

Saying Goodbye to a Teacher

Tips for helping children end important relationships in the classroom

For children with special needs transitions are often difficult and provoke anxiety. Leaving a school, changing favorite para-professionals and moving to another classroom are all major transitions for our children.

Ending any relationship for most of us is not something that comes easily, or is second nature. In fact, ending a relationship may be one of the most difficult things we do in our lives. Many people do not easily deal with their feelings when they end a relationship. For children with special needs endings handled well can be opportunities not to avoid feelings but to understand their feelings better.

Here are some tips to make the transition easier for you and your child.

1. Bring It Up Early Enough.

Tell the child and their classmates with enough time to talk through the emotions that will arise. It gives them time to get comfortable with the idea, and it gives their minds time to get anxious — [anxiety](#) that can then be dealt with in their continuing conversations with you in the last days before the leaving.

2. Pick A Final Session Date.

Make sure the children know when the final date for leaving is.

3. Let It Out (but not in overwhelming quantity)

Ending a good teaching relationship is difficult just like ending any close relationship in your life. That means the child will likely experience mixed emotions about the end of their relationship with you. That's fine, but it's even better if the child has a way to express those feelings to his or her teachers. The other children in the class and the teachers will also experience a lot of the same emotions and it will help for them each to talk to a supportive person.

Talking about feelings about the coming transition as a group is generally a good idea. But do not let the feelings become overwhelming or extremely

disregulating for the children.

4. Anger And Anxiety Are Normal.

It is perfectly normal for people to feel anger, anxiety, or a host of other emotions after knowing that a relationship will end. Encourage children to express them or write them down. If language is limited for a child, then read books about transitions. Use pictures and gestures to convey that this is an ending.

5. Ask Questions If You Have Them.

Make time for children to ask questions. Can I contact you? Will I see him again? What is your phone number? Can we have playdates?

6. Be direct.

Be direct when you say goodbye. Say goodbye Face to face.

7. The Final Session.

There is no “normal” way a final session goes — each teacher has his or her own way of doing it. Some kind of goodbye ceremony can be helpful for the children. It might include a special snack and each of the children saying something to the child who is leaving. Teachers might ask the child’s peers to say what they will miss about them. They may ask them about a favorite shared memory. Include also in their memories some of the challenges between children so that nothing is left out and the conversation is real. The teacher might reinforce to each of the remaining children the ways that they have been a good friend to the child who is leaving.

8. A Goodbye Book

Teachers may make a book for the child who is leaving, including their photographs and a comment from each. A keepsake of their memories for them to take with them.

9. Saying Goodbye Is Not The End.

The final session should also include a sense of moving on and being positive about the next phase in the child’s life. It is the start of a new beginning for the child and for you. And while initially it may be a little

scary or sad, it marks another stage or transition in the child's life. It will help the child if you can embrace that transition.

The strength of the situation lies in the strength of the relationship that the child has formed with you and their ability to move on from that loving/kindness, to enter into a relationship with others in the future.

A song that says it all

Make new friends
But keep the old,
One is silver
And the other gold.