



Building a School Family™: Connect Your Way Throughout the Day

Audience: Pre-K (Ages 3-4)

Presented by: Celeste Finegan, Pre-K Teacher
professionaldevelopment@consciousdiscipline.com

My Circle Time uses the four components of the Brain Smart® Start: starting with the Safekeeper Ritual and ending with the Wish Well Ritual.

- ♥ **Safekeeper Ritual**
- ♥ **Activity to Unite:** Music/brain break (involve the Zumba Instructor job)
- ♥ **Activity to Disengage Stress:** Breathing cube (use the Breathing Expert job)
- ♥ **Activity to Connect:** I Love You Ritual™ (use the I Love You Ritual Helper job)
- ♥ **Activity to Commit:** Make commitments/individual and/or class
- ♥ **Wish Well/Absent Student Ritual:** Use the Wish Well Helper

I start this the first day of school and it continues every day for the rest of the year. These rituals can go quickly after the children learn them and know what to expect. (These rituals are explained in detail below.)

Safekeeper Ritual

Items Needed:

1. Enough pieces for all children to decorate one. I use wooden pieces from Hobby Lobby and purchase at least 50 so that I have extra when new students move in. (I start with 40 students)
2. A Safekeeper Box (it can be any kind of box, you can check Hobby Lobby, Michaels or your closet!)

Day 1: Have the students decorate their Safekeeper piece with markers (write their name with a sharpie on back)

Day 2: Every day from then on, do your Safekeeper Ritual.

Teacher states: “My job is to keep the classroom safe. What is your job?”

Child responds: “To help keep the classroom safe.”

Week 3 – 4: Make a class book: What safe looks like. Have students draw pictures of them being safe at school. Take pictures of them being safe, too. Laminate and put in the classroom library.

Week 5: I add onto the Safekeeper Ritual: “How are you willing to keep it safe?”

The child responds with their own idea. Usually, they mention something about helping to keep the classroom safe. **Some examples are:**

- I am going to help my friends breathe.
- I am going to help when someone falls down.
- I am going to breathe when I feel grumpy.
- I am going to use my listening ears.
- I am going to use my walking feet.
- I am going to pick up toys so that we are all safe.

I do the Safekeeper Ritual while the children are reading books at circle so they are doing their work while I check in with each child. I also call up two children at a time so that this will go quickly and they learn from each others ideas.



Brain Smart® Start

Activity to Unite:

Choose a song to unite. The Zumba Instructor leads beside you. Some of our classroom favorites are *This is my School Family*, *Safekeeper*, *Big Voice*, *Safe and Calm*, all by Dr. Becky Bailey

Activity to Disengage Stress:

We do belly breathing immediately following our brain break. The breathing expert (class job) helps lead this with my help. They roll the breathing cube and then lead that breathing with me and the class. We roll the cube 2 or 3 times and we do each breathing strategy 3 times. Some of the breathing strategies are: Balloon, Drain, Pretzel, S.T.A.R., cupcake, superhero, fire truck, etc. When the breathing cube lands on an empty spot, the breathing expert gets to help make up a new one. I always make sure they are breathing in through their nose (filling the belly) and breathing out through their mouth (exhale longer).

Activity to Connect:

We do an I Love You Ritual. See further down this handout for directions on I Love You Rituals. *Twinkle, Twinkle* or *Wonderful Woman* are ones I would start with.

Activity to Commit: Daily Commitments

Items needed:

1. Potato head pieces (you can find a Mr. Potato Head and use the pieces)
2. Play-Doh cups (or something like it, I just reused old Play-Doh cups)
3. Large craft sticks (write student names on them)
4. Papers with "Today I commit to..." at the top (Commitment papers)

First Day of School: I introduce the 5 potato head pieces/cups with our commitments.

1. Safe hands
2. Watching eyes
3. Listening ears
4. Safe feet/body
5. Talking at the right time/use kind words

Week 1/Day 1: Start by introducing the concept and show the cups with pieces attached. Explain what that means/looks like. Display pictures or draw on chart to show watching eyes, etc.

Day 2: Introduce class commitments (we choose one to work on together)

Day 3: Take pictures of what they "look" like when showing the commitments

Day 4: Teach how to fill in a commitment page at easel (Today I commit to.....) The children watch, they do not fill one out today. This is you doing a large sample on chart paper.

Week 2: Review commitment page at easel (do a different one each day). We focus on one per day as a class. Have students put their stick in the cup to show their commitment.

Week 3: Students draw their commitments on their paper. They place their commitment paper at the circle. Call up about 4-5 students per day to share in front of the class. The student says, "Today I commit to..." The class responds with, "We wish you well on your commitment today, (child's name)."

Week 4: Teach shoulder buddies and "Star and Wish." After you have a few students come up to share their commitment, the rest of the class turns to a shoulder buddy (someone they are sitting beside) and shares their commitment with that person. The listener gives a star and a wish. The star is something they did great on and the wish is something they could work on to improve for next time. For example, the student who is sharing says: "Today I commit to watching eyes." The listener says: "My star is ____ and my wish is ____." This involves all of the students and everyone has someone that hears their commitment.

Week 5 - 6: Continue with what is working for you. If you want to only do the sticks for a while, placing them into the cups with potato head pieces, then you can do that. You can move to the commitment papers whenever you and your students are ready. I find that it gives them a chance to write their name and draw themselves along with making a commitment and I like to see the growth across the year. I am flexible with the commitments and I go with what the children are ready for.



We do commitments every day for the entire year. The children choose their own personal commitment. The child can choose the same commitment several days in a row. If I notice that a student needs work on safe hands, I might suggest to that child that they choose it next time. I will also mention to the class to choose something that is hard for them so that they can get better at that. You can add a commitment “check-up” if you have the time for it. It is an “I did it” or an “Oops.” It is a reflection piece for the end of the day.

Wish Well/Absent Student Ritual

Items Needed:

1. A picture of each child with magnet stuck to the back (I use their meet the teacher picture and print it very small, back it with construction paper and laminate. Then I place a piece of magnet strip on the back, hot glue if needed.) I try to have these ready for the first day of school.
2. Wish Well heart magnet tray (Conscious Discipline product) or any kind of cookie sheet, heart shaped or not.

We do Wish Well at circle time. I have a student job called “Wish Well Helper.” They come up to the front and put pictures of the children who are absent in the heart. I have all of the student photos on the easel so they are right there. We deep breathe, close our eyes, see those friends feeling healthy and with our loving eyes send our love out to those children. Then we sing *We Wish You Well*. We also take a few seconds to put our own personal wishes in our hearts.

Absent Student: When a child returns to school after being gone, the child welcomes them back and removes their picture from the heart and places it back with the class photos. In the past, I used a craft stick with a butterfly attached and they would go up to that child and say, “You’ve been gone and you’ve been missed. Where would you like your welcome back kiss?” You can do what works for you. I plan to add to this next year. I am going to have a student job where they make cards for absent students and place in their cubbies. When they return to school, they will see that we missed them (Absent Child Artist job).

Traveling Shubert

This is a fantastic way to bridge the gap between school and home while implementing Conscious Discipline. We gather for a separate circle time I call “Shubert Time.”

Items Needed:

1. One Traveling Shubert (laminated and put on a stick). Traveling Shubert resource is under free resources at [ConsciousDiscipline.com/Resources/Traveling-Shubert](https://www.consciousdiscipline.com/resources/traveling-shubert). The stick can be a paint stirrer or a sturdy good size craft stick (you can get the sticks free at Lowes or purchase).
2. A composition notebook: I put a cover on the journal that says Traveling Shubert with his picture. On the inside cover, I include a letter to parents with directions. Then I use contact paper on the front, back and inside cover. I will end up using 1 or 2 for the year.
3. A Ziploc bag or some kind of bag to hold Shubert and the journal.

Steps to starting your very own Traveling Shubert!

1. Make Shubert, the journal, and the note home.
2. During the second week of school, share your adventures that you had with Traveling Shubert. If you have para’s, co-teachers or a teachers’ assistant, make sure they have a day to share their story this week, too. This means you bring Shubert home with you for the evening and take pictures of Shubert with your family and your evening activities. You will share your adventure and photos with your class. Make sure you have already read two Shubert books before he goes home with any students. I read *Shubert is a Star* the first week and *Shubert’s Big Voice* the second week.



This ensures that the children know WHY he is important to the class and they will know HOW Shubert helps our School Family and also have the desire to keep Shubert safe. The child is Shubert's safekeeper when he is away from school.

3. Begin to send home Traveling Shubert with your students. Shubert goes home with one student each night until the whole class has had a turn. Then he starts another rotation of visits. My class has about 5 visits across the year. During each visit, the parents always write a story along with the following activity:

First visit: A regular visit to meet the family, etc.

Second visit: Breathing Box. I send home directions to make a breathing box. I print the icons off of the Conscious Discipline website and I write a letter to the parents. I slip those things in the bag with Shubert. I tell the children they can bring their breathing box in to show the class, but that we will not keep it. It goes right back home with them.

Third visit: Safe Place: I send directions home with the children on how to make a safe place. The families may not get it done that night, but when they do get it done, they send me a picture.

Fourth visit: I Love You Ritual bear. I send home a letter of what they are making along with a die cut out of a bear shape and a printout of "I Love You Rituals" from the Conscious Discipline website. The children can decorate their bear and store the I Love You Rituals pictures on the bear somehow. I encourage them to bring the bear to school so we can see it and get ideas and we send it back home the same day. We do not keep it.

Fifth visit: I send home either directions to make a Kindness Tree or a Friends and Family/Wish Well Board. The resources I used are from the paid section of the Conscious Discipline website. Although, you could create your own easily, too. The children do bring their work in so they can show everyone.

The morning when Shubert returns, the child who had Shubert places him in the special Shubert chair. That way we can see that he returned from his adventure. When Shubert time comes, the class is seated in a circle and the Shubert Manager will start the process. He will ask, "Who had Shubert yesterday?" That person will come sit in the special chair.

The Shubert Manager will continue their job to make sure Shubert is safe and sound and that he and his journal made it back. Sometimes the Shubert Manager gives the class pointers on how to take care of Shubert. Then he sits down with the class and the teacher begins to read about Shubert's adventure.

In my original parent letter, I list my email address and ask for the parents to send in pictures of their time with Shubert. The children love this because not only do we read their story, then we see pictures of their time with Shubert. They learn how to call on students and take comments and questions from their classmates.

We do this ritual daily until the end of the year. At the end of the year, we do a Parent Shubert Celebration in which I surprise all of the children with their very own Traveling Shubert to keep and a small journal of their own! We invite families up to show them many different Conscious Discipline structures at this celebration, too. Have a wonderful time with your Traveling Shubert!

School Family Jobs

***"Being of service to others activates the higher centers of the brain. With a job for every student, each child contributes daily to the success of the classroom."* - Dr. Becky Bailey**

I started out with the job chart that is sold by Conscious Discipline and it worked well for several years. When I began to teach Pre-K, I wanted different jobs and used a Teachers Pay Teachers job chart. I still found that some of the jobs were not useful. No one wanted to be the caboose! This past year, I did not start jobs the first or second week. Instead, I watched the children and I listed down tasks that needed to be done and asked myself if this was something a child could do or help with.



I also asked the children where we could use their help. I got rid of the ones that no one liked and no one wanted to do. I wanted all of the jobs to be just as important or meaningful as the line leader. You can use my following example or you may start with the job chart that is already created for you.

Here are the steps to creating your School Family jobs:

1. Make list of jobs
2. Take pictures of the children doing the actual job (not allowing their face in the picture).
3. Laminate them and number on the back (just in case they fall, you will remember the job order).
4. Take individual pictures of all students in the classroom and laminate them.
5. Hang them up. I use some thick twine/jute to hang the job pictures from and clothespins to attach the job to the twine.
6. Hang student pictures beside the jobs. I use staples for this part as I won't be moving the student picture all year. This way the child can always find their job.

I teach 4 jobs a day until I have taught them all. By the third week of school, we start the jobs. Rotate as often as you see fit. My class only attends for 3 hours a day, four days a week (because I have a morning and afternoon class). Due to that, we usually switch jobs every 2 or 3 weeks.

The School Family jobs we currently have:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Bell Ringer | 11. Hand Washing Expert |
| 2. Door Holder | 12. Supply Manager |
| 3. Nurse | 13. Block Manager |
| 4. Safe Place Helper | 14. Librarian |
| 5. I Love You Ritual Helper | 15. Breakfast/Lunch Helper |
| 6. House Manager | 16. Table Squirter |
| 7. Kindness Tree Helper | 17. Line Leader |
| 8. Zumba Instructor | 18. Breathing Expert |
| 9. Floor Sweeper | 19. Shubert Manager |
| 10. Wish Well Helper | 20. Vacation |

Other job ideas: Morning Message Writer, Absent Child Artist, New Child Buddy, Greeter.

“Encouraging children to help others creates a sense of belonging in which the intrinsic desire to be of service outshines attention-seeking behavior.” – Dr. Becky Bailey

I Love You Rituals

“Remember, connection involves eye contact, touch and presence in a playful situation.”
– Dr. Becky Bailey

Items Needed:

The *I Love You Ritual* book by Dr. Becky Bailey is very helpful!

When: I teach a new I Love You Ritual at the beginning of each week during circle time. We practice that same one all week. I have made a flip book of I Love You Rituals that we keep at the Safe Place (or it is able to be carried by a teacher or co-teacher) and I have a handmade book at the easel for circle time. Conscious Discipline also offers one on a clip. The actual I Love You Ritual book is the greatest resource. It has so many I Love You Rituals along with a CD.

How: I also have a School Family job called “The I Love You Ritual Helper.” When I introduce an I Love You Ritual, I show them how to do it using my hand. Then the children will do it on their own hand. We practice like that for one-two days. After that, we turn to our “shoulder buddy” and we take turns doing the I Love You Ritual on our partner. The two children take turns and I lead it (my partner is the I Love You Ritual Helper). After we know it, we can extend it into other parts of our day. This year, I will be adding at the end of the week, doing it with the whole class. For example, we will adapt and change it so that we can do the I Love You Ritual as a class/all together.



This is the order I would teach them:

Week 1: Round and Round the Garden

Week 2: Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

Week 3: Wonderful Woman

Week 4: Here's the Bunny

Week 5: Peter, Peter Pumpkin Eater

Week 6: Humpty Dumpty

The power of I Love You Rituals is absolutely amazing. You can extend it in a story telling table (leave the props and words). You can surprise others in the building by doing surprise I Love You Rituals with them (classrooms, adults in the building). The children do them at home with family members because they are quick and fun ways to connect. You can do them with a child who needs extra connections throughout the day. You can even make up new ones with your class. They are amazing! Just get started!

Ways To Be Helpful

Make a list with the children of ways they can be helpful. When you notice someone doing something helpful use this formula, "You _____ so _____." "That was helpful!" The children love to be helpful and noticing allows them to understand what helpful looks like. Class jobs and being of service is being helpful.

Try to find a service learning project where the children can be helpful to others. As a class, we did a teddy bear drive where the children had to be of service in order to earn money. They brought the money that they had earned to our teddy bear drive. When we added all of that money together, we were able to purchase 56 bears for children in the hospital. We celebrated our efforts by bringing bears from home and doing activities with our bears. The children did not get prizes for this teddy bear drive. Instead, they gave their time and work so that other children would feel comforted in the hospital. We also made a class book of our favorite ways to be helpful. Families loved that we brought jobs/being of service into their homes.

Kindness Tree/Recorder

I have a felt hanging display with a felt tree sewn to it. I have many felt heart shapes in pockets. There is a student job called the Kindness Tree Helper. It is their job to be on the lookout for kindness and when they see it, they put a heart on the tree. Other students can let them know when they see kindness, too. They tell what kind acts they saw and count the hearts. When the tree is filled up, we start again. As adults in the classroom, we have to notice kindness so that the children will understand what kindness looks like. You can take pictures of kind acts and post them near the tree. You can also have a notebook where children can document kindness they see with drawings.

Friends & Family Board

Take an individual picture of each child and then one of the family at meet the teacher (or home visit). Use these pictures for the Friends and Family Board. You can also use that picture for the Wish Well Board, the Job Board and Birthday Board. Find somewhere in the classroom to display the family photos. The children go to the Friends and Family Board when they are missing their families or just wanting to show their friends. It shows to the families that we are all in this together. You can also display other adults in the building that are important to us. I plan to add that next year. You can include a picture of you with your family, too.

My Plan for the First Six Weeks

WEEK	MATERIALS
Week 1:	

My Plan for the First Six Weeks

WEEK	MATERIALS
Week 4:	

