



## 2021-22 Resilience Through Transition Lessons

The lessons are separated for primary and intermediate students. *You know your students.* Adapt the lessons as you see fit to work for your classroom. Note that several of the lessons use the [American Sign Language sign for “Me too”](#). Meaning “I agree” or “I have a connection to that idea”.

Grade K-2 Lesson Overview		
Phase	Lessons	Topics
<a href="#">Phase 1</a> Where have we been?	2	What was your school year like last year?  What have you liked? What have you not liked?
<a href="#">Phase 2</a> Where are we now?	2	Last year was an emotional one. Our emotions are important to get to know. What have you been sad about? What are happy about? Where do you feel that in your bodies?  Getting to know ourselves: what are our superpowers that can help us to thrive?
<a href="#">Phase 3</a> Where do we want to go?  Preparing to step into the new school year.	3	What are our hopes and dreams for this year? How can all of our strengths help our dreams come true?  Building resilience for this school year: What stresses you? What calms you? What do you do or think that allows you to be calm and hopeful?  Self-regulation strategies and practices.

Grade 3-5 Lesson Overview		
Phase	Lessons	Topics
<a href="#">Phase 1</a> Acknowledgement of change.	3	How was last year different for you? How was it difficult? What was a surprise? What was good about the last school year for you? What strengths did you notice in yourself?
<a href="#">Phase 2</a> Honoring grief and loss. Preparing for transition.	2	What did you miss? What do you still miss? What was lost? How will we honor that?  What are you looking forward to? How have you grown and changed and how will that help you to thrive in this next school year?
<a href="#">Phase 3</a> Transition to future. Stepping into the new school year.	3	Preparing for this year: What stresses you? What calms you? What do you do or think that allows you to be flexible and hopeful?  What are your hopes and dreams for this year? What are your strengths and how will you use them to help you and your classroom community flourish this year?



## Lessons for Transition K-2

### Phase 1: Where Have We Been? Acknowledging the Past

Lesson #1: Reflecting on the past school year.

#### Objective:

- Allowing students to examine last year's school year and express what they are noticing since during the pandemic.
- To connect with other students around common and unique experiences
- To allow students to engage, share experience, feel heard and validated
- To teach students how to silently express their opinion using American Sign.

#### Materials:

- Students will need blank paper and pencils, markers, and/or crayons
- The drawing template for demonstration (below)

#### Comments for teachers

After the turn and talk, If your students still have the capacity, have them do a brain break and then move on to the next lesson in this series right away. If they need a longer break, do the next activity the next day.

#### Directions:

- Ask your students to think back all the way to the beginning of school last year. "What is different about how you have started school this year from how you started school last year?" Listen to the responses and write them onto a chart or whiteboard. (Draw forth that they had school mostly at home on-line last year and saw their friends and teacher over the computer)
- Ask, "What have you noticed in the world around you at the stores and in the streets, this past year, that was different than it used to be? What are you noticing is different right now?" Call on voices that were not heard in the first round. (e.g. spent a lot more time at home, people wore masks everywhere, stores and restaurants were closed. Now playgrounds and stores are open.)
- Acknowledge that there have been *many* changes over the past two years.
- Tell your students, We are going to think of things we liked about school last year and things we didn't like about school last year." Teach the ["Me too" / "Same here" American Sign Language sign](#). Have them practice the sign. Explain that when they hear something they agree with, they can use the sign. If they don't agree they can have their hands in their lap.
- From a list that is true for you, say some things you (as a teacher) liked about last school year and somethings you didn't (Here are some examples):
  - I liked having my dog near me when I was in school last year.
  - I liked having a kitchen near me when I was in school last year.
  - I liked having my pajama bottoms on when I was in school last year.
  - I liked having my family around me at school last year.



## Resilience Through Transition

	<p>Ask volunteers to say what they liked about school last year.</p> <p>Go on to talk about what you did NOT like about last year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I did NOT like being on computer a lot last year</li><li>• I did NOT like that I couldn't be in a real classroom with all of my students.</li><li>• I did NOT like that I could not give you a hug.</li><li>• I did NOT like that we couldn't go to the library together etc.</li></ul> <p>Ask volunteers to say what they did not like about how school was last year.</p> <p><b>Turn and talk:</b></p> <p>Ask students to turn to a partner and to tell them one thing they liked about school last year.</p> <p>Ask students to turn to a partner and tell them one thing that they did not like about school last year.</p>
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## Lessons for Transition 1-2

### Phase 1: Where Have We Been? Acknowledging the Past

Lesson #2: Our personal experience of last year: What we found both good and challenging.

#### Objective:

- Allowing students to explore their personal experience of school during the pandemic last year using both their right (artistic expression) and left (language and words) sides of their brains to promote integration.
- Explicitly introducing the idea that we are all different. We all have different likes and dislikes and that is OK.

#### Materials:

- Smiling face sheet for each student
- Sad face sheet for each student
- Pencil, markers, crayons

#### Comments for teachers:

You may want to break this up into two lessons, one for drawing what they liked and one for drawing what they did not like. The idea here is not to do good art, however. The idea is just to express in drawing what they are feeling...The act of using images to express. So, if they can do both in one lesson, it would allow them to move on from the work on the past to the work on the present.

#### Directions:

1. Show the two sheets of paper, one with a smiling face and the other with a sad face. Explain that they will draw one thing they LIKED about last year at school and the other will be one thing they DID NOT LIKE about school last year. Tell them that each person may have a different thing that they like and don't like...we all have our own thoughts, likes and dislikes. We are all different and can learn from one another.
2. Ask students to think of one thing that they, personally, really did like about last school year that they would like to draw. Once they have that thought in their brains, they are to put their thumb up.
3. Call on someone (or a few people) who has their thumb up to say aloud what thing they are thinking.
4. Ask students to think of one thing that they really did NOT like about last school year that they will draw. Once they have that thought in their brains, they are to put their thumb up.
5. Call on someone (or a few) who has their thumb up to say aloud what thing they are thinking.
6. Pass out the papers for the students to draw on. For those who can write, have them describe what is happening in their drawing when they are done. For those who are not yet writing, have students dictate for an adult who will put their description on the page for them.
7. Put the art up on the wall. Find ways to celebrate the likes and dislikes of last year. Empathize with the dislikes and say how hard that must have been.
8. Explain to the students: "This is a new year that is also a little different than what used to be 'normal'." We will soon talk about making this year the best year we can."



**Something I liked about school last year**



**Something I didn't like about school last year.**



## Lessons for Transition K-2

### Phase 2: Where Have We Been? Acknowledging the Past

#### Lesson #3: Exploring Feelings: Emotion Body Maps

**Objective:**

- To begin to build an awareness of emotions and how they are experienced.
- Connect body sensations to emotions in order to get to know them better and be able to recognize them when they arise.
- Acknowledge the grief of missing things in the healing stage of transitioning to the new school year.
- Recognize joy and happiness present despite the difficult past.

**Materials:**

- Body templates to send out ahead of the class. Send the two versions, one for sadness/grief and the other for joy/happiness
- Markers or crayons or colored pencils for each student.

**Comments for teachers:**

To prime for this activity, it may be helpful to give the class some examples of feeling words or by doing the Glad, Mad, Sad or Scared activity in the PDSC manual on page 69. You might share a feelings chart, brainstorm some feeling words or read a book talking about feelings before jumping into this activity.

Brain researcher Dan Siegel and SEL researcher Daniel Goleman have shown

**Directions:**

1. Spend a few moments talking about feelings and that students may have felt some coming into a new school year, with new friends, a new teacher and being in the school in real life when they are not very used to it.
2. Remind students of the “Me Too” sign. Tell them that you are going to share what you were feeling as you came to school on the first day this year. Ask them to use the sign if they felt any of the feelings that you say aloud. Tell them that you were feeling:
  - A little nervous
  - A little scared
  - A little worried
  - A little excited
  - A lot happy
3. Point out that these are all different, but you were feeling all of them at the same time! We can feel more than one thing at once and everyone feels things differently. Some feelings are more difficult to feel than other feelings.
4. Say, “Many of us felt some sadness over the past year about things that they missed out on because of the pandemic. People missed out on birthday parties, family gatherings, sports, and other things. What did you miss out on during the pandemic? Does anyone remember?” Let children talk about any sadness, loss or grief that they may have felt as a result of the pandemic time. Empathize. Ask the children to put their hand over the part of their body where they feel the sadness when they think of this.
5. Ask, “What does sadness feel like to you? Would someone be able to share what it feels like to them? Everyone is different! Emotions feel different to everyone! Does it feel heavy? Does it feel like bumble bees? Does it feel sticky like glue?” (Volunteers share)



that the ability to name difficult emotions calms the brain and is regulating. We “name them to tame them.” This lesson is a step towards building that skill and can be done after or before “Glad, Mad, Sad or Scared: The Wheel of Feelings” (PDSC p 69, TG p 40)

This lesson can easily be split in two. Because you don’t want to end with your students feeling sad, you might do the conversations about grief and joy one day and then do the drawing activity for both of them the next day.

6. Ask, “What color is sadness to you? When sadness or grief is in your body is it green? Is it brown? Is it red? Is it blue? Close your eyes and remember sadness. Put your hand on the part of your body where you feel it and pay attention quietly. “What color is sadness to you?” (Volunteers share)
7. Say, “When we can *notice* when we are feeling sadness, and we can say, ‘I am feeling sad’ it actually makes us feel better! It is kind of like magic!” Have students practice this naming of the emotion aloud.
8. Share the template of the assignment. Say, “Here is an outline of a body. Think of something or someone that you have missed or something that you missed out on doing because of the pandemic. What I’d like you to do is to color the body *WHERE* you feel sadness and in the *color* you feel the grief or sadness.”
9. Ask volunteers to share what they have created and to explain how their bodies feel when they are sad.
10. Repeat the lesson and this time ask the students to focus on something that has made them *happy* or *joyful* lately. Ask them to close their eyes for a moment and picture that thing happening and to put their hands on the part of their bodies where they feel *this* emotion. Ask, “How is this different?” “What color is *THIS* emotion or feeling?” What does this one feel like....waves? ...warmth? ....buzzing? Everyone experiences emotions differently.”
11. Ask the students to use the body template with the happy face and to color this one.
12. At this time or when the class meets again, have volunteers share their “body maps” for happiness/joy and for grief/sadness as well so that people can see the differences.
13. At the next class get together, ask if anyone felt and emotion...like sad or joyful since we got together and if they noticed it in their bodies and said to themselves, “I am feeling sad!” or “I am feeling joyful”. Ask what they noticed in their bodies when they did that. If it was a feeling like sadness or anger did naming it make them feel better?

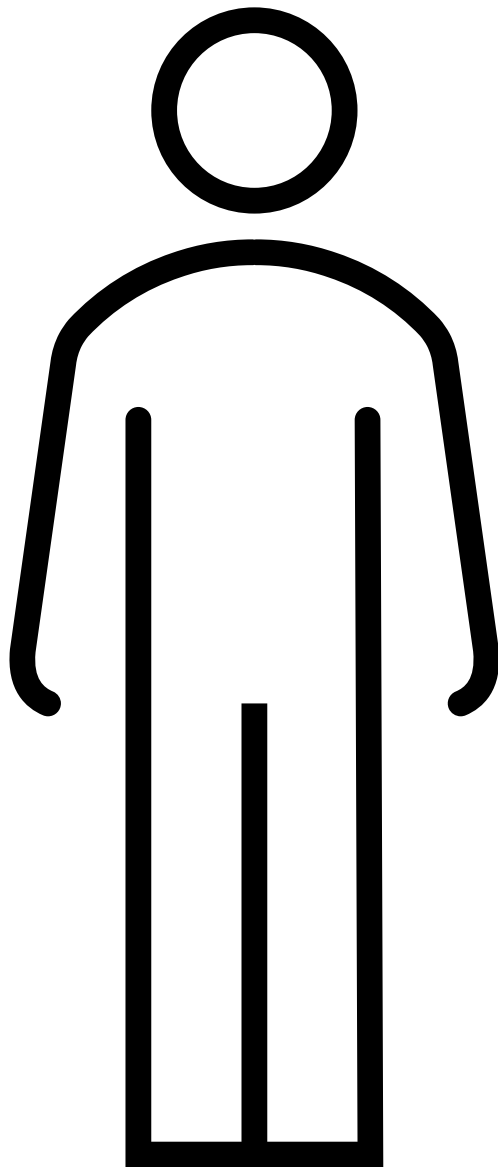


My name \_\_\_\_\_

What / who I missed during the pandemic was \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

When I am feeling sad it feels like this in my body:

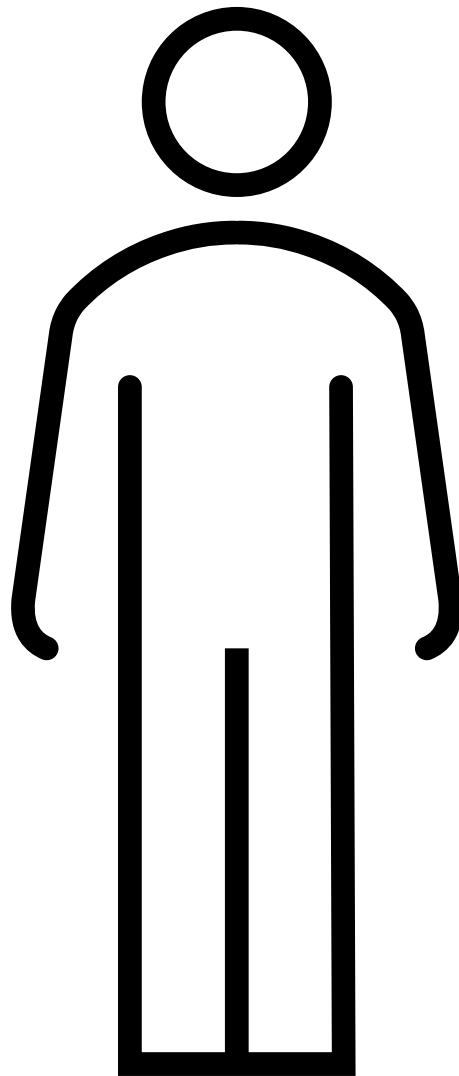


My name \_\_\_\_\_

What/who makes me feel happiest right now is

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

I am feeling HAPPY about it and it feels like this in my body:





## Lessons for Transition K-2

### Phase 3: Stepping into the New School Year

Lesson #4: Hopes and dreams for a different kind of school year

#### Objective:

Allow students to look forward with optimism to a different kind of school year.

Solidify some goals and objectives

Set the stage for creating group agreements and begin to bond as a community.

Integrate right brain (drawing) to left brain (language).

#### Materials:

For students: Paper, markers, crayons, pencil or pen or computer.

For teacher: pen and paper

#### Comments for teachers

As an extension to this lesson use the activity: Beginning the Almost Perfect School Year in the PDSC manual page 37-40. After the brainstorm you can collect 3-4 themes like: learn a lot, have fun, make friends etc. Then, using the T-Chart model in the activity, ask the students **how they can help** make that dream come true. Fill out "What we can say" and "What We Can Do" to make each of the dreams come true.

#### Directions:

1. Explain to the students that though this is also a very different school year than most students in the past have had, we can still make it a *great* school year!
2. Say, "We can still all *learn, teach, feel safe and be together* even if we wear masks or if we have to distance or even if we have fewer kids in our class." Ask the students to tell you what kinds of things they are hoping and dreaming for their class this year. Ask, "What would they like to learn or do this year in school?"
3. Remind students how to tell you that they have an idea to share (You will need to have gone over this in an earlier lesson. Hand up? Thumb up?). Explain that when they share their ideas, you are writing every one of them down. When their classmates share a hope or dream that *they also* have, if *they also* have, they can make the "Me too!" sign so everyone can see.
4. As they share their thoughts, jot down your students' ideas on chart paper/white board/overhead. Write down each student's thoughts as closely to how they said them as possible, so when you read them back, students who shared will recognize their own. After all who want to share have shared, read all aloud back to the class.
5. Ask each student to draw one of their own hopes and dreams for this year and / or write about it. For anyone who is not yet writing, a parent or caregiver can transcribe their story on to their drawing
6. When the students meet again, have several share their hopes and dreams drawings.



## Lessons for Transition K-2

### Phase 2: Where Are We Now?

#### Lesson #5: Strengths / What Are My Gifts?

##### Objective:

To encourage personal exploration to discover strengths.

To foster the idea that students' strengths will help them to achieve their goals and are tools to help others achieve their goals.

##### Materials:

- Students will need paper, markers, paints, crayons or pastels
- Teachers will need a class list.
- Extra: A copy of *And So Much More* by Jessica Callaco or a similar book about strengths and talents.

Online read aloud of [And So Much More](#)

##### Comments for teachers:

Students often don't understand that they have strengths that they can use to help them to achieve their own hopes and dreams and that will continue to get better at things. They can use these talents, skills and strengths to not only help themselves but also to help others. Introducing this idea of personal power used for their own and the greater good is empowering for students and introduces the ideas of capability and collaboration.

##### Directions:

1. If you have access to it, read aloud a copy of *And So Much More* by Jessica Callaco. The first page reads, "I am cute, but I am so much more..." It talks about personality strengths like kindness, creativity, imagination, etc. If you don't have access to it, introduce the idea that we all have important strengths, skills and talents: things that help us enjoy the world and make it easier for us to contribute and help others.
2. Ask the students to think of one of the many strengths or talents that they have. Ask them to put up one thumb to let you know that they know what their "one thing" is.
3. Explain, "We are going to give each person a chance to tell one thing, one strength or talent that you have thought of. Say, "When it is your turn, you can share one of your strengths or talents. For example, if it is Sam's turn he might say,

**'I have an great imagination!' or 'I am really strong!'**

Then you will answer back all together:

**'Sam has a good imagination!' or 'Sam is really strong'**

And then I will call on someone else. And we will all answer that person back in the same way until we hear from everyone"

4. Explain that each one of the students have that one strength and talent AND *so much more!* Our strengths are *always* developing and growing. They are like seeds sprouting and we will continue to grow different strengths, even more than we have already. What a class!
5. Ask students to draw and color a picture of themselves and to either print or have an adult print for them all the strengths and talents they have all around their picture. It can be a drawing of their whole bodies or just their heads and faces.
6. When the class reconvenes at a later date to share their drawings, ask them to choose one of their strengths and to explain **how that strength will help them to make this a great school year and ask them which strength they have that might be important in helping someone else this year.**



## Lessons for Transition K-2

### Phase 3: Stepping into the New School Year

Lesson #6: What stresses us? What calms us?

*Adapted with permission from an activity by Kelly Pfeiffer from the Positive Discipline website.*

#### Objective:

To encourage students to tune into what causes their resiliency window to shrink and also to have them think about what causes it to expand, allowing them to self-regulate.

To bring to awareness that students have the power and tools to self-regulate.

#### Materials:

- Zoom whiteboard to use with “Share Screen”

#### Comments for teachers:

If your class has not yet done Brain in the Palm of the Hand lesson from the PDSC manual page 60, do it ahead of this lesson.

Extensions: Ask the students to put together a “Calming Basket” or “Comfort Basket” at home that is filled with tools that might help them when they are stressed.

You could also lead the Positive Time Out activity in the PDSC Manual. [This video](#) models making one at home.

#### Directions:

1. Using a whiteboard/chart paper/overhead which you have divided into two, vertically, and labeled on the left side, “What Stresses Us?” introduce the topic of stressors and explain that different things make different people worried, upset, angry or stressed. Ask the students to share what stresses them, personally.
2. Capture their ideas (about 10 things) and read them aloud. Ask the students to show the “Me too!” sign when they hear something that also stresses them.
3. Tell the students that just as some things that stress one person do not bother another person, things that feel calming differ from person to person. Say, “When you have been upset in the past, what have you noticed calms you down? What *place, thoughts* or *things* you can do have worked to help you calm yourself so you feel more even and regulated? In other words, what helps you get back into your calm, thinking brain?”
4. Label the right column “What Calms Us”. Take answers and make a list. Read it aloud. Ask the students to do the “Me too!” sign if they hear something that also works for them. Add to the list by saying, “If you think of things around the house that give you comfort that could be moved to a basket, box or to a little special place at home, what might those things be? A stuffed animal? A special pillow? A special blanket? A soothing book?”
5. Go around the whole class and ask each person to choose one thing from the list that they would be willing to try to *use, do or think about* in the next week when they feel stressed as a calming practice.



## Lessons for Transition K-2

### Phase 3: Stepping into the New School Year

Lesson #7: Student led self-regulation practice

#### Objectives:

- To have students teach, learn and practice self-regulation activities
- To promote student leadership
- Provide tools and practices for self-regulation and class regulation.

#### Materials:

- Self-regulation activities and the descriptions are [downloadable as a PDF](#). They are meant to be used to create a set of tool cards.

#### Comments for teachers:

To keep resiliency windows open and expanded, regular attention to calming brains and central nervous systems is key. Being able to engage student leadership empowers students and allows them to feel like capable, contributing class members. Students might also be enlisted to call out when a self reg activity is needed or to be timers, reminding you when 10 minutes has passed and it is time for a self reg break.

#### Directions:

1. Refamiliarize yourself with the self-regulation activities from the Sound Discipline Tool Cards.
2. **Teachers of 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> grade:** Ask for students to demonstrate what they remember from last year: If you are teaching First or Second grade, your students will have done some self-regulation activities in their classrooms last year, I bet. Ask if anyone remembers doing any. If so, can they shout out some names? If no one can remember, prompt them with, “Does anyone remember doing Rainbow Breathing? Who can show that to us?”
3. **Teachers of Kindergarten:** If you are teaching Kindergarten, take the time to teach 2 or 3 engaging self- reg activities in a row with everyone following you. (rainbow breathing, finger breathing, tapping, flying a kite, shake like a dog, box breathing, for example) Then, ask who would lead one of those or another for the class. Ask everyone to look at that student and follow that student. Ask for other student volunteers to lead one of the other self-regulation activities they just learned from you until all those you have taught have been student led as well.
4. Explain: “As we move through this new school year, we are going to take breaks to calm our brains and bodies about every 10 minutes or so. I will need your help to lead these. We will practice these and will learn some more next time we are together.”



## Lessons for Transition 3-5

### Phase 1: Acknowledging Change

Lesson #1: Acknowledging the emotional response to last year

#### Objective:

- To explore all the differences in the way the year ended last year
- To acknowledge and validate the emotional response to the strangeness of last year's school year.
- To recognize that we are not alone...we all had an emotional response to the disruption of last year, some are unique some are shared.

#### Materials:

- Paper
- Dark Pens or Markers

#### Comments for teachers:

Before having students identify their own feelings it is helpful to give them some examples of feeling words or by doing the Glad, Mad, Sad or Scared activity in the PDSC manual. You might share a feelings chart, brainstorm some feeling words or read a book talking about feelings before jumping into this activity.

As with all these lessons, this has been written for the in person school year, but if things go back to virtual, this and the other lessons can be adapted easily to virtual.

#### Directions:

1. Acknowledge that the last school year was very unusual... historically different than any other year. Then say, "Remember back to that time. In what ways was the year different? How was it different for you, personally? What do you remember?"
2. Have students share out ideas. Write words and phrases on a whiteboard or chart paper to create a class list of things that were different about last school year.
3. Say, "I am going to read aloud our list of things that were different about the last school year from the list we just made. As you hear them notice your 'insides.' Notice the emotions you are feeling and write them down on a piece of paper. You might feel a few different feelings for each thing I read. Write as many emotions down as you can as you feel them."
4. Read the list aloud slowly so students have time to write down their feeling words.
5. Say, "Our list represents *a lot* of change and differentness and newness. It is a very different school year than anyone could have imagined. Change brings out emotions for human beings, sometimes several emotions. How many of you felt more than two or three feelings when you thought about the last school year?"
6. Ask students to hold up their papers so everyone can see all of the emotion words all over the papers.
7. Ask the students why it might be important to spend a moment thinking about our feelings about how last year ended before we begin to craft our new and different school year.



## Lessons for Transition 3-5

### Phase 1: Acknowledging Change

Lesson #2: Exploring and sharing our experiences

#### Objective:

- To spend time exploring our own experiences of change
- To have an opportunity to see both positive and negatives and to have both “heard”
- To integrate left and right hemispheres of the brain.
- To have the opportunity to build connection with the group
- To have an opportunity to see both unique and common experiences.
- To build empathy.

#### Materials:

- Paper and something to draw with

#### Comments for teachers

In preparation for the class, teach students the American Sign Language sign for “Me too/Same here!”

Have calm music ready to play during the drawing. (Though these are quick sketches, the vibe should be calming and restful)

#### Directions:

- **(10 min)** Hand out blank paper and ask students to fold their paper in 4 so there are 4 quadrants. Tell the students that you are going to ask them four questions and for them to **draw** the first thing that pops into their heads for each question, instead of saying the answer or writing the answer. The drawings will be quick sketches. They will have only 2 minutes to draw in each quadrant.
  - What was the hardest part of not having normal “in person school” for you last year?
  - What was the best part of not having “in person” school for you?
  - What was something positive about last year that surprised you? (Did you like something you didn’t think you would? Learn something you didn’t know you would?)
  - What was a strength you learned you had as a result of all you went through last year?
1. **(5 min)** Ask how the process was for folks to draw answers rather than say them or write them.
  2. **(15 min)** Tell the students that we will go around the classroom one by one and they can share one answer with the class of their choice: what was hardest, what was best, what was most surprising or their strength or they can say, “Pass.” When the students hear from their classmates something that they, too thought was hard or good or surprising they can use the A.L.S. “Me Too!” sign to show agreement.





## Lessons for Transition 3-5

### Phase 1: Acknowledging Change

Lesson #3: What did you miss? Honoring grief.

#### Objectives:

- To acknowledge and validate feelings of loss and grief
- To acknowledge shared feelings
- To connect as individuals through shared experience
- To use written art to express and move through feelings of loss.
- To allow students to feel heard and “feel felt”

#### Materials:

- Ensure that students have a copy of the template ahead of time either by email or another means.
- Have your poem (made on the template) ready to read to them.

#### Directions:

**(10 min) Explanation of assignment**

**(10-15 min) Time to write poem individually**

1. Share something that you, teacher, personally “lost” over the past months of the pandemic. This could be an experience that you did not get to do, or that you missed doing. Have a few examples to share with your students. Maybe you missed having a birthday party last year or were supposed to be in a friend’s wedding that was postponed. Name other things that you have missed. Maybe it was hugging your grandparents (or parents) or going to your favorite restaurant.
2. Explain that when we miss something it creates a feeling in us called “grief” that is something like sadness. It is a sadness that comes from losing something. Grief is as important as any other emotion, but we don’t tend to talk about it because some people think that talking about grief will make us *stay* sad. The interesting thing is that when we decide to talk about grief, after we do, it often makes us feel better. We were *all* missing something during the pandemic and *we all* have missed important things that we thought we would be able to do.
3. Ask the students: “What about you? What did you miss out on? What do you still miss? (What did you miss doing with your friends and family? What didn’t get to happen and you may be still sad about it?)”
4. Read a poem to the students that *you* wrote using the attached poem template so that they can get the feel of it.
5. Ask to fill out the blanks on the poem template. Encourage the students to be personal and detailed and to use specific names and details so that the poem creates images unique to them. When they are done, ask for a couple of volunteers to share their poems. Invite students who are willing to post or read their poems.

**(5-10 min) Optional Brainstorm:** Writing a poem is one way of honoring loss. What are some other ways you can think of that might work for you?

**A Pandemic Poem by \_\_\_\_\_**

I missed \_\_\_\_\_;

I missed \_\_\_\_\_,

And I missed out on \_\_\_\_\_

...which was important to me.

I missed \_\_\_\_\_;

I missed \_\_\_\_\_,

And I missed out on \_\_\_\_\_

...which was sad, don't you see?

I will honor my sadness. I will honor my loss. But I have hopes for my future:  
bridges to cross.

Though last year was difficult,  
for everyone, it's true.

I have hopes and dreams for THIS year,  
That are powerful, too!



## Lessons for Transition 3-5

### Phase 2: Where Are We Now?

Lesson #4: Exploring emotions: what brings you happiness? Building community.

#### Objective:

- To introduce the idea of exploring how emotions show up in our awareness.
- To practice an inward orientation of focus.
- To foster connection between students
- To foster engagement
- To acknowledge the happiness available even during difficult times
- To have fun together as a class.

#### Directions:

##### 1. (5 min) Explanation and Prep and Practice

- Lead a brainstorm about the emotion of happiness. What makes people feel happy (take many answers from people)?
- Ask everyone to write down on a scrap piece of paper 2 things that make them feel happy right now or that they like to do. This could be about school or home or anywhere.
  - Ask the students to close their eyes and think of one of the things they wrote down. Picture themselves doing that thing. Ask them to focus on their bodies and to put their hand on the part of their bodies where they feel that feeling of happiness most strongly. Ask them to pay attention to the feeling. Really focus on it. Ask them to silently think about these questions:
    - *What color is their happiness?*
    - *What shape is it?*
    - *Does it move or is it still?*
    - *What does happiness “look like and feel like” in their bodies?*
  - Ask the students to open their eyes. Share that everyone experiences emotions differently. Ask students to do a “turn and talk” to share how they experienced happiness just now. Ask a few volunteers to share out to the whole group.
  - Explain, though everyone experiences happiness differently, we often share things that make us happy. Let’s see who gets happy with things that make you happy.
  - End the session by playing a quick game of Common Ground: “One person will stand up and say one thing that makes them happy. They use their bodies to do that thing or pretend to be that thing. If it was my turn, I could I jump up, pretend to be on a bike and I would say, ‘Bicycling makes me happy.’ If this is true for you too, you would jump up on your feet and pretend to be bicycling! You would look around and see who else likes to bicycle. Then I will call on someone else to tell what THEY like and that makes them happy. They will jump out of their desk, say and do what makes them happy and others will join and I will call on someone else. This all happens very quickly....be ready!”
  - Lead a practice round by saying aloud, “*Eating hamburgers makes me happy!*” while you pantomime eating a hamburger. Then, begin to play.



## Lessons for Transition 3-5

### Phase 2: Where Are We Now?

Lesson #5: Acknowledging concerns and excitement: body maps

#### Objective:

- Allowing students to make their concerns and excitements about the coming year transparent, to have them validated and to explore them.
- Encourage emotional curiosity
- Connect feelings with body sensations

#### Materials:

- Templates of the body, pen or pencil, markers, crayons or colored pencils.

#### Comments for teachers:

- Brain research tells us that when we recognize our feelings when they arise, that we are better able to manage them. Naming those difficult feelings is helpful, and the first step is just to begin to recognize them in our bodies.
- Validating childrens' emotions promotes feelings of connectedness and safety, both are important steps for setting the stage for optimal learning.

#### Directions: PART ONE

1. **(2 min)** Explain that you are about to do an activity that will take about 30 minutes. Say that this year is a new year after a most unusual year and that students are probably feeling BOTH worried AND excited...and that is understandable.
2. **(5 min) Naming concerns:** Provide the students with 2 body outline templates. They can use the line drawing of a body attached or they can make their own. For the first round, ask them to list on the outside of one body, in the blank space around the body, what their worries or concerns about the upcoming year might be.
3. **(5 min) Experiencing the concerns.** When they are done listing all of their concerns and stresses and worries about the coming year, ask the students to look at each one by one and sit quietly to think about it and pay attention to the feel each. Ask them to circle the 3 that feel the strongest.
4. **(5 min) Exploring the body feeling of concerns and worries:** Ask the students to concentrate on the top 3 worries one by one. For each answer these questions: "Where do you feel this concern in your body? What color is it? How does it feel? Squiggly? Hot? Tight? Draw an arrow from that worry to where you feel it. Color in that part of your body with the color and a design showing how the concern feels there. Do this with the 3 concerns and stresses that feel strongest."
5. **(5 min) Validate the student's concerns without dismissing them.** Empathize with them. This is an uncertain year after an extremely unusual year and it is understandable to have worries like these. They are hard to feel. Explain that sometimes we think that we are supposed to ignore it when we are worried or concerned, that it is not good to pay attention to these emotions, but actually, if we can NOTICE those worried feelings and say, "I feel worried", it actually allows that feeling to relax and get smaller and helps them to be less bothersome.



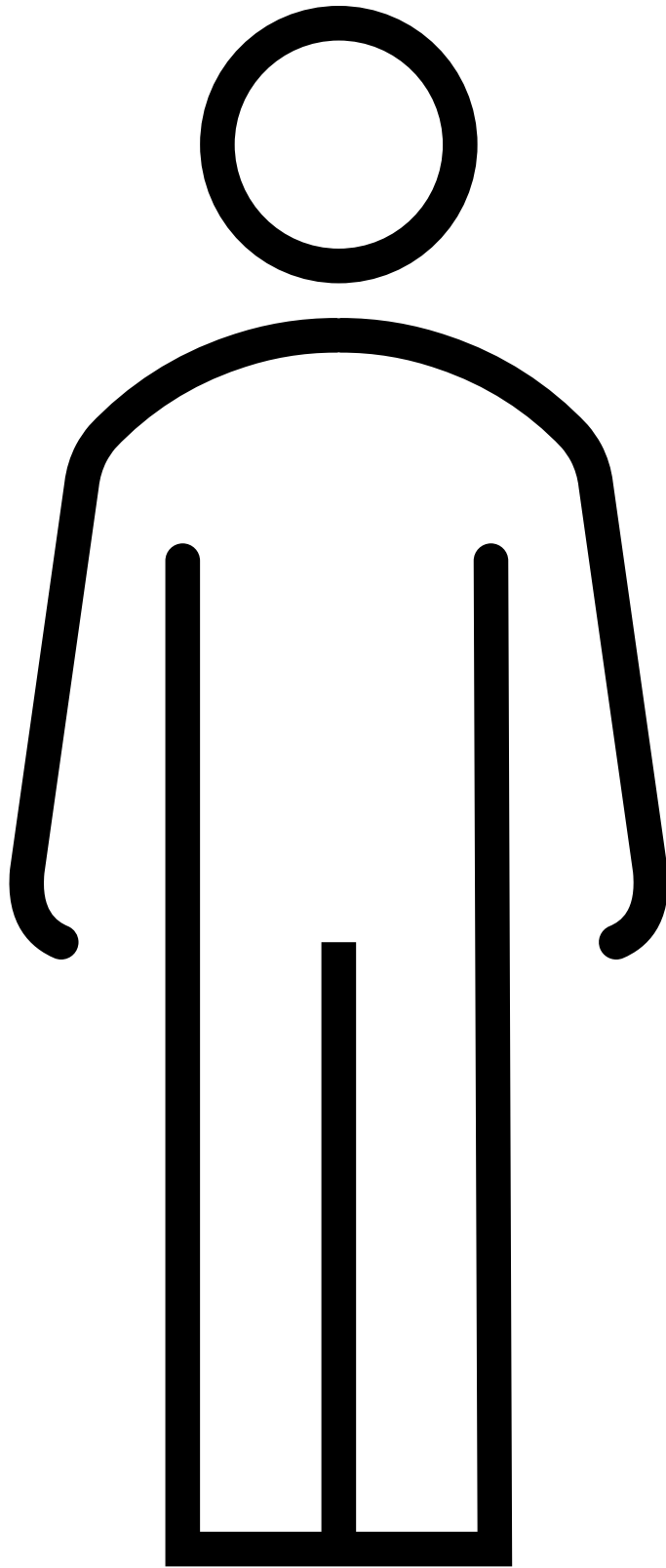
## Resilience Through Transition

### Comments for teachers:

You could do this activity in two sessions, or you could do a brain break, self regulation activity between part one and two.

### DIRECTIONS PART TWO:

6. **Repeat steps 2-4 for the activity, this time for things that the students are excited about and look forward to (step 5 need not be done for this round).** The directions are the same but THIS time would be, “What do you find yourself **excited about and looking forward to this year?**” **Explore and draw on the template for these emotions.**
7. **(5 min) Discuss as a group** Ask, “What did you learn about yourself from doing this activity?” Ask volunteers to share what they learned. Allow time for “turn and talks” so students can share their two body maps with others.





## Lessons for Transition 3-5

### Phase 3: Stepping into the New School Year

Lesson #6: Building resilience and preparing to thrive

#### Objectives:

- Empower students with the awareness that they can self-regulate and calm themselves when they have difficult emotions.
- Students gain ideas about what works for self-regulation practice
- Provide opportunity for student led activity
- Promote idea that students can find ways to self soothe in different ways in different environments and that this is an important skill

#### Materials:

- Optional Tool cards (see link below)
- Open Word doc or Google doc

#### Comments for teachers:

Teaching Brain in the Hand (page 60 of the PDC manual) either before or after this lesson would be a good extension.

[Self-regulation activities](#) and descriptions PDF (can be made into tool cards)

[This video](#) models making a calming space at home.

**On-going Practice:** Using students past knowledge of self-regulation activities, ask students in groups or

#### Directions:

1. **(5 min) What Stresses Us?** Introduce the topic by saying, “Last time we talked about the worries, concerns and stresses we might be feeling about this new school year. We drew and wrote and talked about how those stresses made our bodies feel. It is hard to learn when we are feeling worried and stressed. You might have noticed that.”
2. **(3 min) What are “Difficult Emotions”?** Lead an informal brainstorm, hearing from several students answering this question, “We all have difficult emotions sometimes and they are not just worries or concerns. What are some other difficult emotions?”
3. **(5min) What Calms You?**

Hand out about 4 sticky notes to each student.

Start by saying, “We ALL have things that upset us. AND we don’t stay upset. Emotions tend to move through us. Some people have figured out how to begin to feel better when they are feeling difficult emotions. Think of a time when you were upset or overwhelmed or angry... and you were feeling difficult emotions.”

“Now, think of something that you do or something that you use *that works* to help make you feel calm again.” (Pause)

“Use a thumbs up to tell me that you have something in mind.”  
Pause until all have a thumbs up. If there are people that don’t have a thumbs up, ask those who do, to share ideas out loud to inspire those who can’t think of anything.

Ask students to write 3 or 4 ideas that really work to calm themselves, one on each sticky note.

4. **(10 min) What Calms US?** Start a classroom poster that is titled “What Calms Us”. Have the students come up and stick their stickies onto the poster.



## Resilience Through Transition

on their own, to demonstrate and lead the class in self-regulation as a transition from one zoom learning session to another with the aim of doing several a day. These might include Rainbow Breathing, 5 finger Breathing, Hot Chocolate, Flying a Kite, or Tapping. These can be entirely student led. They can use the SD Tool Cards as a resource (above) or past experience of self-regulation activities.

**Assignment: Create a cooling off space at home.** Explain: “Now that you have many ideas from your classmates about things that work for them to calm down, look around your house and gather items that may help you. Maybe a favorite book, a soft special pillow or stuffy, something that reminds you of the love of someone who believes in you. Gather them in a box, a basket or a special place, a place where you can go for tools that might help you feel settled and reconnected to yourself again.”

5. Read out loud the student ideas that were not already heard in the discussion. Explain that it really is important to know what helps them when they feeling difficult emotions like feeling worried, angry, disappointed, or overwhelmed. Explain that knowing what works for us, to help calm us, is part of building *resilience*. Resilience is the ability to withstand difficult things, to be able to get up and keep going when the going feels hard. (If it is not mentioned by the students mention that talking to parents, caregivers or other adults might help, too.)
6. Ask some volunteers to turn the sticky notes into large lettered notes on the poster to keep as a class reference list. Continue to add to this list as students find “something that works”.
7. Introduce the idea of a calming space in the classroom...a place of comfort and calm where people can go to begin to regulate. Ask students to think about where it would be in the classroom and what, based on the list just created, might be in it. Over the next few weeks, begin to co-create the classroom calming space and invite students to practice using it. Refer to the PDC manual on pages 57-64 for more information.





## Lessons for Transition 3-5

### Phase 3: Stepping into the New School Year

Lesson #7: Hopes and dreams

#### Objectives:

Encourage the students to turn focus to this school year and to think of their hopes and dreams.

To notice that they have many shared dreams and hopes and there are some unique ones as well.

To create something together, connecting as a classroom.

#### Comments for teachers

**Extension:** It would be powerful to follow this lesson with an adaptation of Beginning the Almost Perfect School Year from (PDSC 37).

Example: Once you have your poster of hopes and dreams ask the students “What can we do and say in class to help us achieve these dreams?”

#### Directions:

##### (10 min) List of Hopes and Dreams

Divide students into small groups (groups of 4 or 5). Ask each group to ask for a volunteer scribe (be sure that each group has one or two students comfortable with writing). Each group will be supplied with a large paper and some large sticky notes or index cards.

Explain, “We have a new year beginning. We want it to be a great year; a year that we will remember for good reasons. What would make this a meaningful year for you? What do you want to learn and to experience this year? In other words, what are your hopes and dreams for this year?”

Ask students to brainstorm everyone’s hopes and dreams to make this a year they feel good about. The scribes will write the brainstorms down on the large papers.

Once the ideas are on the large papers, ask each group to choose the four that they agree are most important and put one each on the large sticky notes. Ask each member of the group who did not scribe to bring one of the groups sticky notes up to the front of the class to place on a large poster. Ask each group to come up, group by group, to put their sticky next to another that is the same or almost the same as the one they have in their hands (if they see one that is close).

After all the groups have gone, look at the collection and do some quick organization of ideas so that like-ideas are clustered together. Explain to the group that you can see some similar categories.

Based on the categories that are seen, create a new poster with the main hopes and dreams that you see represented.

Post the Hopes and Dreams poster. Have volunteers decorate it. Follow up with the extension activity mentioned above in the left column.



## Lessons for Transition 3-5

### Phase 3: Stepping into the New School Year

Lesson #8: How do we get there? Using our strengths and building our stamina

#### Objectives:

- To invite students to learn that they each have important strengths and talents and that everyone in the class also has strengths and talents.
- To help students realize that they can rely on their own and others' strengths.
- To introduce and explore the idea of "stamina" and how that needs to be developed over time.
- To find strategies for how to take breaks as our stamina builds.

#### Materials:

- 2 Card stock superpower badges (next page) for each student.
- 2 safety pins or strips of packing tape for each student.
- Markers, at least one per student

#### Comments for teachers

##### Extensions:

Use the book and activities of : [Superpowers!: A Great Big Collection of Awesome Activities, Quirky Questions, and Wonderful Ways to See Just How Super You Already Are.: M.H. Clark, Michael Byers: 9781943200757: Amazon.com: Books](#) to inspire activities focused on personal strengths.

Consider doing team building activities that rely on everyone coming together to help out like are on the website: [Team Building Activities for Kids: A Complete Guide \(ventureteambuilding.co.uk\)](#)

Think about other ways to help your students build stamina. In this year following a school year and a half of partial days of school, many students cannot handle long work times. How

#### Directions:

1. Lead a class discussion. Point to the Hopes and Dreams poster created from the last lesson. Acknowledge all you have done in your class so far (co creating agreements, co creating routines, doing the Beginning the Almost Perfect School Year work from PDSC Manual page 37 if you did the extension suggested etc) to help the classroom community to set up to achieve our class dreams for the year.
2. Then, talk about the individual strengths and talents that we bring to the group. Ask the group if anyone would be willing to explain what they think the saying "Two heads are better than one" means. If it doesn't come out, explain that when two people with different ways of thinking and two different set of talents that they can achieve more than one person working on their own. Imagine what 28 (however many students in your class) minds and bodies can accomplish! Explain that we all have our unique minds and ways of thinking and that we also have many more unique powers and strengths that will come in handy to our class as the year progresses.
3. Ask the class to name one fictional character that they think everyone knows about. Choose one that it seems everyone knows. Put that name on a whiteboard or chart paper. Ask people to brainstorm this character's strengths and talents...their "superpowers." Write those on the chart. Point out that having superpowers doesn't mean we don't have weaknesses too, but those weaknesses don't make our superpowers go away. We each and every one of us has strengths and talents.
4. Handout out 2 Superpower badges to each student. Have them draw their first initial in the middle of both badges (Just like the S of Superman) but to make the initials not very big because there needs to be space around to write on each badge.
5. Ask each student to take one of the badges and to write some of the "superpowers" they feel they have. Are they good cooking? Are they strong? Are they coordinated? Are they a good problem solver? Are they



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will you break up the school day into small bits that will eventually continue to grow longer? How will you promote rest? How will you promote steadily increasing times of focus? How will you include student leadership, student problem solving, student voice and decision making in this building of stamina?

- kind and compassionate? Are they a good friend? Are they a quick thinker? Once they are done, have them pin the badge on their front.
6. Now, ask everyone to turn to a partner and have them pin or tape the second badge to their backs. (*Alternately, taped up on walls around the room or sitting with papers get rotated.*)
  7. Instruct students to walk around, and to write the talents, strengths, and positive character traits they see in the person on the badge on their backs. Tell them that you will give them time to get to everyone. If you notice that someone else wrote what you wanted to write, try to think of a different talent or strength that students has.
  8. When all students have gone to most people, stop the writing, ask the students to get help to retrieve the badge from their backs and read them. Are they surprised at anything they read there? What do they notice?
  9. When that discussion is done, bring up the idea of stamina (the ability to sustain prolonged physical or mental effort). Athletes who were in the Olympics this summer have incredible strength and talents. The marathon runners run 26 miles. Some weightlifters can lift 800 pounds. Ask the class: "Did they do this the first few times they ran or they lifted weights? How did they get to be able to do these feats? "They had to build their stamina. They had to start small and work up. We are going to need to do the same. We may start with a reading time of 5 minutes...maybe that is all we will be able to handle before we get distracted. By the end of the year, we may be able to read for 40 minutes or an hour without stopping! We will be **building stamina all year.**
  10. Ask the students to come up with ideas of what to do when they get tired as they are all building up their strengths and talents and their stamina. (This could be any of the self-regulation ideas from the tool cards and it may be something else as well.)
  11. Ask students to do a turn and talk to discuss what they are thinking about and what they learned in this activity.



### Strategies to Bring New Students into the Community

When new students join, it is an opportunity for the class to show and tell about their community: their classroom, their routines, and agreements. It is an opportunity to practice their tools as they teach someone else. Get the students involved. How do we welcome our new classmate and let them know they belong? This will also help with student resiliency to manage the emotions that arise with changes to their community.

- **New Student Kit** - Have a few “new student” kits ready for when a new student arrives. In it, there can be a welcome note from you, a school t-shirt, basic school supplies, a map of the school and a list of all the students names in the classroom and other helpful and welcoming pieces.
- **Class Meeting** – Use the structure of the class meeting to allow the students to share about the class with the new student. Have the class explain how students use class meeting to solve problems. Invite the students to share interesting/fun things about themselves.
- **Tour Guide/ Welcomer** – Open up a job for current students to be the tour guide for new students. They can greet them in the office when they arrive. The team can show the new student where things are, what the current group guidelines are, how to get supplies, etc. (This would be helpful for a student who needs to increase *their* sense that they “matter.”)
- **Intentional pairing** – Be intentional about pairing students up together for different tasks, lessons or activities. Creating a few “go-to” friends for the new student will help build the sense of belonging.
- **Job for new student** – Create a new job (or jobs) for the new student. The job will ideally create opportunities to have contact with different students (for example they are the inventory person who checks in/out supplies or the person who takes requests for games for a special day coming up). Try to provide opportunity for the student to interact with other students for more than just a short transactional interaction. Open up the time that students can come to that person (so they could do it any time during this lesson block, so that it’s not everyone all at once which could be overwhelming). It could also be based on one of that students self-identified strengths.
- **Free time game job** – Create a free time game leader job. You could even do it at the beginning of the school year (and tell the class that if a new student joins the class they are bumped to the beginning if they are comfortable doing so). The new student could lead a game for the group or even a small station during a designated free time or indoor recess.
- **Continued pairing or grouping** – Be intentional about giving the new student *multiple opportunities with the same student* or group of students, so they get to know a few students more in-depth. Rotating them through every single student in the class right from the beginning might be overwhelming for some new students.



### Strategies for Saying Goodbye

We work hard to build classroom communities where each student feels connected and like they count and belong. It is important for students to be able to be regulated, to learn and to grow into capable human beings. Building community is not something that happens in a day or a week but evolves over time with intentional effort from educators and students. As your community develops there are opportunities for your community to expand when new students join the group. It is important to be intentional about how we welcome new members into our group. They need to understand your class culture, routines and structures and they need to connect to you and the other students in the group.

And sometimes your community changes when someone leaves the class. It is helpful to have practices to let the leaving student acknowledge the relationships as well as allowing the other students to say goodbye, share memories and wish the student well on their new journey. If you have a process in place that happens each time a student leaves, it will support your community and make a difference for your student who is about to transition to a new situation. A student who has to leave knows they will be recognized by their teacher and classmates. *They will leave with a sense of being valued and cared for.*

Ideas for *when you know ahead of time* that a student is leaving:

- **Create a Goodbye Memory Book**

Have each classmate make a book page to honor the student who is leaving the community. Write/draw a note to the student. Combine the pages in a book that the student can bring with them to their new community. Be sure you complete a page in the books as well. Attach individual class pictures to each page and the school's name and address (and maybe your email address) at the front in case the student want to write to the class. Sample template:

You have been a (friend/person in my class, neighbor) in my class since \_\_\_grade. I am grateful you have been in my class because \_\_\_\_\_. Also, you helped me to \_\_\_\_\_. I will always remember \_\_\_\_\_.

- **Ball of Yarn**

Bring a ball of yarn that has a small token (rock, pompom, small object) in the center of the ball. Students stand in a circle. Use a ball of yarn to pass from student to student as they share compliments, appreciations or memories about the student who is leaving. The student who is leaving can take the memory token with them. You may record this to share with them later.

- **Signed T-shirt**

Have extra school t-shirts in your classroom. When a student is leaving take out a shirt and have each student sign the shirt with a sharpie.

- **Class Picture Wall**

Have a place in your classroom, at the students' eye level, with a snapshot of each student and their name. You can also have them add a sentence about what they like to do or a favorite thing about school. As new students join the class their picture is added to the wall. When a student leaves their picture stays posted so they are always a part of your community. This can be useful when you are talking about memories from the school year.



Ideas for when a student leaves - *and it is a surprise* to you and their classmates:

- **Acknowledge the Loss**

When a student leaves and it is a surprise it can be painful for you and the student's classmates. When you find out, and sometimes the students will know before you do Acknowledge the loss. Be honest about your feelings and share things you will miss about the student as well as fun memories you have. Sit in a circle, pass an object and invite classmates to do the same. If you are able to find out information about where the student went or how they are doing share it with the class.

- **Class Meeting**

Acknowledge feelings about the student leaving. Pass an object and let each student share. Then pass the object around again and share memories and appreciations for the student who is gone. Record the words. You could use an audio or video recording or chart the message. Find a way to send this message from your class to the student. Include a stamped addressed envelope so the student can write back to your class.

- **Journal Prompt**

Allow students to write/draw about their feelings, memories and wishes for the student.

- **Write letters**

After talking about memories, things you will miss, and wishes you have for the student in their new school have each classmate write a letter to the student. Be sure to get these letters in the mail. It will be encouraging and help support your student on their transition.