


Our Children

JEWISH
STANDARD

DECEMBER 2020

Sharing Chanukah Joy



New Chanukah Books for Kids
8 Ways to Brighten Your Holiday
Pondering a Pandemic Pup
Gift Giveaway Contest

8 Ways to Brighten Your Chanukah in 5781

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The Festival of Lights starts on the evening of December 10 and like all of the other holidays in 2020/5781, we're left wondering: How can we make the most of this special holiday while keeping friends and family safe? Local educators shared their illuminating ideas for making this Chanukah shine more brightly.

1 CELEBRATE SUCCESS

"This year, when you light the Chanukah candles and remember the victory of the Maccabees, take turns sharing a recent personal victory or moment of growth," says Aliza Strassman, Director of Student Services, Ben Porat Yosef in Paramus.

"Think of something you have worked hard on academically, socially, or personally and decide how to cheer each other on—clap, snap, wiggle your fingers, or do a silly dance. Bring on the positivity, celebrate success, and light up the room with smiles, confidence, and accomplishments."

2 SENSORY EXPERIENCES

"This time of year is always unique and magical. I feel the best way is to make it relatable because young children struggle with the abstract," says Hillary Posner, Director of Early Childhood Educa-

tion Andrew Friedland Early Childhood Learning Center at Temple Beth Rishon in Wyckoff. "Experiment with light using candles or flashlights. Do experiments with oil; see what happens when it mixes with water. Young children benefit from sensory experiences that this year may be difficult to do at school. Fill a bin with dreidels, or candles, or reflective pieces of foil and let them touch and explore."

3 GIVE BACK NIGHT

"Chanukah is always fun—yummy latkes and sufganiyot, lighting the chanukiyah, playing dreidel, and of course the presents! But how can we make it more meaningful?" asks Roni Shapiro, Director of Early Childhood at Temple Emanuel of the Pascack Valley. "Here at TEPV ECP we will be adding to all the fun with a Give Back Night for families to do at home and Eight Days of Chanukah Kindness in school."

What is Give Back Night? "As a family, pick one night of Chanukah that no one gets a present. Advance notice will really help with any meltdowns," suggests Shapiro. "Instead, everyone collects items that they wish to donate such as extra toys, clothing or even household items. After lighting candles, go drop off the items."

For Eight days of Chanukah Kindness, each class will do some kind of mitzvah project that will promote kindness to



PJ Library families met at Beechwood Park in Hillsdale to make Chanukah cards for isolated seniors. The event was sponsored by JCC of Northern NJ and Jewish Federation of Northern NJ.

others and appreciate what we have. "On one of the days, the children will be making cards that will be delivered to a hospital," says Shapiro.

4 JEWISH BOOK NIGHT

Designate one night as "Jewish Book Night." Give Jewish books as gifts, read aloud, and share reviews.

Check out the new Chanukah books reviewed on p. 8, as well as a selection from *The Book Meshuggenahs*, a group of 18 Jewish authors (myself included) providing diverse Jewish-themed children's books and educational resources.

Melissa Berger Stoller, New York City-based author of *Sadie's Shabbat Stories*, suggests creating a Chanukah book club. "Ask questions about the books and engage in family discussions, create book-themed art, or science projects, many of which can be found at TheBookMeshuggenahs.com," says Stoller.

5 CHANUKAH COOK OFF

Like most Jewish holidays, Chanukah places food at center stage. "Host a Zoom Iron Chef Chanukah edition, with a latke-plating competition," suggests Rabbi Yael Buechler at the Leffell School in Westchester. "Families can have the latkes ready-to-eat, homemade or from the freezer. Choose your favorite latke toppings and don't forget to garnish! Family members can designate winners for presentation and (virtual) taste."

Children's author Sarah Aronson from Evanston, Illinois, self-proclaimed "queen of creative latkes," shared that her family will host a latke competition by Zoom this year. "My favorite is the Liz Taylor—creme fraiche and caviar on a latke," she says. Other varieties in-

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