



Strong Start Morning Routine



Strong Start is a set of rituals and routines that get students **ready to learn** by fostering a sense of safety, belonging, community, and self-efficacy.



The routines begin as students enter the classroom and continue through a **morning meeting**.

Starting each day with a predictable routine helps students feel safe & connected to school, as well as creating time for explicitly teaching social-emotional skills.

Strong Start includes:

① Greetings



② Breakfast in the classroom & independent activities

③ Carpet Routine



- Community Building
- Purposeful Partnering
- Breathe & Focus
- Goal-Setting
- Optional Elements

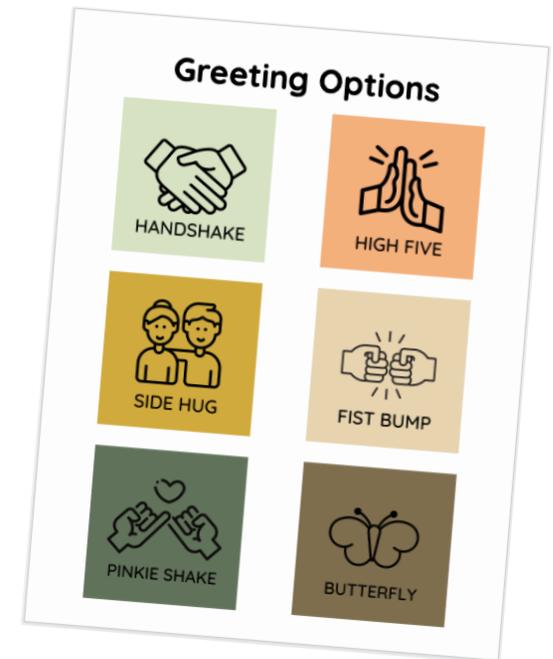


① Greetings

Teachers greet students individually at the door to the classroom.

How to do this well:

- ✓ Post a student-friendly **visual menu of greetings options** at the classroom door. Include a variety of levels of touch for student comfort.
- ✓ Greet students at their **eye level** at the classroom door. Each child **chooses** their preferred greeting.
- ✓ Make a **personal connection** with each child, exchanging 2-3 conversational turns.



A warm welcome to the classroom reinforces with students that they are safe, loved, and part of a nurturing school community.

② Breakfast in the Classroom

Students may choose to eat the provided breakfast.

How to do this well:

- ✓ Establish **school-wide procedures** for breakfast delivery to the classroom.
- ✓ Set up food on a designated table or counter. Students **serve themselves** and take their food to their seat.
- ✓ Provide **clear instructions** for students on how to serve and clean up after themselves.



During Greetings and Breakfast, students will also complete **arrival tasks** like hanging up coats, putting away backpacks, or turning in homework.



When students feel calm and composed during breakfast time, they are more likely to eat, which provides physical fuel for learning and prevents hunger-related upsets.

② Independent Activities

If students choose not to eat, or when they are finished, students engage in independent activities.

How to do this well:

- ✓ To start with, independent work should be **easy** to take out and clean up, and not require any specific amount of time to complete.
- ✓ As you feel out your routine, you may try to integrate assignments like Lexia or small-group interventions.

Examples of Independent Work

Journal writing
Question of the day
Independent reading
Simple centers
Relax quietly at your table
Lexia minutes
Partner teacher could be doing intervention or small-group mini lessons

Students will have something productive to do when they finish breakfast, which helps them have a sense of direction.



③ Strong Start Carpet Routine Overview

The whole-group routine on the carpet is the formal start to the instructional day.

How to do this well:

- ✓ Use a **signal** like a chime or other attention-getter to alert children that it's time to come to the carpet.
- ✓ Allow children who have not yet finished breakfast to continue eating.
- ✓ The carpet routine should be no longer than **approximately 15 minutes** when it is running smoothly.



Remember

Students must be **taught** the routines at the start of the school year and provided with **extensive, supportive practice opportunities** for Strong Start to run smoothly.



③ Purposeful Partnering

Purposeful Partnering is a ritual that fosters peer connection between students through an engaging partner activity.

How to do this well:

- ✓ Choose activities that foster **peer-to-peer connection** through appropriate touch, tone of voice, eye contact, presence, and playfulness.
- ✓ Activities can include songs, movement, fingerplays, quick games, and partner shares.
- ✓ **Introduce and practice** a number of age/grade-appropriate rituals with your class.

Purposeful Partnering Examples

Create a secret handshake with your partner
Hand clapping rhymes
"What is your favorite book?"
Let Me See Your Move

Go to www.wholechildmodel.org for Strong Start activity decks!



Human connection, fostered by building a sense of attunement and synchronicity in movements, voice, and feeling, optimizes brain function through the release of oxytocin, a soothing brain chemical.

③ Community Building

Community Building is a whole class routine that says "we're all in this together" with a shared joyful experience.

How to do this well:

- ✓ Choose activities that promote a **sense of team** across all members of the classroom.
- ✓ Activities can include songs, movement, and quick games.
- ✓ **Introduce and practice** a number of age/grade-appropriate rituals with your class.

Community Building Examples

We're Going on a Bear Hunt
Freeze Dance
Five Green and Speckled Frogs
Hokey Pokey
Tooty Ta
Cha Cha Slide
Choral singing & movement (any type of song that students enjoy!)



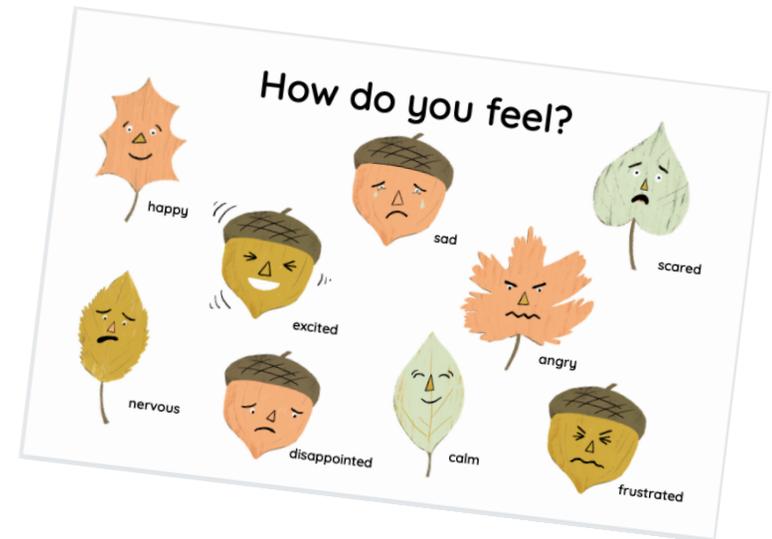
A sense of belonging is a prerequisite to learning. These rituals give students an opportunity to participate in a collective activity, building trust and relationships as a group.

③ Breathe & Focus

Breathe & Focus teaches strategies for self-regulation, helping students become ready to learn in the moment and able to use strategies in future times of upset.

How to do this well:

- ✓ Use instructional strategies like modeling & practice, role play, social stories, and problem-solving scenarios to introduce and practice self-regulation strategies.
- ✓ Prioritize teaching **skills and tools** students will use frequently in the classroom, including how to use the Safe Place.



Breathe & Focus Examples

Teach breathing strategies
Teach Safe Place use
Introduce Feelings Friends
Mindful Kids cards
Yoga
Breathing GIFs
GoNoodle Flow

③ Goal Setting

During Goal Setting, students set a daily goal for living out the classroom agreements.

How to do this well:

During Greetings & Arrival

Each child sets a goal based on the classroom agreements. Students **verbally and/or symbolically** (e.g., with a token) identify their goal for the teacher.

During the Carpet Routine

Students **recite** the classroom agreements. Prompt students to **share** what reaching their goal will look like:

Think of your goal and one action that will fulfill that promise.

I will show respect by actively listening and tracking the speaker.

I will be kind by using helpful words when other kids are upset.

At the end of the day

Students **reflect** on how they did and move their token to "Yes, I did it" or "I'll try again tomorrow."

Optional Elements

You may want or need to include other elements in your morning routine, before or during carpet time.



Possible other elements:

- Sending wishes of love and kindness to others
- Arrival and unpacking routines
- Visual daily schedule review
- School-wide morning announcements
- Morning message or newsletter
- Reciting the school pledge or motto
- Completing Classroom Jobs

Things to avoid during Strong Start:

- ✘ Discussing current events that may be stressful to students without appropriate time or support to process
- ✘ Competitive games where some children lose or get "out"
- ✘ Prolonging carpet time when an activity isn't working

CARE Practices



Our Beliefs

Students must feel safe and cared for in order to be ready to learn.
 We must actively care for each other so that we can actively care for our children.
 Strong relationships between students and teachers lessen the impact of stress on the brain.
 The brain is wired to mirror the skills it sees others use. Students learn what adults model.
 We learn best when we practice skills frequently, with focus, and across multiple contexts.

Compassion & Assertiveness

Maintaining Composure
 Intentional Language & Tone
 Empathy

We are intentional about our own behavior. We build trusting relationships with students and consistently model, teach, and practice the skills that we most want them to learn.



Routines

Strong Start Morning Routine
 Classroom Jobs
 Consistent Routines

We use consistent routines to foster safety through predictability, explicitly teach and practice SEL skills, give students greater ownership of the class, and free up mental energy to focus on learning.



Environment

Classroom Design
 Safe Place

We design a physical environment that is warm and welcoming, meets students' physical, academic, social, and emotional needs, is owned by students, and minimizes stimuli that may overwhelm or trigger students.