We are back in school!

Supporting Re-entering into Early Childhood Education Programs after COVID-19

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How to use this book

These past weeks have been an unprecedented time that has all of us feeling big emotions. The Pennsylvania Key Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants have worked collaboratively to create this social story and tips and resources to support re-entering into Early Education Centers after COVID-19.

This book can be used as a resource as children and staff start the process of re-entering to support social and emotional being. Please use this book as a support for when new children are coming back to school.

Each page in this book contains Teacher Tips, Prompts, Resources and Activities which can help with discussions with children in your care. There are even spots where you can jot down your own notes!
We are back in school!
Teacher Tip

Please reflect and think about your own emotions about returning to school. You need to be aware of your inner state of being and recognize how you are feeling so you will be prepared to support the emotional state of the children.

Prompts

Did you miss coming to school?
What is something you missed about being at school?

Resources

ABC’s for Parents of Little Ones: https://go.aws/3clwcYM

Providers: Taking Care of Ourselves: www.ecmhc.org/documents/TakingCare_ProviderBk_final.pdf
How are you feeling?
Teacher Tip

This is an opportunity to explore emotions the children are experiencing about coming back to school. Having discussions about their emotions will help build an environment where the children feel safe, seen, soothed, and secure. This is not a time for judgment but a time for validating a child’s feelings and holding space for them while they are verbally expressing themselves. Remember to label the different feeling faces so that the children can link the word to the feeling face.

Prompts

How do you feel about coming back to school?

Why do you feel that way?

Activity

Print out a feelings chart and have the children place their name on the emotion that they are feeling.

Resources

https://go.aws/2zpuiro
https://go.aws/2WRoxuO
We all had to stay at home because of the Coronavirus. Grownups wanted us to stay home and stay safe.
Teacher Tip
There are more social stories for you to share with children about the coronavirus if the children have a lot of questions or having discussions.

Prompts
Has anyone of you heard of the coronavirus?
Do you know why we all had to stay home?

Resources
Cyrus the Virus: https://bit.ly/2yEgfhM
The Oyster and the Butterfly: https://bit.ly/2Wn9Jop
Coronavirus is a Big Word: https://go.aws/2WkTIEY
What activities did you do at home?
**Teacher Tip**

Have a discussion of the different things the children did during the stay at home order.

Create or reinforce the families’ presence at the child care program by placing in the room pictures of children and their families. To prevent objects from being brought from home, provide an opportunity for families to email photos that can be printed. These photos can be pictures of the family or their family experiences during the COVID-19 Stay at home.

**Prompts**

What are some activities that you did when you were home?

Is there anything that you did at home that you would like to do in school?
Now that we are back in school, our teachers will help keep us safe.
Teacher Tip
This page will allow you the opportunity to discuss the importance of health and safety practices. You can review practices and introduce the new ones to the children.

Prompts
What do you think we can do to keep safe?
Why do you think we all have to wear masks?

Resources
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Guidance for Child Care Program that remain open
https://bit.ly/2LfNUB1
Did anyone ever take your temperature?
Teacher Tip

This is a great opportunity to have a discussion with the children to explain that everyone is getting their temperature taken when they first arrive at school to help keep everyone safe.

Prompts

What do you think a thermometer is used for?

Have you ever had your temperature taken with a thermometer at home when you weren't feeling good?
Teachers may now take your temperature when you walk in!
Teacher Tip
Show the children the thermometer and explain how to use it. Put a few in the house area for their use. Be sure to use toy or non-working ones that are not put in their mouths.

Prompts
Would you like to see how we take temperatures at school?
Do you have any questions about the thermometer?

Activity
Explain your current procedure of how you are taking temperatures and that it is to keep everyone safe, if needed.
Most people are wearing masks.
Teacher Tip
An additional social story about wearing masks and gloves is in the resources. If you are requiring masks to be worn, then this is an opportunity to go over expectations. Visuals posted around the center would be a great idea.

Prompts
Have you been wearing a mask when you go out of your house?
Why do you think the teachers wear gloves and at times during the day?

Resource
Masks and Gloves social story: https://go.aws/2WkrHrC
Everyone must wash their hands...a lot!
Teacher Tip
An overview of the procedure for washing hands and pointing out where the visuals are to support the children during hand washing.

Prompts
Why is it important to wash our hands often?
When are times we should wash our hands? Let's practice singing our song and washing our hands.

Resources
Handwashing Visual Procedures: https://go.aws/3bnAXQj
I can be Safe and Healthy by Washing my Hands: challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/washing-hands_story.pdf
Do you remember our class rules?
Teacher Tip
Point out where the children can view the classroom rules and a time to review them.

Prompts
Who can tell me a classroom rule?
Why do you think it is important to have rules?

Resources
CSEFEL: Visual schedule: csefel.vanderbilt.edu/modules/module3b/handout2.pdf
Going to School: A story about our expectations and rules: challengingbehavior.cbcsh.edu/docs/Going-to-School_Expectations_Story.pdf
Let’s review our daily schedule!
Teacher Tip

Point out where the daily schedule is posted in classroom and review it with the group.

Prompts

Who can tell me where the daily schedule is posted in the classroom?
Who can tell me what we do after circle time?

Activities

Have a classroom job that has a child move a clip from activity to activity on the visual daily schedule.
Take pictures of the children during the different parts of the daily routine and make a book.
We all have big emotions!

What can you do when you feel big emotions?
Teacher Tip
Review your safe space, calm down area, or cozy area in your own classroom.

Prompts
Sometimes we get mad or frustrated. What do you think we could do when we are feeling sad, mad or frustrated?
Does anyone want to share a time when they felt sad, mad or frustrated?

Resources
Safe Space Breathing Icons: https://go.aws/3fF0doo
When I Feel Crazy book: https://go.aws/2LhQbLV
Tucker the Turtle: challengingbehavior.cwcs.usf.edu/docs/TuckerTurtle_Story.pdf
We Can be Problem Solvers social story: https://unc.live/3ctCSUQ
We can learn, read books, play with friends, enjoy meals, rest our bodies and create crafts!
Teacher Tip
Make a list with the children of activities that they would like to do to empower them to lead their learning. Remember that you will have to reteach and remind children of social skills that are expected in the classroom.

Prompts
What are some fun activities that we can do at school?
Can someone tell me what we can do if there is one toy and you and a friend both want to play with it?

Resources
Let’s have fun!
Teacher Tip

The children will need to have a consistent daily schedule and classroom rules and expectations. This will create an environment that allows the children to feel safe and secure. Have fun in school and enjoy being back with the children.

Prompts

What is a fun way we can choose to go to centers today?

After centers what is a fun way we can come back to the circle after cleaning up?