

1. What did the group learn getting to this meeting site? Model some answers, such as the fact that they entered through the third door on the left, that the person in the next seat is wearing black, that you needed help getting the DVD player to work, that the cookies on the refreshment table look homemade, etc. The point is that we are taking in new information all the time and that all of this is learning, not just what is presented in a school setting.
2. What false things can they remember having to unlearn? Again, model this by talking about gossip that you discovered was untrue, or a community rumor that proved to be unfounded. Outlandish statements by some of the tabloid papers as in the National Enquirer might be fun to discuss as well.
3. How many people know their social security numbers? Their driver's license numbers? Their high school locker combinations? What do they remember about deliberately learning these numbers? How did they teach their children their telephone numbers or addresses? Did they have to teach their children to recognize and ask for French fries? To recognize their grandparents? The point here is that there is a difference between deliberate and incidental learning. However, the distinction is *not* between school and home learning. We learn and teach both ways in both situations. A parent deliberately teaches a child a great deal: toilet training, how to use a fork, where to put dirty clothes, etc. At school a child learns incidental things: what kind of shoes are "in," which other child seems to please the teacher, how long it is safe to linger on the playground after the bell has rung, etc. What the film is trying to do is to break down the notion that school learning is different from home learning.
4. Everyone knows a great deal about something. If you know the parents well, you can point out that Sophie knows a great many Bible verses while Juan knows a whole lot about the Chicago Cubs and Brenda can speak three languages. The idea is to help parents realize that the capacity of the human brain is immense, and there seem to be almost no limits to how much we can learn. The brain doesn't get used up when new knowledge is introduced, but rather, it is capable of more. Each new Bible verse is probably easier for Sophie to learn than the last, and Juan has probably learned a lot about other baseball teams in comparing them to the Cubs.
5. Crediting parents with the huge wealth of information that every young child has is beneficial. Get them to talk about the fancy dinosaur words their kids know, the ability of the small ones to recognize brand names ("Lays" "McDonald's"), or to run household appliances. The children learned some of this independently through observation, and others the parents deliberately taught to them. Encourage them to rejoice in the learning capacity of their child by reminding them of examples of what their child already knows.
6. Yes, reading *is* a complex skill, but it should not be the daunting challenge that it seems to be for many children. Literacy rates in China are amazingly high, despite a much more difficult language to decode; reading is not as valued in this country as it is there. No one has proven that the Chinese have genes that help with decoding that the rest of us do not have. Helping parents know that reading is a skill their child *is* capable of and that they can assist the process is a real gift. Some plain talking has to be in order, but done diplomatically.
7. Televisions should not be available to children all day; people do not talk to each other in the same way when the televisions are on as when they are off. Library books are available to all but the

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homeless. Reading material is everywhere if one looks for it: on food labels, in junk mail, on the sides of buildings, and on street signs. If possible, have parents run a session run about fostering literacy; invite parents you know have been successful to run the meeting.

8. Some parents have had bad experiences in school, but everyone can think about successfully learning something difficult and the joy that it brought. Which silk flower was the most difficult for Sylvia to learn how to make? How long did it take Henry to learn to back up the eighteen-wheeler? Preparing parents to help their children face the hard work that school involves and to celebrate their academic successes is another gift you can give them.
9. The video lists six components of a successful school experience: ***Safety, Validation, Continuity, Creativity, Responsibility, and Joy***. List them, and discuss which ones the parents have the most concerns about. *Safety*, of course, is basic and parents' apprehensions about both physical and emotional safety need to be addressed. If the schools their children are going to enter truly aren't safe, what can they do? For some communities, physical safety is not as much of a problem as some new parents believe it is. Having experienced parents reassure them lowers anxieties about this issue.

After *Safety*, the other qualities can be discussed with ideas on how the parents can support and encourage them. Warning: This discussion can become a session of woe, with much swapping of terrible tales about the local schools, especially if school personnel are not present. Is there something that community members can do to improve the schools? Are there *any* bright spots in the systems that give hope? If the situation is not really as grim as some present it, encourage parents who have had good experiences to speak up and balance the picture. Having a friendly principal present can dispel many rumors and fears.

10. Within a group that is comfortable with each other, parents can share their own school experiences and how these components of a successful school experience were or were not present.
11. Are there parents who are engaged in formal education after being away from it for a while? Can they talk about their motivations for returning and the challenges and rewards of pursuing more education?
12. Discuss the parents' hopes for their children and endorse them. Dreams should be big and are attainable. Share success stories you know.

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