

# SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD THROUGH A SCHOOL CLOSING

Simple words, room for feelings, meaningful goodbyes, and steady support

A school closing can feel like losing a familiar community. Your child may grieve people, routines, traditions, and a place where they felt known. You do not need perfect words. Being calm, truthful, and available matters most.

## 1 TALK SIMPLY & HONESTLY

Give clear information without giving more than your child can manage.

- **Choose** a calm moment. Start with what is known and use direct, age-appropriate language.
- **Reassure** your child: “This is an adult decision. It is not your fault, and adults will help you.”
- **Invite** questions: “What have you heard?” “What are you wondering?” “What feels hardest right now?”
- **Clarify** rumors gently. If you do not know an answer, say so and explain when or how the family may learn more.
- **Name** what will stay steady, such as family routines, supportive adults, favorite activities, or ways to stay connected.
- **Revisit** the conversation. Children often understand change a little at a time and may ask the same question again.

## 2 MAKE SPACE FOR LOSS

Treat the closing as a real transition and allow each child to respond in their own way.

- **Expect** mixed feelings, including sadness, anger, worry, relief, excitement, or no visible reaction at first.
- **Notice** how feelings may show up through sleep changes, stomachaches, clinginess, irritability, withdrawal, or trouble concentrating.
- **Validate** without trying to erase the feeling: “It makes sense that you miss your school.”
- **Stay steady** with meals, bedtime, activities, and family routines. Predictability can make change feel more manageable.
- **Offer outlets** that fit your child: talking, drawing, movement, music, quiet time, breathing, or time with someone trusted.
- **Avoid** setting a deadline for “getting over it.” Feelings may return around the last day, summer, or the start of the new school.

## 3 CREATE A MEANINGFUL GOODBYE

Help your child honor what mattered while building a bridge to what comes next.

- **Remember** the school with a memory page, photo book, favorite-moments list, school map, or small keepsake box.
- **Express** appreciation by writing or drawing a thank-you for a teacher, staff member, classmate, or helper.
- **Participate** in farewell and transition events when possible, while letting your child choose how involved to be.
- **Connect** safely with important friends and adults. Make a concrete plan rather than a vague promise to “keep in touch.”
- **Visit** or view the new school, practice the route, identify a welcoming adult, and learn one or two routines in advance.
- **Carry forward** a valued tradition, phrase, photo, or classroom ritual to show that memories can travel with us.

## 4 WHEN FEELINGS COME IN WAVES

Strong feelings often rise, settle, and return. Respond to the moment before solving the future.

- **Pause** and connect: “I am here with you.” Use a calm voice and give the feeling time to settle.
- **Reflect** what you notice: “You really wish things could stay the same,” or “This goodbye feels unfair.”
- **Regulate** together with slow breathing, a drink of water, movement, a quiet space, or a familiar comforting activity.
- **Offer choice:** talk now or later, draw or walk, look at memories or take a break.
- **Return** to the next known step. Children usually need today’s plan more than every detail about the future.
- **Check back** later: “How big does the feeling feel now?” “What helped a little?” “Who else could support you?”

### WORDS THAT HELP

“You can love your old school and still become comfortable at a new one.” • “We can be sad and still take the next step.” • “You do not have to figure everything out today.”

### REACH OUT FOR HELP

Contact a school mental health professional or healthcare provider if reactions are intense, worsening, persistent, or interfering with daily life. For immediate safety concerns in the U.S., call or text 988; call 911 for immediate danger.

School Counselor: \_\_\_\_\_ | School Social Worker: \_\_\_\_\_ | School Psychologist: \_\_\_\_\_