's the only way they learn about how their friends will handle it

Ann> Is a 7 yr.old able to control his private life. I don't think so . How do teachers share. I really don't know.

Moderator> I always found it interesting that folks find adoption so strange in some way....we don't marry our brothers....we marry someone (not our blood) who we love and care about...I feel that adoption is a bit like that as well.

Barbara\_Rall: We need to talk with our kids about how they feel about sharing and rehearse how they will handle the reactions of their friends

Moderator> That is a great point, Barbara

Ann> During adoption month Are there signs up? Do teachers have any impact? Do they choose a story to read and very basically give out information to the little one with inquiring minds?

Barbara\_Rall: Lois Melina has written some good books about how to talk to kids about adoption and how to help kids handle teasing

Moderator> Do you think you could go to your school and read a book or start a discussion in your son's classroom about how families are formed?

Barbara\_Rall: Ann, I think you can direct your child's teacher in a diplomatic way

Barbara\_Rall: Teacher's are often open to suggestions particularly when parents have more experience with a particular topic

Moderator> I agree. The last NJ ARCH newsletter has some great ideas in how to introduce the adoption topic to the kids in school

Barbara\_Rall: Ann, did you receive a copy of the newsletter?

Moderator> You can also meet with your school's counselor about National Adoption Awareness month and perhaps they can have a small group discussion on the topic.

Ann> I asked his teacher last night and I think they act like no one has ever done that, but I believe otherwise. We read alot and I think there are a great deal of books for the young people

Barbara\_Rall: There are a lot of great kids books.

Barbara\_Rall: You could ask to go to the classroom in November and read a story

Moderator> That is a great idea.

Ann> I would rather start young, like now than wait thill he (they) get older.

Barbara\_Rall: I think the kids will be much more open to it at this age

Barbara\_Rall: Is your child in second grade or first?

Moderator> Starting now is the best, because after about 2-3rd grade they get embarrassed about being singled out.

Ann> I agree. They , the kids are better than the parents. I almost feel the parents need more educating.

Moderator> True; kids are very accepting; parents seem to have a prejudice that can come out in many different ways.

Ann> Second grade, in special ed, dealing with many issues besides the different color of skin than us.

Barbara\_Rall: That makes it more challenging, doesn't it?

Moderator> We need to really start educating our teachers to use the word "adoption", adopted, etc. in how families are formed.

Moderator> Probably then all the more reason to try to help educate his teachers in adoption issues.

Barbara\_Rall: Especially niow when there are so many different ways families are formed

Moderator> Right

Ann> Perhaps the librarian will help me out with finding the right book for the age level but I still would like parents to be enlightened. Sorry, I'm usually a good speller.

Moderator> Did you son come to you as an infant or older child

Barbara\_Rall: NJARCH has an extensive lending library.

Barbara\_Rall: If you call our librarian, Natalie, on tues, thurs or sat, she will recommend some good children's books

Ann> 7 yr. as an infant and 4 yr. old off and on (many move) till we where able to adopt him at 4 yr. 3 mo.

Barbara\_Rall: We will send the books to you at no charge, including a postage paid return envelope

Moderator> There are some terrific ones out there. Also if and when you go into the classroom or speak to the couselfors, you may find many other children who are adopted from your school

Moderator> I think it REALLY important for your children to know that they are not alone or wierd. I would recommend you join an adoption support group in your area, if you have one.

Ann> Thank you I will call Natalie. There are others adopted, nice parents, but our 7 yr. old stands out a little more

Moderator> Your kids meeting other kids their age who are also adopted is very good for them, and your you, since then you will meet other parents with similiar backgrounds, etc.

Barbara\_Rall: Foster and Adoptive Family Services has a support group in each county. Many of the parents have adopted transracially

Moderator> If you check out our website under "resources" there is a list by county. Or you can call Natalie and see where the nearest Foster and Adoptive Family Services group is.

Ann> We do have a good support group (freinds) and it truely is a unique and needed lifeline.

Barbara\_Rall: The same is true for members of CPFA which meets in Whippany and another support group that meets in Colt's Neck

Barbara\_Rall: Great! I'm glad you're connected

Moderator> CPFA stands for Concerned Persons for Adoption

Ann> FAFS is wonderful

Moderator> They are having a conference in November in Piscataway. If you go to [www.cpfan.org](http://www.cpfan.org) the information is there.

Ann> Once in school there are only so many meetings one can go to

Barbara\_Rall: I know, it's hard

Moderator> There is also another conference in NYC on October 13/14 that is featuring Transracial adoption.

Moderator> It is difficult to go to meetings..that's why Chats are good, huh?

Ann> I read about the Oct 13-14 conference but too difficult to get away. Yes, chats are good.

Moderator> Another thing that is recommended is to have your child have an adult "mentor" who looks like him..

Moderator> Do you have many friends that have the same family makeup as your family?

Barbara\_Rall: Yes, chats are great if you can't get out

Ann> Yes, but the color issue is difficult in the area we are in. Great suggestion but I have not found one yet.

Moderator> It can be hard...perhaps a teacher in your school, a coach, someone at your place of worship...

Ann> I think I'll ask our minister about a mentor. I hadn't thought of that before.

Barbara\_Rall: Each county has post adoption counseling services which are free. Many of them have mentor programs

Barbara\_Rall: If you call the office tomorrow, we will be able to direct you to the program in your area.

Moderator> Having a positive role model is great; think that having another parent figure, besides his parents. is very good..

Moderator> Barbara, that is a good idea.

Barbara\_Rall: Particularly if the mentor looks like him

Ann> Okay, I'll call Natalie and talk with our minister. Wow two phone calls tomorrow. Thanks for the input. Made me think a little more. Post Adoption Counseling is something I asked for and had difficulty with someone following up for us.

Barbara\_Rall: Studies show that kids who grew up in homogeneous communities longed for someone who was a minority who looked like them

Barbara\_Rall: Once the adoption is finalized, you can request the counseling yourself

Ann> we did but got no where!!

Barbara\_Rall: Let me know tomorrow where you called and I will follow up for you

Moderator> Did you contact the state or a private agency?

Moderator> Does the 4 and 7 year old get along ok or are there issues with the little one as well?

Ann> Our Af-Am does have a cousin's boyfriend we hang with and we go to basketball games for exposure to the talent in af. am

Moderator> That's good.

Ann> The little one could care less. He would love anyone and everyone with green, yellow, red skin.. He would change favorite colors daily. Is a very loving child.

Moderator> Perhaps there is another person who can role model reading, studies, etc as well.

Moderator> Good

Moderator> So sounds like that there are some things that you can do for your son and your family!

Ann> A state agency, for counseling.

Moderator> Do try to connect with the school and have them read or you read to his class about adoption. Just like National Foster Care Month in May, it tends to get overlooked in our schools, unless active parents make it real.

Barbara\_Rall: Actually the counseling is offered by private non profit agencies under a state contract

Ann> I will call tomorrow. Yes, that sounds right.\

Moderator> You have the number? you can call the warmline at 877-4ARCHNJ.

Barbara\_Rall: Natalie comes in around 10 or 10:30 and works until 6 tomorrow

Ann> I'm happy to assist the teachers but first get through that red tape!! We have a new social worker so I'll feel her out.

Moderator> Also, check out our newsletter from the website; it has lots of ideas in what to do in your child's school.

Moderator> So some closing thoughts...

Ann> I don't think I checked out the website recently. Will do.

Moderator> Let your child take the lead on how much he wants to discuss adoption in the classroom

Moderator> Try to encourage discussion about adoption and how families are formed

Ann> I definitely want the children to be comfortable and have input.

Moderator> Try to speak with teachers, counselors, etc. in your school about adoption (you'll also probably find out who else is adopted in your school as well).

Moderator> And emphasis that adoption has been going on for thousands of years (Moses was adopted!); this is not a new thing....

Ann> Sounds like a plan. Many thanks.

Moderator> Have a terrific evening and give us a call when you can.

Moderator> Best wishes!

Ann> Good night.

Barbara\_Rall: thanks, Ann, for joining us tonight

Ann> Thanks again.

Moderator> Thanks Ann for sharing and joining us. Remember we have chats 3-4 times a week, so join us again, if you want!

Moderator> Good night

Ann has left.

Moderator> We will be closing the chat; Barbara can you please close it for us? Thanks.

Moderator> Thank you Barbara for all your input. Appreciate it.

Barbara\_Rall: Dana, I will close the chat

Barbara\_Rall: See you tomorrow

Moderator> Thank you. See you tomorrow.