

TEACHER TIPS

Talking to your students about Covid-19 and the return to school

REMAIN CALM- Your students will look to you for how they should react to a situation. If you are stressed or negative, they will pick up on your energy. If you, as the adult role model in the room appear extremely worried, it can cause them to worry.

REGULATE You can help calm a dysregulated classroom by regulating yourself. Take a deep breath or use other calming strategies when you need to. You can model self-regulation techniques to your students. Remember you can take a brain break or mindful minute.

LISTEN to children's concerns. You may be the first adult to really listen to how they feel about all the changes in their world. Take time to be the kind of listener you would want as a child.

ANSWER questions in an age appropriate manner. Young students should not be overwhelmed with complex, or ambiguous ideas about the virus. For example, they should learn general ideas like germs can spread sickness to others. They will focus on simple things such as washing their hands, and sneezing or coughing into their elbow.

STICK to the facts. Facts about the situation are easier for children to understand than abstract theories, and/or personal opinions. They've likely heard varying explanations from their parents or caretakers. Your job is to rationally present the facts. This will help them to understand. *Do not offer your opinion on the governmental handling of the situation or begin a discussion of your personal political beliefs.*

NORMALIZE- Discuss the different feelings they may be experiencing and explain that these are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. This is the first global pandemic of their lifetime! They may be experiencing a range of emotions. They might start to feel like there is something wrong with them, or their reactions. Reassure them that a variety of feelings and responses is ok.

ENCOURAGE them to express and communicate their feelings. Remember this can be done through art, drawing, or writing. Some students will not feel comfortable speaking their concerns out loud.

BE PATIENT. REPEAT IF NECESSARY. Some students may feel anxious, afraid, or unsafe. To feel better, they may repeat questions you already answered. Instead of meeting their repeated questioning with irritation, try to understand what it may feel like to them. They are looking to you to help calm their fears.

Example: Instead of saying "Yes John, we are all going to wash our hands, I already said that 3 times." Try, "You are really concerned about keeping all of us safe. You're right, we are going to wash our hands."