



# Talking to Your Child About School Changes: A Guide for Glen-Worden Families

*A resource to help parents navigate conversations about school closure with children ages 5-11*

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## **A Note to Our Glen-Worden Parents and Guardians**

We know that news of a school closure brings a wave of complex emotions. As a parent, you are likely navigating your own sense of grief, overwhelm, and loss for a community you have helped build and call home. We hope to assist you, and your child, through engaging in the difficult conversations around closing a school.

You may be wondering: Why would I have this conversation with my child?

While our staff are here to provide unwavering support, and we will speak with students when a decision is made, we know that children process major life changes best when they have these conversations first with their most secure attachments - you. You are their safe harbor. At home, your child can react authentically without the pressure of being brave for their classmates.

We have designed this guide to empower you in those quiet, kitchen-table moments. We are not asking you to have all the answers; we are simply asking you to be the first voice of reassurance. We are in this together.

## **Understanding Your Child's Perspective**

When children hear about major changes like school closure, they often experience a mix of emotions: confusion, sadness, worry, and fear of the unknown. Remember that children process information differently at various developmental stages, and their concerns will vary based on their age and maturity level.

### **Common concerns across all ages:**

- Fear of losing friends
- Worry about new teachers and environments
- Anxiety about the unknown
- Sadness about leaving familiar spaces

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## **Age-Appropriate Conversation Strategies**

### **Kindergarten - 1st Grade (Ages 5-6) and Most Neurodiverse Learners**

#### **Keep it Simple and Concrete**

##### **What to say:**

"Our school will be closing, which means we'll go to a different school in Scotia-Glenville next year."

"You'll still see your friends - many of them will go to the same new school as you."

"The grown-ups are working hard to make sure you feel safe and happy at your new school."

##### **How to support them:**

- Use simple, concrete language
- Focus on what will stay the same (friends, learning, playing)
- For neurodiverse learners in self-contained classes, reassure them that much of their staff, materials, and routines will stay the same.
- Read books about change and new experiences
- Create a visual calendar showing when the change will happen
- Validate their feelings: "It's okay to feel sad about leaving our school"

### **2nd - 3rd Grade (Ages 7-8)**

#### **Provide More Details with Reassurance**

##### **What to say:**

"The school district decided to close Glen-Worden because there aren't as many students as there used to be."

"This means we'll go to a different school in Scotia-Glenville where there will be other kids just like you."

"Your teachers will be working with the new school to make sure you're ready and excited, and some of them will be there with you."

**How to support them:**

- Answer their questions honestly but age-appropriately
- Help them make a "memory book" of Glen-Worden
- Arrange playdates with friends who might go to different schools
- Drive by the new school or visit the new school's playground
- Emphasize the adventure and new opportunities

## **4th - 5th Grade (Ages 9-11)**

**Include Them in the Process**

**What to say:**

"The district made this decision because of declining enrollment and budget considerations."

"We understand this feels (repeat what feeling your child is expressing: unfair, sad, exciting, etc) - those feelings are completely normal."

"Let's talk about what you're most worried about and how we can address those concerns together."

"In the fall, all 5th graders going into 6th grade will still go to Scotia-Glenville Middle School next year, just like always."

**How to support them:**

- Have honest conversations about their specific worries
  - Help them research their new school online
  - Encourage them to write letters to friends or create contact lists
  - Discuss the positive aspects of change and growth
  - Allow them to be part of planning the transition
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## Essential Conversation Tips for All Ages

### DO:

- **Listen first** - Let your child express their feelings without immediately trying to "fix" them
- **Acknowledge emotions** - "I can see you're really upset about this"
- **Be honest** - Use age-appropriate truth rather than false reassurances
- **Focus on what they can control** - Staying in touch with friends, bringing favorite items to new school
- **Create rituals** - Plan special ways to say goodbye to Glen-Worden
- **Emphasize continuity** - What will remain the same in their daily life

### AVOID:

- Dismissing their concerns ("You'll be fine" or "Don't worry about it")
  - Making promises you can't keep ("All your friends will definitely be at the new school")
  - Sharing your own adult anxieties about the situation
  - Rushing the conversation - allow time for questions and processing
  - Comparing their situation to others ("At least you're not...")
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## Addressing Specific Concerns

### "Will I lose all my friends?"

- **For younger children:** "Many of your friends will go to the same school, and you can still play with others after school and on weekends."
- **For older children:** Help them create a plan to stay connected (phone numbers, sports and clubs, planned activities).

## "What if I don't like my new teacher?"

- **All ages:** "It might feel different at first, but teachers want to help you learn and feel happy at school. We can talk to your new teacher about what helps you learn best."

## "Why can't we just stay at Glen-Worden?"

- **Younger children:** "Sometimes grown-ups have to make hard decisions about schools, but they're trying to do what's best for everyone."
  - **Older children:** Provide basic information about declining enrollment and that the district had to make this difficult decision for financial reasons while emphasizing that this doesn't reflect anything wrong with them or their school.
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## Creating Positive Transition Experiences

### Memory-Making Activities:

- Create a scrapbook of favorite Glen-Worden memories
- Take photos of special places around the school
- Write thank-you notes to favorite teachers and staff
- Plan a family celebration of their time at Glen-Worden

### Preparation Activities:

- Visit the new school's website together
- Drive by the new school building
- Attend any transition events offered by the district
- Connect with other families making the same transition

### Ongoing Support:

- Check in regularly about how they're feeling
- Maintain routines that provide stability

- Be patient with regression or emotional outbursts
  - Consider counseling support if your child is struggling significantly
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## When to Seek Additional Support

Contact your child's counselor, teacher, or a mental health professional if you notice:

- Persistent sleep problems or nightmares
  - Significant changes in eating habits
  - Withdrawal from friends and activities
  - Extreme anxiety about the future
  - Academic performance concerns
  - Behavioral changes at home or school
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## Remember: You're Not Alone

Be gentle with yourself as you navigate these conversations. As a parent and caregiver, you are also managing your own transition while supporting your child's, and that is significant work. This transition affects our entire Glen-Worden community. Don't hesitate to reach out to other families, school staff, or community resources for support. Your child will take cues from how you handle this change - showing them that while change can be hard, families can work through challenges together.

### For additional support, contact:

- School Social Workers: Kelly Marsh and Jacqueline Cubano (ext. 2087, 2088)
  - School Psychologist: Cheryl Buckley (ext. 2088)
  - Saratoga Center for Family Therapist: Ben Scharett (ext. 2331)
  - Principal: Andrea Polikoski [518-346-0469]
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*This is a significant change for our school family, and it's normal for both children and parents to have mixed emotions. With patience, honesty, and support, we can help our children navigate this transition successfully.*