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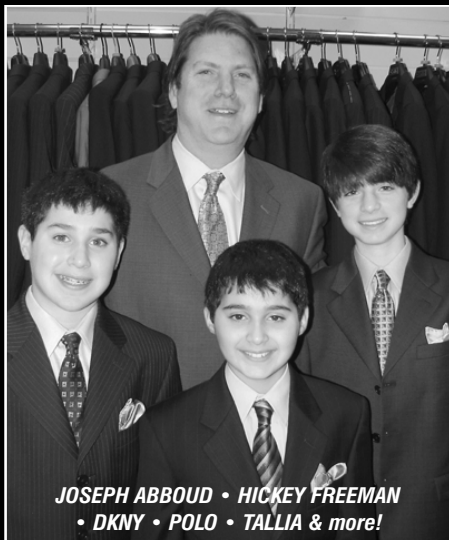
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Teachers to share own memories

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schools about how they plan to teach their 10-year-old students about the defining day of the year they were born.

Some plan to share their own memories; others, like teachers at MetroWest Jewish Day School in Framingham, will simply join their students in observing a moment of silence. Zipora Portman, who teaches fifth grade at Maimonides School in Brookline, said she is not sure if she will even cover Sept. 11 in class. "Some parents would rather discuss it on their own," Portman said.

Lodgen, who has been teaching for 33 years, said up until five years ago his fourth and fifth grade students had some recollection of the day, or would remember things their parents or older siblings had told them. Last year, some kids did not know the attack involved airplanes.

"They don't really know this was something that happened just 10 years ago," he said. "To me, it seemed like it happened yesterday, and I want them to almost feel what was going on that day, and to feel what everybody was going through and how nervous everyone was."

In addition to describing his memories, Lodgen will talk about the three people from Marblehead who were killed that day. Two were passengers on a jet that slammed into the World Trade Center; the third was at work in the towers.

"A lot of the kids when I mention that say, 'Oh yeah, I know that,' or, 'I was down at the park, and I could see there is a bench that is a memorial to them.'"

He will read the book, "World Trade Center: The Giants That Defied the Sky," showing the students photos of the towers burning and collapsing, but skipping over the photos of bodies. He will also go through a chronological breakdown of the events of the day from CNN.com, noting, for example, that American Airlines Flight 111 left Logan at 7:59 a.m.

"The kids get nervous because they hear it is Boston – they travel all the time. I explain to them all the changes that have been made since then," such as the requirement that pilots lock their doors and the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security. He also talks about the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

"I'll explain to them that these wars are related. [The terrorists came] and immediately President Bush was looking for them in the hills of Afghanistan."

Michelle Fuhrman, who teaches fourth and fifth grade at New England Hebrew Academy in Brookline, will have her fifth graders piece together what they know about Sept. 11, as she has done in past years. Last year for the first time, she said, students raised their hands and asked, "What's that?"

Fuhrman talks about the heroism of the firefighters, asking her students, "What do you do when there is a fire?"

When they respond, "Run out," she tells them, "Well, firefighters and police ran in."

What to say to the very young

The 9/11 attacks evoke a variety of emotions and memories in all who were old enough in 2001 to be aware of the day's tragic events. This being the 10th anniversary, we are seeing intense coverage in magazines, Web sites and on television and radio. Inevitably, young children will notice and ask questions.



Jeanne Ruckert Lovy

Boston's close connection to the events of 9/11 means that some children will have deeper experiences and reactions to the day than others. But as important as the anniversary is for their parents, it does not have relevance for most small children. The events occurred many years before they were born; they can be complicated and disturbing for them to see and talk about.

Children are not strangers to sad events. They lose a pet; a grandparent is ill; a friend moves away. We acknowledge all of these occurrences and help our children to process them the best they can.

Sept. 11 is a little different. Most preschool children do not understand the passage of time and would find it difficult to grasp the concept of "10 years ago." Some have recently been on planes with their family for summer vacation. They are especially likely to see the events of 9/11 as scary and threatening.

We also need to keep in mind that adults have differing responses. Some are grieving, others angry. Some have political feelings; others personal, cultural or religious. It would be very difficult for very young children to make sense of all of this; hence, proceed with caution.

Children are naturally curious about what they see on TV or hear adults or older siblings discussing. It would not be surprising to hear your child make comments about planes crashing, terrorism or buildings falling down.

When this happens, handle the comment or question with respect and sensitivity to the child's individual needs. If possible, try to respond to the *feeling* without encouraging conversation about the events. The key messages to convey are:

- It's good to share feelings.
- We are safe. This school is safe.
- Your family, teachers and other adults in your life will take care of you.
- There are people all around you, like firefighters and police, who take care of us, too.
- I care about what you are saying and I hear you.

Some specific language to consider:

- Respond simply with a comment such as "that sounds very sad" or "you sound worried about that; would you like to draw a picture?"
- If questions arise, you can say: "Aviva is talking about something sad that happened a long, long time ago. But nothing bad is happening now, and we are together and safe."
- If a child persists with questions about planes or other details you can say, "Yes, sometimes scary things happen. But that was a long, long time ago and we are together and safe now. Nothing bad is happening here today."
- You can also say "You sound as if you have a lot of feelings to share today. Would you like to talk about them some more?" By doing so, you make the point that the child's needs are valid and will be supported in the family.

If a child persistently brings up images from Sept. 11 or expresses worry or anxiety, you may want to consult your child's teacher or pediatrician or other health professional for support.

Jeanne Lovy is director of early learning at the Jewish Community Centers of Greater Boston.

She shares where she was on Sept. 11, and how she felt confused at first, because America seemed like such a safe place. She shows them a picture of the memorial at Ground Zero, and a photograph she took of the Twin Towers when she was 22. "I wouldn't be able to get this picture again," she'll tell them.

Fuhrman said students sometimes raise questions about "the enemy" behind the attacks.

"I say, yes, there are people who don't like Americans, and then I move on," she said. "I just don't want to delve into the hate so much. I emphasize this is a sad thing. I like to emphasize the firefighters and police officers, and how we never used to have to take our shoes off [at the airport], we never needed a passport to get into Canada."

At times students bring up Muslims, and say things like, "They hate us." She responds by telling them about how an Arab doctor

saved the life of a young Jewish woman who was on an Israeli bus blown up by terrorists.

Jewish day school teachers say talking about Israel helps their students relate to 9/11.

Fuhrman said many of the students at her Lubavitch school do not have televisions, but they do get newspapers, including Jewish and Israeli ones. Their families talk about current events around the dinner table, especially events relating to Israel, security and terrorism.

Ellen Kischel, who teaches fifth grade general studies at Striar Hebrew Academy of Sharon, said last year most students in her classes had traveled to Israel and/or had family living there.

They are students "who understand when you say terrorist attack, the threat that is posed," Kischel said. "It is not 'oh, it happens to them,' in a very distant sense."