

How to Talk With Your Child About Their School Closing or Changing

Learning that a school may close or change can bring up many emotions for children and families. A school is more than a building—it is a place where children build friendships, connect with trusted adults, develop routines, celebrate traditions, and create memories.

Children may feel sad, worried, angry, confused, curious, excited about what comes next—or several of these feelings at the same time. There is no “right” way for a child to feel.

As a parent or caregiver, you can help your child feel supported and secure as your family moves through this transition.

Be Honest, but Keep It Simple

Share information in a way that matches your child’s age and ability to understand. You do not need to have every answer before starting the conversation.

For younger children, keep explanations short and concrete: *“Next year, you may go to a different school. The adults are still working out the details, and we will tell you more when we know.”*

Older children and teens may want more information and may have stronger opinions about the change. Give them opportunities to ask questions and talk about what the change means to them.

Talk About What Is Changing—and What Is Staying the Same

Children often feel more secure when they know what they can count on. Be clear about the things that may change, such as the school building, teachers, classmates, transportation, or daily routines.

Just as importantly, remind your child about the things that will remain consistent. Their family, support system, interests, strengths, accomplishments, and memories go with them wherever they attend school.

Don't Make Promises About Things You Don't Know Yet

It can be tempting to reassure a worried child by saying, *“All your friends will be at your new school,”* or *“You’re going to love it.”* If you don't know that for certain, try not to promise it.

Instead, you might say: *“I don't know exactly what it will be like yet, but we will figure it out together.”*

Being honest helps children trust that they can come to you with their questions and concerns.

Make Room for All Feelings

Your child may be sad about leaving a favorite teacher, worried about making new friends, angry that the decision was made, or even excited about a new school. Some children may not seem bothered at all.

Try to listen before trying to make the feeling go away. Simple responses can be powerful:

“I can understand why you feel that way.”

“It's okay to be sad about leaving a place that is important to you.”

“You can be excited about something new and still miss your old school.”

Keep Routines as Consistent as Possible

During times of change, familiar routines can help children feel safe and secure. Continue regular mealtimes, bedtime routines, activities, family traditions, and other predictable parts of your child's day whenever possible.

As information about the new school becomes available, help make the unfamiliar more familiar. Looking at pictures, visiting the campus, learning about activities, meeting staff, or practicing a new route to school can make the transition feel more manageable.

Keep the Conversation Going

Talking about a school closing or changing should not be one big conversation. Children often process change over time and may have different questions as the transition gets closer.

Check in periodically. Ask open-ended questions such as:

“What are you thinking about the school change today?”

“What are you going to miss most?”

“Is there anything you're wondering or worried about?”

“What are you looking forward to?”

Your child may not want to talk every time you ask. Let them know the conversation is always open when they are ready.

Help Your Child Say Goodbye and Look Ahead

Give your child opportunities to remember what has been meaningful about their school. Looking at photos, creating a memory book, writing a note to a favorite teacher, attending

school celebrations, or staying connected with friends can help children honor an important part of their lives.

At the same time, begin exploring what they can look forward to at their new school. Children do not have to choose between appreciating what they are leaving and feeling hopeful about what comes next. **There is room for both.**

When Your Child Needs More Support

Most children will adjust with time, reassurance, and support. However, if you notice ongoing changes in your child's mood, sleep, behavior, school attendance, relationships, or ability to participate in everyday activities, additional support may be helpful.

Your child's school counselor, school social worker, school psychologist, and other Student Services staff are available to help your child and family navigate this transition.

Remember: You don't need to have all the answers. Being present, listening, being honest about what you know and don't know, and reminding your child that they will have support along the way can make a meaningful difference.