

**TALKING WITH
YOUR CHILDREN**
RETURNING TO SCHOOL
5th - 7th Grade





KEEP IN MIND

- Be mindful of how you speak about the transition (not just to your kids) and model problem-solving, flexibility, compassion, and positive attitude. Children will follow your reactions.
- If your child expresses fear and anxiety, remind them that your family is healthy (if this is the case). Reassure them that you are doing everything you can to keep everyone safe and well. Listen carefully to what they share and respond honestly and reassuringly.
- If your family has been directly impacted by COVID-19, it is important to acknowledge this. Talk about how doctors and nurses help ill family members. Share ways that children can reach out to anyone who is ill (e.g. phone calls, handmade cards).
- Help your child recognize silver linings and feel gratitude. Maybe you developed a new ritual at home, learned something new about each other, or formed new habits.



RE-SET ROUTINES

We recognize that we all developed habits during quarantine and that returning to school routines will take time to establish. We recommend that you practice the following *at least two weeks before school starts* in order to help ease your child's anxiety and prepare them for school:

1. Morning routines: Set your child's wake-up time to the time they will need to wake up for school. Have your child follow a morning routine that includes getting dressed and grooming. For many children it is helpful to have a visual reminder of the morning routine posted in a visible place.
2. Bedtime: Set your child up for success with step-by-step directions and clear expectations for a bedtime routine. Have your child in bed at the time that they would need to be in bed for school. Some kids might argue that they want to finish a TV show or a video game. Setting time limits in advance can be helpful. Also make sure that all other electronic devices are off and stored outside of the bedroom, or otherwise in accordance with your family rules.

3. Mealtime: Set regular mealtimes, including breakfast, snack, lunch, and dinner. This will help your child better adapt to the school day and school week on nutritional and energy levels.
4. Chewing with mouth closed: Practice with your child chewing with mouth closed/not speaking with food in their mouth. This will help your child adjust to new health and hygiene routines and expectations. Children will be eating without masks on and this will help with controlling the spread of germs.
5. Masks:
 - a) Find a mask that your child feels comfortable wearing. Explain to your child that the mask is both their protection in case someone else is sick **and** their way to take care of our community in case they get sick.
 - b) Practice with your child the correct way to wear a mask. Explain to your child that scientists believe that the virus is transmitted through the air; therefore, it is important that their **mask covers their nose, mouth, and chin**.
 - c) Discuss with your child the importance of only using the ear loop to put on and remove the mask: the virus will be trapped on the outside of the mask, and touching that area may result in contamination. Emphasize that wearing the mask on the neck is ineffective because the neck is not protected and therefore placing the mask there may contaminate the mask.
 - d) Practice with your child wearing the mask for longer periods of time each couple of days.
6. Hand washing: Practice a hand washing routine with your child that follows CDC recommendations:
 - a) Wet your hands with clean, running water.
 - b) Apply soap.
 - c) Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds:
 1. Rub your hands to completely cover both hands with soap.
 2. Rub your palms together.
 3. Rub your palm to the back of the opposite hand, repeating for each hand.
 4. Rubbed your interlaced fingers.
 5. Rub your fingertips to the palm of the opposite hand, repeating for each hand.
 - d) Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
 - e) Dry your hands using a clean (paper) towel, or air dry them.
7. Digital technology: Begin weaning children from regular use of internet and technology use. This will help reformat their alertness and concentration for in-person learning.



TALK ABOUT THE TRANSITION

1. EXPLAIN:

a) Context of Coronavirus:

- Share the infection rate with your child Explain that it is very low in NYC and that that is a major reason that we feel comfortable opening in person.
- Explain the probability or risk of getting infected. Explain that if it gets too much higher, school may have to close
- Teach your child/talk about the preventative measures that helped control the spread of the virus, including social distancing, wearing masks, and hand washing. Explain the impact that these measures have had in lowering the risk of getting sick.

b) Emphasize to your child that some things will remain the same in school: math, reading, writing, science, Chumash, Miishnah, Ivrit. Help your child anticipate what will be different this year by describing the differences and explaining what to expect:

- *New Building: All grades from 2nd-7th are moving to a new building this year on 105th Street and Amsterdam Avenue. This building is three floors and has a fenced-in roof on the entire fourth floor. Beit Rabban is moving to this building for a year because it has more space, which is safer right now. For example, each classroom has enough space for desks to be 6 feet apart. The younger kids will stay at 86th Street. Your campus will be called the North Campus (Beit Rabban Tzafon) and the Gan-1st grade will be at the South Campus (Beit Rabban Darom).*
- *Pods: One of the ways we are trying to limit the spread of germs is to limit the number of people you spend time with each day. For this reason, each grade will be in it's own "pod" this year. This means that you will be spending all day with your classmates. Fifth grade will divide into two pods, and will only be together as a full grade when you are outside for tefillah some mornings, and during recess and lunch. Sixth and Seventh grades will each have separate classes, and they will be combined outside for tefillah, recess, and some classes like Ivrit. Otherwise, grades will not get together in person for gatherings or assemblies. Events for the whole school will happen on Zoom this year.*

- Indoors and Outdoors:
 1. *Each classroom has windows that will stay open (even if it is cold or hot!) to make sure that fresh air circulates through the room and germs don't build up.*
 2. *Outdoors is safer than indoors, so you will be spending more time outdoors this year. You will have tefillah outdoors some days, you will probably have some classes outdoors each day, and you will eat lunch outdoors whenever weather permits. There will even be a tent or covering on the roof of the new building, so you might be able to have class outdoors even if it is raining.*

- Masks: *Everyone will be wearing masks this year-- all staff and students. We are going to find the best, most comfortable masks for you to wear that cover your nose, mouth, and chin. You will leave a few in the classroom and take a couple new ones with you each day. Sometimes you will need to take a quick mask break, and teachers will understand that and allow it. The best time for mask breaks is when you are outdoors and 6 feet apart from other friends. Of course, you will not wear masks when you are eating (which is why we really need to chew with our mouths closed, so we can minimize the spread of our germs).*

- Social distancing:
 1. *When you are in the school building, you will practice social distancing. This means you will try to stay 6 feet apart from teachers and classmates. You will have individual desks this year, and they will be placed six feet apart from each other.*
 2. *Sometimes you will be closer to friends or teachers indoors, so you will make sure to wear your masks and not spend too much time closer than six feet.*
 3. *Hand Washing: Everyone will be washing and/or sanitizing their hands frequently, especially before and after snack, lunch, and recess.*

- Bathroom: *There are bathrooms on each floor of the new building, and you will only use the bathrooms assigned to your class. If the bathroom is occupied, you will wait on a floor marking outside the door to maintain social distancing.*

- *Materials: Each student will have a personal bag with pens, pencils, erasers, etc. We already ordered these and they will be delivered to our house before school. Even though we know that people rarely catch COVID-19 from surfaces, we are being extra careful to make sure students do not share germs from pencil and other supplies that kids sometimes put in their mouths. You will be sharing classroom libraries and sports equipment with your classmates, and that is okay. You'll also be reminded to use hand sanitizer before and after doing so.*
 - *Meals: You will take off your mask to eat your snack and lunch, but you will try not to speak while eating in order to prevent the spread of germs. Whenever the weather permits, you will eat lunch outside. You will use a waterproof mat that you can sit on outside while eating lunch. There will really be no sharing of food this year. We know that was always the rule before, and we know that sometimes kids did not always follow this rule. It is really important that this year, everyone needs to follow the no-sharing food rule.*
2. DISCUSS and VALIDATE: Ask your child if they have any questions. It is okay if you do not have the answers. Validate their experiences and allow them to express themselves. Ask about their anxieties, wonderings, and what they are looking forward to with the return to school.
3. CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION:
- Consider offering your child the opportunity to read the [*Reopening Plan with you.*](#)
 - [The Emotional Brain](#)
 - [Understanding Your Emotions](#)
 - [Techniques for Teens: How to Cope With Your Emotions](#)
 - [Support Teens to Release Emotions](#)
 - [My Emotions Journal](#)
 - [Gratitude Journal for Teens](#)
 - [How to talk to kids about wearing a mask](#)
 - Show to your child: [How to wear a fabric mask safely](#)
 - [Myths about masks](#)
 - If you would like to watch and discuss videos with your child with respect to mask wearing, we recommend this list of videos divided by age group: <https://www.weareteachers.com/mask-videos-for-kids/>.