

Exploring

children's social-emotional wellness

a tipsheet for parents and caregivers



Capital District
Child Care Council

Saying Goodbye to a Friend or Teacher

Some ways that we can support children in saying goodbye:

Talk, talk, talk

Young children need to talk about and hear about good-byes before they happen. They may express worries, ask questions about where their friend or teacher is going, or simply need reassurance that their needs will still be met.

Show them how it's done

Children may experience new or confusing emotions that they don't yet understand when saying goodbye. You can act as a role model to teach them how to handle separation.

Circle-time sharing

Allow the child or teacher that is leaving to talk to the other children about their future plans and feelings about leaving. This is a good opportunity for the children to ask questions.

When in doubt, act it out

Use puppets, storybooks, or role-playing to help children understand the concepts of separation and goodbye.

Calendar Keeper

Calendars help children to gain a sense of time and place. Use the calendar to review the departure date of the teacher or child.

Reassure

Children may feel stress about an upcoming transition as they struggle to make sense of it. They may worry that classroom routines and expectations will be different. We can help them to feel safe by encouraging them to express their fears.

A Parting Gift

Help children create a "goodbye" book for their departing friend or teacher. Each child can create a painting or drawing and include a goodbye memory or message that will be included in the book. Children can even take pictures to include as a mini photo album.

Celebrate

On the day of departure, create a goodbye activity for all of the children to participate in: a special circle where the goodbye book is presented, a favorite activity of the teacher or child's, or a special snack where the person that is leaving is honored. Children can prepare for these things by planning the activity ahead of time, gathering necessary supplies, etc.

Keep in touch

If it is appropriate, the children may like to exchange addresses or phone numbers for the possibility of future play dates or correspondences. If not, encourage the teacher or parent of the child to send the class a letter within the next month saying hello and reporting about their new experiences. (Giving them a self-addressed stamped envelope with paper always makes it easier!) You may even want to schedule a special "visiting" day in the future for the departing friend or teacher to come back and share about their new school, etc.

Adapted in part from *Reducing Stress in Young Children's Lives* by Janet Brown McCracken, NAEYC, 1986