



**A Strong Start contains four key elements, which helps get students into their optimal learning state. Below you will find suggestions and resources on how you can incorporate the four elements in a virtual setting. As you discover and create your own, feel free to add them to this document!**

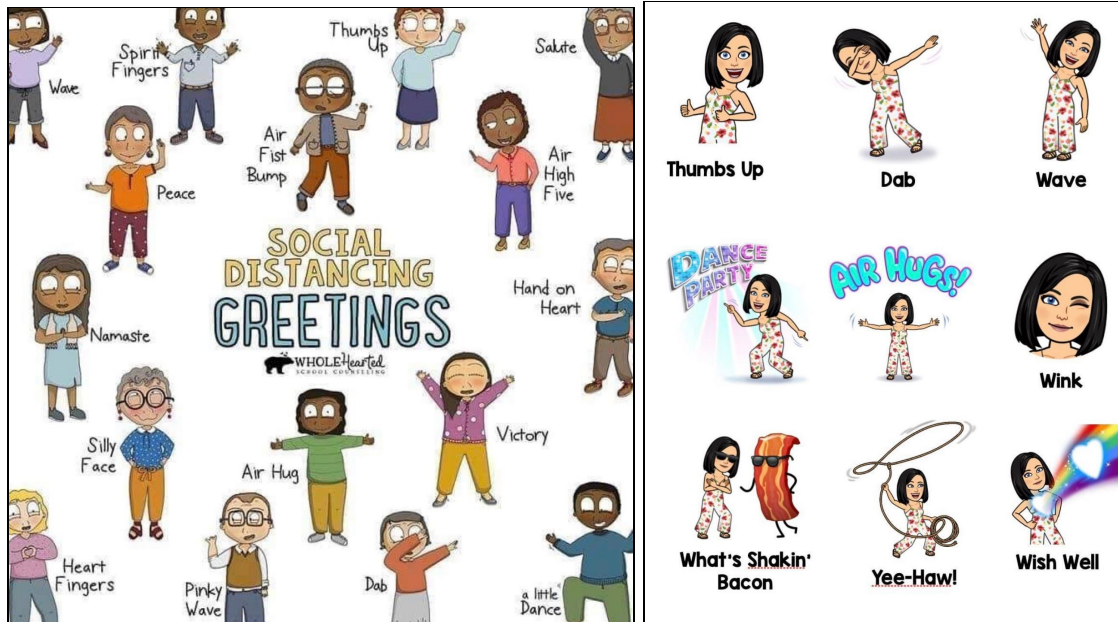
*(Modifications for a virtual/learn-from-home setting adapted from Transcend + VaNess Academy)*

**Opportunities to Build Relationships through Connection:** The activity to **connect** helps to maintain focused attention and the motivation to learn. It also releases oxytocin, which promotes bonding and reduces aggression.

#### **Modifications for a virtual / learn-from-home setting:**

- Make use of the waiting room or lobby feature so that you can greet students individually as they enter a live learning session.
- You may need to schedule short individual check-ins with students outside of whole-group live instruction to intentionally build the student-teacher connection. You may have other SEL or academic objectives during this time, but be sure to begin your time together with a greeting choice and a back-and-forth conversation with your student.
- Make use of the breakout room feature so you can greet students in a smaller group. If possible, include an adult in each breakout room.
- Consider asking students to invite a family member to join your Strong Start for the greeting portion (either live or recorded). Students can choose a touch greeting to share with that family member.
- Use the breakout room feature to allow students to connect during live remote learning. Be sure to explicitly model and practice Purposeful Partnering expectations before using this feature.
- Partner students in breakout rooms and challenge them to complete a shared activity (e.g., come up with a virtual secret handshake, unscramble a list of words, complete a short scavenger hunt).
- Modify games like I Spy or Pictionary that can be played quickly and virtually. Choose games that don't require a winner or a student getting "out."

## Virtual Greeting Examples



## Check in question with visual options

Think - pair - share in breakout rooms:

OUR FAVORITES!  
Tell your favorite... 🥰 🥰

Zoo animal  
**OR**  
Song to sing

## Connection Games

- I Spy
- Match me
- Charades
- Passing the ball
- Scavenger hunt
- Find & tell: I.e, “find something that is pink, find a rock”
- [Move and Freeze](#)
- “Where’s waldo” on screen + circle
- Pictionary
- [Guess that sound](#) Youtube channel
- Poems and/or song that directly includes students
  - ex. [Little Red Box](#)
- [Guess the Movie](#) (from Ana N.)
- Mirror Me (silent)
- This or That (e.g. Do you like swimming [motion] or going to the park [motion]?, play in gallery view)

**Opportunities to Disengage Stress/Mindful Breathing:** The activity to disengage stress involves deep breathing and stretching. It prepares the brain for learning and turns off the stress response.

### Modifications for a virtual / learn-from-home setting:

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- Use gifs and videos to provide visuals that support students in deep breathing. See examples above.
- Use screen-share to participate in short active-calming activities and videos offered by meditation apps like Calm and Headspace (offered free to K-12 educators).
- Provide materials to create calming tools at home (e.g. pipe-cleaner, straw, and foam for a pinwheel).
  - [Box Breath](#)
  - [Virtual Breathing GIFs](#)
  - [Cosmic Kids Yoga](#)
  - [Go Noodle](#)
  - [Breathe with Rosita](#) (There’s other Sesame Street characters too. Search YouTube)
  - [Deep Breathing for Kids](#)
  - Breathing balls

- Option/Invitation to turn off camera
- Created visual of class favorite breaths
- Provide opportunities to take breaths throughout zoom time
- Changing body position/body breaks

**Opportunities to Set Goals/Intentions:** The activity to commit oneself to learning involves affirmations and positive thinking. It produces serotonin, teaches responsibility, promotes mindful attention and develops the prefrontal lobes.

**Modifications for a virtual / learn-from-home setting:**

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- Consider developing classroom agreements specific to the virtual learning environment, (e.g., “Stay focused on my learning,” “Keep trying, even when things get hard”). As you develop your classroom agreements at the start of the year, solicit student input and create agreements that are responsive to the virtual learning needs of your class.
- Use technology tools (e.g., Zoom stamp tool, online poll, chat feature) to allow for a visual representation of each student’s daily goal, so students can still view their goal and reflect on their progress.

**Suggested Commitments (use what feels right for you and your class family):**

- Stay at learning space (unless you need a break)
- Try your best
- Take turns speaking
- Raise your hand (*in front of the camera*)
- Use kind/helpful words

## Our Agreements



Look at the screen



Raise your hand to talk



Follow directions



Try your best

### Suggested Strategies to teach commitments:

- Match me exercise that is paired with expectations for Zoom
- Visual paired with commitments (short presentation), ended with a thumbs up to show us that students commit
- Share commitments with families (student and adult commitments)
- Go over agreements and pick one to commit to and focus for the meeting

**Opportunities to Unite/Build Community:** The activity to unite as a Class Family involves everyone doing something together. It builds connection, fosters a sense of safety and releases endorphins.

### Modifications for a virtual / learn-from-home setting:

- Call-and-response-style chants and songs may be more effective given lag time on virtual platforms.
- Model new Community Building activities and give students time to practice. Consider sharing links to songs in advance or in pre-recorded lessons so students will be familiar with the activities.
- Include visuals for learning lyrics and dance moves.
- Community Building activities are a great opportunity to exercise student autonomy, choice, and creativity. Students can create songs, dances, and chants and lead them for their peers.

- Community Building activities are a valuable component of Strong Start, but just like any of these components, it can be used throughout your day to refocus student attention and increase engagement. You may find yourself using Community Building activities much more frequently, given the challenges inherent in physically-distanced or virtual learning.

**Sing along Songs:**

[Moana - How Far I'll Go](#)

[Zootopia - Try Everything \(Shakira\)](#)

[Count On Me - Bruno Mars](#)

[Raise Your Arms with the Baby :-\)](#)


**Additional suggested uniting activities:**

- Co - Create a classroom song/chant
- [Classroom Cheers/Celebrations](#)
- Co-create videos/collages
- Share a zoom background
- Themes (wear your favorite color...etc.)
- Cook/bake together
- Whole class breaks (color together, dance, etc.)
- Pet day/Stuffed animal day
- [FlipGrid](#)

**Bonus - Opportunities to Ease Through Transitions:** Proactively support students through the energy/tension that might build up when transitioning from one activity/lesson to the next.

- Consider using a consistent song to signal clean up/transition time.
- Call & response
- Playful movement activities
- Chants, match me, songs
- First \_\_\_\_, then \_\_\_\_\_
- Schedule checks,
- Reflect what we learned/did yesterday and what we are continuing with today
- Visual Timer
- Time to decompress/get needs met in longer session times <https://www.online-stopwatch.com/classroom-timers/>
- Music during transition times and to signal coming back soon
- Verbal warnings (1-2 mins left before break is over etc)

**Clear Expectations:** Clear and consistent expectations help students feel safe. With your team, consider what expectations (i.e. remote learning behaviors) will be important to name and practice for virtual learning.

Expectations	Examples
As often as possible, attach a visual to the expectations.	
To help build trust, be transparent about your absence or inability to hold a session	<p><i>“Tomorrow, we will not have our whole group lesson because I will not be here. You are prepared to continue learning even if I’m not here. You’ve got this! Make sure to watch the video and complete the assignment in our class folder. I will return on Thursday.”</i></p>
Respectful of time. Strict start and end point & be consistent with class time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For ELE students, attach times next to your visual schedule.</li> <li>• A student can have the job of timekeeper to help teacher</li> <li>• If helpful, use an actual timer.</li> </ul>

Prompting students to be ready. Pre lesson checklist.

### Pre-Lesson Checklist



Charge my device (tablet, laptop)



Take care of my needs (snack, bathroom)



Gather my supplies



Sit at learning spot

### We're glad you're here!

1. Wave to a friend! 
2. Put your microphone on mute. 
3. Sit up tall in your chair. 

Eyes on the speaker

Use the bathroom (*Before* the classroom)

Mute yourself

Eyes watching/Faces on the screen

Be in your learning space (**engage families to co-create**)

Bring supplies

Engage in work/try your best



Following directions	
Engagement signals (agree etc.)	Video chat polling feature
Video screens on (if student feels comfortable to do so)	
Mute self, raise hand to unmute	

**Helpful Visuals: Children constantly take in visuals/images to make sense of the world around them. Because of this, we know how instrumental visuals are in a classroom setting. What visuals do we need or want to create to support tier 1 virtual instruction?**

How to introduce session & how to exit session	Skills: bathroom, sleeping, washing hands, toothbrush, etc
Using your Zoom background to aide in visuals: I.e, having your expectations as your background	Sending out a social story before the beginning of school: Meeting teachers via zoom, expectations, it's okay to have mixed feelings
Schedule	Checklist (for before logging into class)
Visual Timer	Connectors
Expectations	Using students as a model for doing the norms (integration into social story)
Placemat for the tablet (with agreements, schedule, etc.)	Circle/square space to sit on
Be Ready Visual	<a href="#">First, then</a>
Agreements/Expectations	Classroom jobs
Wish well	Individual weekly schedules
Ask parents to take pics of student in learning spot to live in the home/use to show to remind student	Review xpectations up at each session
Using technology, Google search to advantage (e.g. vocabulary-visual link)	
Using students as a model for doing the norms (integration into social story)	

**Building Relationships: It is through relationships that students feel seen and valued. Once this is established, there is a willingness to engage and participate. What routines, rituals or activities can be used to build relationships virtually?**

Show & tell: using different themes	Using different sources of identity: food, picture, etc
Sharing what we saw on Seesaw: giving shoutouts to children (i.e, celebrating birthdays/bathroom breaks/nap time, giving thanks, etc)	Using powerpoint/slides to introduce the teacher: Who is your safekeeper? What is your favorite food?
Utilizing gifs, videos, powerpoint	Breaking up lessons with fun pictures, animations, videos and so on
1:1 calls to connect, sticking with a specific time	Office hours
Small groups	Incorporating children's interests in lesson
Snack time and games	Extra bonding time for specific students on a consistent schedule
Meals/snacks together	Lunch Bunch
Keep Seesaw public	Game Time
Class groups on other apps (whats app, etc.)	Community Resources
Social skills groups	Break out rooms
Caring connections (hug in a box)	Starting each session with wish wells
Free share time	Student spotlights during the first few weeks of school
Beginning of year hang out sessions	Lunch with teacher/safekeeper
All about me assignments	Office hours
Break out rooms	Seesaw Blog feature!