

Supporting Transition Back to School

Here are some things to consider as you prepare to receive children and families back to your classrooms. This list is by no means exhaustive - think of it as a place to start. They are geared toward preschool, so please adapt these to your specific age group to be developmentally appropriate.

BEFORE OPENING

Preparing children



- ❖ Explain facial coverings by demonstrating in real time, or take a video of yourself with a facial covering on/off and send it to families. Show children what you look like with and without it, have children get their own and show you.
- ❖ Discuss ways to cover up your eyes, mouth, nose - with hands, scarfs, sunglasses. Help children experiment and talk about how it might feel.
- ❖ Make and read social stories for children about new drop-off procedures, facial covering, physical distancing, what will be different in school, etc.
- ❖ Play “How do I Feel” game - practice reading feelings with facial coverings on, for example, “show me your smile,” “show me what you look like when you’re sad/scared.”

Preparing families

- ❖ Hold family info sessions to go over new protocols. Answer questions when possible, collect questions and concerns. Adapt policies and procedures whenever possible to respond to families’ desires/concerns.
- ❖ Send a video re-enacting what drop-off will look like for families. Include info on new protocols/routines.
- ❖ Develop a plan for what communication will look like on a daily basis to share information.

Preparing classroom

- ❖ Print, laminate, and display family photos in the classroom.
- ❖ Reduce materials by 50%, have other materials on hand to rotate.
- ❖ Create multiple spaces for 2 children and post visuals to remind them.
- ❖ Create individualized boxes for art, sensory, manipulatives, and other provocations.
- ❖ Develop individual “calming boxes” - include visual timer, squeeze toys, pictures of family, emotion pictures, sensory bottles, small child-safe mirror, visuals of regulation strategies, etc.
- ❖ Place the visual schedule in a central space, at the child’s eye level.
- ❖ Adjust schedule and consider time, space, staffing for each transition. Develop a plan for staffing schedules - assign roles for cleaning, rotating materials, breaks, etc.



UPON CHILDREN'S ARRIVAL

Drop-off/Pick-up routines



- ❖ At drop-off, take pictures of the family to show the child throughout the day. If possible, print, and laminate multiple copies right away. Give one to the child to hold on to.
 - ❖ Support a special goodbye routine - for example, provide heart stamps for family members to stamp on the child's arm, fun movement to do together (turn around and wave).
 - ❖ Create a welcoming routine between teacher and child - "toe kisses," a special dance, look out of the goodbye window.
 - ❖ Bring a book or a favorite toy from the classroom and offer to read/play with the child when they get back to the classroom.
 - ❖ Make a choice board for the child to choose a classroom activity.
- ❖ Communicate with families - send a picture to the parent during the day, write on a classroom message board what children did that day so parents can see during pick-up.

Help with Facial Coverings & Physical Distancing

- ❖ Post photos of teachers with AND without facial coverings in the classroom. Teachers can wear a picture of themselves without a facial covering.
- ❖ Sing songs with butterfly/bird/airplanes themes to help children understand distance - "make sure you have butterfly space!"
- ❖ Use tape and trays for individualization, tape pictures of children's faces on and other physical/visual cues to designate seating spaces. Involve children to understand how big 6 feet is ("as big as my bed!" "as tall as my dad!").
- ❖ Teachers can learn some [simple sign language](#), such as "do you need help?" and "I'm happy to see you!"
- ❖ [Butterfly hugs](#) can support regulation - teach children to wrap hands around their chest, hands on shoulders like wings of a butterfly, tap in alternating rhythm.



- ❖ Create some fun visuals that appeal to the children's imagination and play. For example, instead of Xs on the floor to transition outside, use lily pads or puddles, laminate them, and encourage the children to jump on the pads pretending to be frogs.