



Notes from “Approaching Transitions” Early Childhood Virtual Coffee Chats

Webinars Thoughts and Reflections:

- The language offered by the presenters helped to frame the moment and efforts. Things like “peak end rule”, “bittersweet”, and “pathways to meaning”.
- The idea of transcendence spoke to many – using light, prayer, nature, mindfulness, Havdalah (separation) as focal points
- Stories in Early Childhood DO work and can be just as powerful
- Important to remember each individual child as well as the collective
- Allow your core Jewish values to fuel what you do – things like showing appreciation, caring for people who might need more right now,
- Music makes everything festive

Other Guiding Ideas:

- Listen to parents to learn where they are at right now
- Offer ways for parents to contribute – especially for teacher appreciations
- Go with what parents have already been responding to favorably
- Different classes may need different approaches based on the culture
- These past few months should be seen as part of the year – embrace recent activities and silver linings

Ideas/Approaches for Celebrations and Rituals:

For the Individual Child:

- Individual Zoom Calls
- Individual “Home visits” to drop off something special!
- Show and tell favorite toy/memory throughout the last weeks of school
- Teachers make “paper plate” awards about something special the teachers have noticed about a child
- Children can receive an award for something they themselves feel proud of
- Teachers can write short memory about each child and email to families with a picture
- Children can share special things that they love about each of their classmates and then the teacher can combine them together to share with each child.
- Have children interview another student and share those
- End of year self-portraits



- Make sure to do the work you need to finish up any journey binder pages for the end of the year. Even though the binders might be at school. It is great to remember this time too as a part of the child's journey with you and your school!

For the Class:

- Remember: the end of the year “ceremony” is important but so are the few weeks leading up to it! Often children will take apart their classroom to help feel the transition. It is important to signal to them that the end of the year is coming.
- Create a social story about the arc of your year- teachers in our session reflected on how this year was one full of change for their class. From changing the dramatic play area from a restaurant to a post office then to changing from school to zoom. This theme helps children understand that they have already been through change and that they can go through change again.
- Reflect with your class! What was their favorite snack, activity, zoom activity, song or special day? You can even explore charts and graphs on Zoom with this information with older kids.
- Create a class playlist – include all their favorite songs you can even have a class dance party!
- Send handwritten invitations to make the special day stand out – or a special Paperless Post!
- Create a slide show of pictures from throughout the year (make sure to continue pictures from March-June it was part of the year too!)
- Create class shirts! During the last Zoom call all children could wear the same color or decorate a white shirt or a school shirt to wear the final day.
- Create a class Zoom background for a celebration
- Have a class cooking experience so that families can share in the same recipe on the last day of school!
- Include class parents and give the children the opportunity to thank the teachers.

For the Community:

Whole School Final Shabbat

- Invite extended family – Grandparents would love to join!
- Parents can all light candles together
 - Think about what the two candles could represent (Child and Teacher, School and Family ect.)
- Have a challah bake the night before
- Thank the teachers
- Share in a special song that children lead
- Create a video or slideshow to share



Communal Art Project - large group art project that can remain at school and that everyone can contribute to

- Painted rocks (children might want to make two – one for home and one for school)
- Mosaics
- Tree decorating
- Chalk drawings on the school property
- Fabric Squares – could you turn this into a quilt or tallit?

End of Year Ceremony/ Moving-Up Day/ Syium:

- Create a festive atmosphere on Zoom - create a school Zoom background
- Have the leader lead with balloons or other fun decorative touches
- Sing and create a sense of unification and belonging
- Teach and use hand motions during songs to help keep children involved
- Many schools are using the song “Building a Better World” by Ellen Allard
- Create a slide show of pictures from throughout the year (make sure to continue pictures from March-June it was part of the year too!)
- Assemble a video of children sharing their favorite things about school or their teacher
- Create a slide show where each slide is a picture of the child at the beginning of their school experience and then now at the end of the school experience – They have grown so much!
- Lawn signs for the 4s classes so they can proudly acknowledge the moving up transition (reminds me of those stalk boards when there’s been a birth)
- Use Havdalah ritual objects to represent school values – Challah braids (teacher, community, family); lighting (each person is a light; lighting the way forward); wine (sweetness of the year)
- Festive can mean having all the children eat the same item or wear the same shirt!

For the Teachers:

- Create a teacher appreciation video with photos from the year (some said they feel like they don’t capture photos of teachers enough and will do this more next year!)
- Teacher Appreciation Week is the perfect time to acknowledge the extraordinary contributions of teachers during.
- Parents might want to put together a thank you to the teachers with videos of their own children saying nice things. If someone likes editing they can create a full video of all of the clips.
- Organize a Happy-ish Hour for teachers to celebrate them and let them unwind together
- Use social media to acknowledge teachers publicly
- Be specific about teachers’ strengths and unique personalities



- Parents are driving by teachers' homes with signs and well wishes for them. Teachers are greatly appreciating this.

Challenges / Concerns:

- Should we do this all virtually? Some parents are weighing in that they DON'T want that. They want to postpone and wait until the class can come together.
 - Others said there could be a kind of hybrid model. Some acknowledgement or closure is offered now but the festivity or celebration part would wait.
 - Some wondered if putting it off would just in the end not make it happen at all.

Digital Tools:

- Photo Booth (iPhone/iPad app)
- Tribute app
- Screencastify (free screen recorder for phone)
- Zoom recording function (for parents to record quick messages)