

Feel a Sense of Belonging and Significance



Write an idea for what you can do to create a sense of belonging and significance in the classroom community for every student on the first day of school. What sort of first encounter between you and your students (and among students) will lay the foundation for students to show skills of cooperation, assertiveness, and empathy, and to continue building on those skills?

T I P S

- * Greet each student at the door.
- * Organize the classroom so it's obvious what students should do or where they should sit.
- * Make sure students start to learn their classmates' names and begin to connect with each other. Building social connections on the first day of school is essential for ensuring that students feel included in the school community.

The first day of school passes so quickly that it's easy to lose sight of what was accomplished. Focus on the gift you gave to students on their first day in your class—a sense of calm, purpose, and joy. This will not only influence how they feel when they leave school today but will also influence their desire to return tomorrow and every day that follows.

Notice the closing activities on the following two pages. Which one could you use with your students to bring a positive close to the first day for each student? Can you think of any others?

Closing Activities

Just Like Me

- 1** The leader (you or a student) stands. Everyone else sits.
- 2** The leader says a statement about something positive that happened that day, such as “I learned something new today.” Everyone to whom the statement applies stands up and says “Just like me!” and then sits down again.
- 3** The leader says another statement, and group members again respond.
- 4** The activity continues through a number of statements.

More sample statements for Step 2:

- I did something I was proud of today.
- I had fun learning about [academic or social topic] today.
- I was kind to someone today.
- I took on a challenge today.
- I solved a problem today.
- I was excited about something today.
- I accomplished something today.
- I’m looking forward to something tomorrow.

TIP: If you’re struggling to come up with enough statements, open it up to your students. They’re bound to have some good ideas.

Partner Sharing

- 1** Students pair up with another student (someone sitting next to them or a partner you assign).
- 2** Ask the class a question that gets them thinking about something they learned today or last year. For example, “What’s one thing you learned today about yourself [our class, our school, a subject you’re studying]?”
- 3** Students share their answer with their partner (if needed, specify which partner should go first).
- 4** If time allows, student volunteers tell the class one thing their partner shared.

More sample questions for Step 2:

- What’s one surprising thing that happened to you today?
- What’s one thing you’re looking forward to tomorrow?

Pluses and Wishes

- 1 Give each student a piece of paper or index card and a pencil.
- 2 Ask students to write any number of positives or “pluses” about their day on the left side. Some pluses might be:
 - I really liked our Advisory meeting today.
 - I figured out the math challenge problem.
 - Using clay in art class was cool!
- 3 Ask students to write one wish or hope for school tomorrow on the right side. Some examples:
 - I wish we had more time for silent reading.
 - I hope I get a chance to work with a lot of partners.
 - I hope we get a chance to do more challenge problems in math.
- 4 Collect students’ papers as they leave the classroom. Read them privately and adjust the next day’s teaching as appropriate.

Variation: Invite students to read one “plus” aloud to the class.

Thumb Gauge: Did You Like It?

- 1 Ask students whether they personally liked or agreed with something from the school day. For example, “Did you like the math we did today?” or “In the article we read, do you agree with the coach’s decision to cancel all the away games?”
- 2 Students respond silently, using their thumb to show if they liked or agreed with something.
 - Thumb up = yes
 - Thumb sideways = not sure
 - Thumb down = no
- 3 Summarize aloud the responses that you see.

More sample questions for Step 1:

- Did you like the story we read today?
- Are you excited about the second day of school?
- Do you agree with [a conclusion from a newspaper article, a choice that a character made, a weather prediction, etc.]?

What Do You Remember?

- 1 In advance, write different parts of the day (arrival, lunch, math, PE, and so forth) on craft sticks and place the sticks in a can.
- 2 Pass the can around to students. Each student takes a turn pulling out a stick and saying one thing he or she noticed during that part of the day. For example:
 - **Arrival stick:** “I noticed my bus was late this morning because it was a new route.”

- **Beginning of lesson stick:** “I noticed we got quiet right away when you gave the signal.”
- **Brain break stick:** “I noticed everyone having fun and staying in control at the same time.”

It’s OK for students to repeat what others have said.

TIP: If you don’t have craft sticks, index cards in a basket also work fine.

Make Personal and Positive Connections With Their Teachers and Their Peers

Remind yourself why building positive relationships is so important during the first week of school.

The first week of school is the time not just for teaching routines but also for helping students build positive relationships. Building positive relationships early on will create a safe zone in which students can set realistic goals for themselves, a process that will be done this week, and see how the rules will lead to success in reaching those goals. During week two you'll want to invest students in the rules; therefore, use this week to build positive teacher-to-student and student-to-student relationships.

Jot down ideas you plan to use in your Responsive Advisory Meetings to help build positive relationships.

Consider embedding into your lesson plans active and interactive learning activities that also build positive teacher-to-student and student-to-student relationships.

Ideas for Responsive Advisory Meetings

Tip	Suggestion
Conversation Starters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ What kinds of movies do you like? ➔ Do you like to play video games? Which ones? ➔ What fun things did you do this summer? ➔ What would your theme song be? Why? ➔ What scares you the most? ➔ What would you do on a “perfect” day? ➔ What is the furthest you have traveled from your home? ➔ What one possession do you cherish the most? Why? ➔ If you could live in any moment in history, what would it be and why? ➔ How many siblings do you have? Are you close to them?
How to Introduce Themselves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Model this and mention that this is a skill that helps both in and out of school. Direct students to do this at table groupings. “Hi, my name is _____. What’s yours?” ➔ Emphasize eye contact and a pleasant facial expression. ➔ Discuss ways that you may use memorization tricks to help remember names. (For example, Garrett is wearing green, or just focus on remembering the names of people at your table for now.)
How to Ask for Help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Remind students that every expert in any field of study had to make mistakes and fail in order to learn. ➔ Possibly show students a student work sample from a leader in the field, or a student work sample of your own if you have one. ➔ Emphasize that we learn through mistakes and will need to ask for help.
Show Them How to Find Their Way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ If you teach 6th grade, consider how they can be oriented to the building and school grounds. It will be important for you to create a visual or share helpful tips in getting around the building. ➔ Recording a video of a walk through the building and school grounds on a mobile device and sharing it on a presentation in class could be a way that you give students a “tour” of the building. ➔ If you teach 7th or 8th grade students, you may want to pair up new students with friendly and willing students who have been there and are headed to the same location. It is important to do this discreetly without putting students on the spot to help if they are not motivated to do so.

Establish Expectations for Academic Engagement in Your Classroom

Anchoring supports and visual cues foster students’ growth in thinking, reasoning, problem-solving, and autonomy by making visible the steps or qualities of the mind that lead to success.

Anchoring charts are useful tools. Additional support tools include table tools, such as table tents and table mats, and timing tools, such as a large digital countdown timer and a bell, music clip, or other auditory signal.

Use this page to think about what types of anchoring support you can provide to students through charts and/or visual cues. We began the list for you:

- Diagram of the FOIL (first, outside, inside, last) method for cross-multiplying
- Visual to help students recall the process of passing the baton in a relay race
- Table that illustrates the organization of living things—kingdom, phylum, class order, etc.
- List of government systems
- Five-paragraph essay format
- Tips for using the ribbon or toolbar on a computer
- Verb conjugation or spelling rules

What are some concepts or skills you want to highlight for your students in the first two weeks?

Interactive Learning Structures

Interactive learning structures can be used to create anchor charts and/or visual cues with your students. Following are two structures that you can use with your students to co-create anchor charts and/or visual cues for your classroom.

Around-the-Clock	Maître d'
<p>Name the learning goal. For example: "What are ways we can implement our class rules during group discussions?"</p> <p>Put a Clock Partners placemat in the center of each group. Students use the placemat to determine whether they are the 12 o'clock, 3 o'clock, 6 o'clock, or 9 o'clock person. (If needed, model how to take turns clockwise.)</p> <p>Give students a topic for discussion and have the 12 o'clock teammate ask the first question (generated either by the teacher or by students). A student might ask: "How do we follow the class rule of 'Respect each other'?"</p> <p>Teammates answer clockwise:</p> <p>3 o'clock • "We can wait until someone is done speaking to ask a question."</p> <p>6 o'clock • "Even if we disagree with someone else's idea, we can tell them in a kind way."</p> <p>9 o'clock • "Instead of talking with our neighbors, we can give our focus to the person speaking."</p> <p>The 3 o'clock person asks another question about the topic. Teammates again answer clockwise.</p> <p>Repeat until every person has asked a question. Reinforce positive behavior: "Your questions were clear and specific. And I heard many people respond in a respectful tone of voice."</p> <p>Bring everyone back together and ask for volunteers to share highlights from their conversations. Use what students share to create an anchor chart.</p>	<p>Name the learning goal. For example: "You're going to form different table sizes [standing groups] to share ideas about our new unit on healthy living."</p> <p>Remind students about the expectations for forming new table groups, emphasizing the importance of being inclusive, friendly, and respectful: "What will you do to make sure everyone is included?" (If needed, model how to move about the room safely.)</p> <p>Call out a grouping, starting with "Table for two." Students quickly form pairs of their own choosing (with one table of three, if needed).</p> <p>Ask a question to focus the discussion: "How might you increase your weekly physical activity?" Give students 1–2 minutes to share (with a 15-second warning). Reinforce positive behavior: "I heard a lot of encouraging words when people got stuck on an idea to share."</p> <p>Call out "Table for three," have students form new groups, and ask the same question or a new one. After groups have discussed this question, call out "Table for four." Repeat as time allows, continuing to vary the table numbers.</p> <p>Bring everyone back together and ask for volunteers to share highlights from their conversations. Use what students share to create an anchor chart.</p>

Learn About Logical Consequences

As you begin to implement logical consequences, think about the relationships you have established in your classroom. As misbehaviors occur, you will become more skilled with identifying the appropriate logical consequence the more you practice. Take a look at the sample scenarios provided for each logical consequence and write in some examples from your own classroom.

Break It, Fix It

- A student breaks a ruler, and uses tape to fix it.
- A student knocks over books, and works to put them back correctly.
- A student calls another classmate an offensive name, and talks privately with the student to make amends.

Loss of Privilege

- A student doesn't adhere to the guidelines for collaborative work; the student will continue the work independently.
- A student abuses hall passes; the student will not have hall privileges for the next week.
- After redirection, a student continues to go on social media sites instead of researching information; the student will have to research with a partner instead of having their own device.



A few days before you're ready to teach logical consequences and the use of Space and Time, sketch out how you will do so by completing this Interactive Modeling planning guide:

Steps	Think About . . .	What You Will Do and Say as You Model and Coach
1. Describe what you will model and why.	Why is this routine, behavior, or skill important to students and the classroom community? What classroom rule(s) connect to it?	
2. Model while students notice.	What particular aspects of this routine, behavior, or skill are important to show explicitly? What specific details are students not likely to notice? How might you coach students to notice these details?	
3. Give students the opportunity to collaborate and practice.	How will students practice? How can you make this practice engaging? Will all students practice immediately or will you need to space it out over a day or two?	
4. Reinforce their practice with immediate feedback.	How will you point out student successes? How might students get off track? How might you redirect them?	

Taking Care of My Intellectual, Spiritual, and Emotional Growth Needs

Use the SMART Goal Planner to set goals for your own self-care plan.

Sample Growth Goals From Each Category		
Intellectual Growth	Spiritual Growth	Emotional Growth
Hobbies and interests	Reflection, meditation, or prayer	Applying envisioning language to your relationships and experiences
Setting and achieving financial goals	Spending time unplugged	Writing a list of self-affirmations
Improving time management, planning, and decision-making	Yoga	Being responsible for own actions
Ability to take perspective of others	Congregational worship	Persisting in the face of challenge
Consistently applying the rules of social conduct	Writing or journaling	Practicing self-soothing behaviors as a way of managing stress
	Writing a gratitude list	Managing inner critic and fears

You don't have to complete the entire SMART goal sheet (though of course you can), but make sure you answer four things so you can stay on track:

1. What do I have to do to make this behavior a routine?
2. How will routinely doing this contribute to my _____ growth?
3. How does this connect to staying energized and focused as an educational professional?
4. What obstacles can I expect and how will I address them?

This could also become a self-reflection tool that then becomes a SMART goal in the future.