



Creating School Family™ in Non-Traditional Classroom Settings

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Brain Smart® Start

Activity to Unite – Everyone is doing the same thing at the same time with the same energy.

Activity to Disengage Stress – Turns off the stress response through deep breathing.

Activity to Connect – Includes eye contact, touch, presence, and playfulness.

Activity to Commit – Focuses the brain for goal achievement.

What could a Brain Smart Start looking like in your teaching environment?

Step 1: Start establishing a School Family on the first day.

Help each class create a Family Name (let your students take ownership of this – it will give them more buy-in).

Then create a Family Ritual. It can be a chant, a song, a cheer, a dance – it doesn't matter, just as long as it's fun and everyone knows what to do. Again, let your students take ownership of this piece.

Step 2: Start your Safekeeper Ritual.

In a School Family everything comes back to safety. This is especially true when students travel to different spaces throughout the building (i.e., our classrooms).

"It's my job to keep you safe. It's your job to help keep it safe."

Step 3: Create Agreements.

Agreements aren't rules. Rules are teacher driven, whereas students help develop agreements. Start with a brainstorming session – “*What would help you feel safe enough to participate in class?*” From those responses design your agreements. You'll find that most classes have similar needs.

Step 4: Do a Brain Smart Start with EVERY class, EVERY day!

I cannot stress this enough! It is worth the time commitment to start class this way. It reorganizes your students' brains after they've transitioned to your teaching space (or you've entered their classroom). You will get much more accomplished with your students if they've participated in a full Brain Smart Start before you start teaching your content.

Step 5: Give every student a meaningful job. Yes, EVERY student.

Which student jobs would be most helpful to you? What are the tasks that you struggle to accomplish – can a student do one as their job?

What are some possible jobs for your learning environment?

Step 6: Start your Friends & Family display.

Start taking pictures on Day 1 and continue to add to it throughout the year. Place it where your students can access it easily without disrupting learning. Be equitable – include everyone!

Step 7: Implement *I Love You Rituals*[™] with key students.

Create a plan.

Who? – Which student/s will be best served?

What? – What type of ILURs work best for this student?

When/Where? - Be consistent and predictable. Will it only take place during your class?

At a specific point in the day? Will they come to you, or will you go to them?

Step 8: Give it some time, then teach them how to use your Safe Place™.

Be deliberate in this step. Students must feel safe and connected to learn how to use the Safe Place. It's better to wait until they're ready than to push it out too early.

I Am

I Calm

I Feel

I Choose

I Solve

What tools will you include that use the sense of sight?



What tools will you include that use the sense of sound?



What tools will you include that use the sense of smell?



What tools will you include that use the sense of touch?



NOTES

Lined area for taking notes.

