

**TALKING WITH
YOUR CHILDREN**
RETURNING TO SCHOOL
2nd - 4th 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). Ensure to them that you are doing everything you can to keep everyone safe and well. Carefully listen to what they share and respond honestly and with reassurance.
- 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.

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: Find a mask that your child feels comfortable wearing. Explain to your child that the mask is like a shield and it protects us from getting sick. Practice with your child the correct way to wear a mask, making sure that the nose, mouth, and chin are covered. Explain to your child that the germs will stay on the outside of the mask and won't get into their nose and mouth, so it is important that they do not touch the outside of the mask or under the mask. Practice with your child wearing the mask for longer periods of time every 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:
 - i. Rub your hands to completely cover both hands with soap.
 - ii. Rub your palms together.
 - iii. Rub your palm to the back of the opposite hand, repeating for each hand.
 - iv. Rubbed your interlaced fingers.
 - v. 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: *We have been at home for a long time together because the coronavirus was getting people sick quickly. Staying away from other people, wearing masks, and washing hands frequently really made a difference and fewer people are getting sick now.*
2. ASK: *I wonder what it will feel like to go back to school? What do you think will feel awesome or amazing... and what do you think will feel weird or sad?*
[PAUSE to allow your child to respond]
3. AFFIRM: *It may feel weird to be apart after so many months of being together. If it does feel that way, that would make sense. It will feel less weird each day.*
4. EXPLAIN:
 - a) *This is one of these times when some things are going to be the same and some things will be different at school. You will still learn math, writing, reading, Ivrit, and Chumash. You will still have snacks, lunch, and recess with your friends. You will recognize almost all of the teachers and other staff members and classmates. School will still be fun!*
 - b) *Some things that are going to be different:*
 - *Pods: You and your friends in your grade are going to be in your classroom together, but other kids will not be allowed into your classroom. Each child will only be with their classmates, just like we were only with our family.*
 - *Social Distance:*
 1. *In your classroom, you and your friends will keep social distance from each other. Each student will have their own desk and you will be sitting away from each other to make sure that kids do not share germs. But you do not have to worry about getting close to classmates when you are passing them in class or going to the same area of the room to get something. You are wearing masks for that reason.*
 2. *Kids will be coming to school and leaving school at different time slots, just to make sure the hallways are not too crowded when people arrive and dismiss. Teachers will be there to help keep everyone moving and to make sure everyone knows where to go.*
 3. *You will be in a new building this year because we needed more space for each student. 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).

- *Masks: You will be wearing masks in the classroom and will be allowed to take it off when you need to eat, drink, or blow your nose. Remember to use hand sanitizer after you use a tissue. You will do that in your classroom.*
- *There will really be no sharing of food this year. We know that was always the rule before, and we know that kids did not always follow this rule. It is really important that this year, everyone follows the no-sharing food rule so you do not share germs.*
- *Hand Hygiene: You will be allowed and reminded to wash your hands more frequently in case there were germs somewhere.*
- *Supplies:*
 1. *You will have your own supply bag. The school is trying to avoid having to share things that you use often so kids don't share germs.*
 2. *You will have a library in your classroom and you will be allowed to share books; you'll just be reminded to use hand sanitizer before you approach the library. You will also have shared sports equipment just for your class, and you will use hand sanitizer before and after recess.*

5. REASSURE:

- a) *Your teachers and I want to make sure that all the kids stay healthy so everyone can go to school. If you forget to do any of these things, it is okay; the teachers will remind you. They know that it takes time to get used to all of this and that we are not used to it. It is new to them, too.*
- b) *You and your friends are also going to have a lot of opportunities to get used to school this year. We are going to visit your teachers and classroom as a family the week before school starts. The first day of school is going to be a shorter day. Each day during the first week you will stay a little later.*

6. DISCUSS: *Do you have any questions? What do you think this might be like for you? Is there anything you want to clarify before school starts?*

7. REINFORCE: Self-regulation is the ability to manage one's behavior, thoughts, impulses, and feelings. Self-regulation helps children learn and develop positive social relationships. Helping your child develop self regulation skills will help them with managing stress and anxiety.
- a) [Self Regulation Skills: Why They Are Fundamental](#)
 - b) [How Can We Help Kids With Self-Regulation](#)
 - c) [How to Help A Child Struggling with Anxiety](#)
 - d) Books:
 - *School's First Day of School* by Adam Rex
 - *The Exceptionally, Extraordinarily Ordinary First Day of School* by Albert Lorenz
 - *Breath Like A Bear: 30 Mindful Moments For Kids To Feel Calm And Focus Anytime, Anywhere* by Kira Willey
 - e) [How to talk to kids about wearing a mask](#)
 - f) [Tips to help kids wear masks](#)
 - g) Show to your child: [How to wear a fabric mask safely](#)
 - h) [Why do people wear a mask song](#)
 - i) If you would like to watch and discuss videos with respect to mask-wearing, we recommend this list of videos divided by age group:
<https://www.weareteachers.com/mask-videos-for-kids/>.