

SCHOOL DAZE—PART ONE

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Prologue

(Opening shot: fade in to an overhead close-up of the magical map on the central table in the throne room of the Castle of Friendship. Zoom out to frame all of it as Twilight Sparkle and her friends gather around, accompanied by Starlight Glimmer and Spike; Rainbow Dash hovers above one edge. The piece of crystalline furniture has grown a size or two, and a few new geographical features have manifested themselves on the shimmery blue surface, the most noticeable of these being a sizable patch that has gone dull gray.)

Twilight: This happened while we were gone?

Applejack: Wow! Those are all the places we went when we left to save Equestria!

(Referring to the events of My Little Pony: The Movie. Close-up. Rarity aims a disgusted eye and hoof at the gray spot, which proves to be a representation of the ramshackle desert settlement of Klugetown.)

Rarity: Ugh! There's that horrid town where we were almost sold! *(Rainbow finds a tiny, hovering copy of Captain Celaeno's airship.)*

Rainbow: The pirates! They were pretty awesome—uh, once they decided not to throw us overboard. *(Pinkie Pie spots Mount Aerie, the former home of the hippogriffs.)*

Pinkie: *(hip-checking Applejack aside)* And Mount Aerie! Ooh, Starlight...

(She dives across the table to squish the unicorn's cheeks.)

Pinkie: ...did you know we made seashell necklaces for aaaaaaaa— *(Stop for breath.)*
—aaaaaaaall the sea ponies?

Starlight: *(bewildered)* I...you...really? *(Pinkie nods.)* What about that unicorn—the one who attacked Canterlot?

Twilight: Tempest. I invited her to come to Ponyville, but she wanted to spread the word of the Storm King's defeat—and share what she learned about friendship.

Applejack: *(pacing past them to Fluttershy)* Y'all think that's why the map grew? Friendship quests beyond Equestria?

Fluttershy: I hope not. I've had quite enough life-threatening adventures, thank you very much.

(Cut to Twilight's side of the table. The attention of all is drawn by the end of a tape measure as it extends into view from o.s. and makes contact with the edge. It is held by Pinkie, who whips into view wearing a full tool belt and a hard hat fitted with a flashing red light.)

Pinkie: How many friendship quests do you think we need to go on— *(retracting tape)* —before we have to expand the throne room?

Twilight: We can't do it all alone.

Pinkie: Sure we can! We just need to knock this wall down, get some paint—

(She starts this line holding a clipboard, but trades it first for a jackhammer held against a wall and then for a can of paint and brush as she speaks.)

Twilight: No. I mean, the world is filled with so many different creatures who know nothing about friendship. *(pacing around table; Pinkie sets paint/brush down)* We need help if we're gonna teach them all about friendship—lots of help.

Rarity: Perhaps. But where does one go to learn about friendship?

(Close-up; the resident Princess stops and points out Ponyville on the map.)

Twilight: Here. They can all go here, because we're gonna open a school!

(Fade to black.)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(Opening shot: fade in to a long shot of Celestia's School for Gifted Unicorns, in Canterlot, during the day and zoom in slowly. The first few words of the following line are heard in voice over before the camera cuts to Twilight, Princess Celestia, and Spike walking a hall inside. Twilight carries a notepad and quill in her magic, Spike holds a stack of papers, and all three are passing a classroom full of young students. Daytime sky is visible through the windows.)

Celestia: I think a school of friendship is a wonderful idea, Twilight. *(They stop at the doorway.)* I'll help in any way I can.

(Twilight jots a few lines on her pad with a glance at the colts and fillies, then hurries to catch up to Celestia, having traded her implements for Spike's notes. The young dragon takes his time rejoining them.)

Twilight: I just have a few questions. *(Separate pages; float them up.)* What time should school start each day? *(Cut to Celestia.)*

Celestia: It really d—

Twilight: *(from o.s., shifting pages)* What's the ideal length for class? Do you test regularly?
(Back to her and Spike.)

Celestia: *(from o.s.)* Oh, well, that's a—

Twilight: What about class projects? *(To Celestia.)*

Celestia: That's a very—

Twilight: *(from o.s.)* Assigned seating? *(Her again.)* Open seating? Or is that too unstructured?
(Cut to all three on the end of this.)

Celestia: *(chuckling, taking/stacking pages in her field)* Oh, Twilight, you were my star pupil. If anyone knows how to run a school, it's you.

(She floats them down so Spike can take them back.)

Twilight: There's a big difference between attending a school and running one. It's not like there's a rulebook to follow.

Celestia: Actually, there is. The EEA guidebook is very specific about how to run a school.

Twilight: The EEA? I've never heard of that. *(Spike shrugs his puzzlement.)* Should I have heard of that?

Celestia: Of course not. You've never run a school before. *(Spike takes notes.)* The Equestria Education Association is a board of learned ponies that oversee every school in Equestria.

Spike: Even your school? But you're...you!

Celestia: Not even a princess can do whatever she likes when it comes to shaping young pony minds.

(She conjures up the following image as she continues. A seal of two concentric circles, with sprigs of laurel leaves in the space between and curving around the inner one, which houses a horseshoe with points up. Three silhouettes, one by one—a unicorn and a floating leaf, a pegasus with a raining cloud, an earth pony and flower—which swirl away after a moment. The seal vanishes with her final words.)

Celestia: The EEA ensures that whether it's unicorns studying magic, pegasi learning weather, or earth ponies researching agriculture, all schools are held to the same high standards. They'll need to approve your plan before you can move forward.

Twilight: *(as Spike writes)* Okay, Spike. Looks like we have a presentation to make.

Spike: *(scoffing)* After everything we've been through, how hard can that be?

(Both smile confidently. Snap to black, against which a spotlight beam flares from above to pick them out, standing on a stone floor with a stack of ten very, very thick file folders that reaches to nearly double Spike's height. The light comes up around them to illuminate a meeting hall in which ten ponies stare humorlessly down at them from elevated desks similar to a judge's bench. Three sit along each wall directly in front of her and to either side, and the tenth has taken a still higher seat at the front. Each has a small desk lamp at his/her position, and all are wearing dark red cloaks with gold braid along the turned-up collars. Cut to Twilight and Spike.)

Spike: *(fearfully, to Twilight)* I'm gonna go with "really hard."

Twilight: *(to the gathering)* Uh, hello. My name is—

Stallion voice: Princess Twilight Sparkle.

(The voice's severe tone instantly dispirits her and sets her ears to wilting. Cut to the front wall, the speaker being the one in the highest seat—Chancellor Neighsay. Pale gray unicorn; dark gray, slicked-back mane and goatee, blue-green eyes, thick book resting on his desk.)

Neighsay: I am Chancellor Neighsay. Equestria owes you a great debt. But princess or no, we expect you to do things *by the book*.

(His aura sends the very heavy reading down to the floor, where it lands with a thud and barely misses Twilight's hooves. On its cover is the seal Celestia displayed for her, marking this group as the Equestria Education Association. She brings it up for a quick flip through the pages, then raises her eyes confidently.)

Twilight: *(floating it to Spike and her files up to the group)* I think you'll find my curriculum meets all your requirements, Chancellor.

(The number-one assistant flips her a thumbs-up as her submissions settle onto the desks, the last one taking a bit longer to reach Neighsay. He leafs through it with his magic, this camera angle pointing up a red sash decorated with a gold medallion that bears the EEA seal. He waits to speak until he has reached the very end.)

Neighsay: And can we trust you to follow through with this plan? *(Back to front; close the folder.)* Or will you leave the school unattended to gallop off on your... *(contemptuously)* ...adventures?

Twilight: My journey beyond Equestria showed me first-hoof that the threats out there are greater than we imagined.

(A round of concerned murmurs ripples through the other nine attendees.)

Twilight: If we want to keep our land safe and create a friendlier tomorrow, we need to teach the magic of friendship far and wide.

Neighsay: A school for ponies to learn how to protect themselves.

Twilight: Uh, more like respecting difference and communicating.

(Neighsay glances from one side to the other, receiving stern nods from the membership.)

Neighsay: The EEA concurs. Everypony should be prepared to defend our way of life. So if your work is in order, provisional EEA approval is granted.

(He taps a front hoof against the file for emphasis as he finishes, showing a short sleeve attached to his cloak. Cut to Twilight and Spike, a relieved grin passing from one face to the other.)

Neighsay: *(from o.s.)* We will need to observe your school up and running before it can be fully accredited.

(On the end of this, cut to frame both him and her.)

Twilight: Then, please. Join us for Friends and Family Day. It'll be the perfect time to see our progress.

(A flick of Neighsay's power brings up a rubber stamp and applies it to the front cover of his folder, imprinting it with the EEA seal in red ink. From here, dissolve to an extreme close-up of a stretch of blue-shingled roof and tilt up to a projecting, lighter-hued brick tower set with a window that bears the six-pointed pink star from Twilight's cutie mark. The camera shifts to point directly at the end of a rooftop over a white structure trimmed in purple, showing a white copy of the star superimposed over a pink compass rose and a starred purple banner waving in the breeze. Tilt up to frame the upper reaches of an even taller edifice behind it, its uppermost peak topped by a pink banner on a pole whose ornament is a winged copy of the star. The walls are decorated in pastel shades of pink and blue, with hearts worked into the trim. Next, the camera roves along a stone walkway that projects into a small body of water; it ends abruptly, but stepping stones rise to the surface to continue the path—first a heart, then four round ones to stop at the base of a foaming waterfall. The torrent parts slowly to expose a set of double doors immediately in front of the last stone, surmounted by a round window that depicts a rearing Twilight with wings spread. Zoom out slowly to frame the building in its entirety: a sprawling, multi-level complex of towers, courtyards, and bridges, with several waterfalls pouring into a lake that encircles all. Stepping-stone paths lead off to either side from the walkway, while a lamppost stands to each side of the heart. This is the campus of the School of Friendship, whose crest is mounted on a higher level above the doors: a purple shield edged in pink and bearing a six-pointed pink star with gems resting between the arms.)

Rainbow: *(voice over)* It's too much. Too much!

Rarity: *(voice over, sighing)* You think so?

(Cut to her inside; she has donned a light blue blouse with gold-buttoned white sleeve cuffs, a yellow belt, and a full-length purple skirt that matches the frames of the eyeglasses she also wears. Most of her mane is tied back in a bun, and around her neck is a ribbon tie in a darker shade than her blouse. The overall impression is that of a schoolteacher from bygone times. A stack of folders is visible on one end of a table behind her, and Fluttershy's rabbit Angel and a bird sit on a nearby ledge.)

Rarity: I had hoped dressing the part would help me feel the part. *(Rainbow flies into her face.)*

Rainbow: Not your dress...

(Up she goes; long shot of the area, in which Applejack, Fluttershy, and Starlight have also come together. It is an entrance hall with a cloud/sky motif and crystal trim worked into the walls and ceiling, plenty of heart-decorated pillars, and busts of Starswirl the Bearded and Mistmane stand across from each other on pedestals in the foreground. The table has two stacks of folders and a container of quills on it, and a purple banner is being hoisted into position, showing a gold copy of the School's crest.)

Rainbow: ...*this!* Us! (swooping back down to her) Teaching? They're gonna think I'm an egghead!

(Her intended exit comes to a most abrupt halt when the barrel of Pinkie's party cannon trundles into view, followed in short order by its user putting head and forelegs out from the muzzle. Busts of Flash Magnus and Mage Meadowbrook can be seen behind her, on the same side as Mistmane's; she has ditched her hard hat and tools from the prologue.)

Pinkie: Well, the students are gonna love my confetti cannon class. (*donning crash helmet/goggles; the cannon swells ridiculously*) It's gonna be... (*Launch; sending her o.s. and throwing confetti everywhere.*) ...a blast!

(The bits of bright paper rain down past the camera, the view wiping behind them to Fluttershy at the animals' ledge, now a bit more populated.)

Fluttershy: (*to them*) Um, hello there. I'm your teacher. I hope you enjoy class, but if you don't enjoy it, that's okay too.

(As she speaks, all the critters except Angel clear out and he claps a paw to his face in disgust, touching off a dismayed cringe from her. Cut to the table, Applejack and Starlight now behind it.)

Applejack: I don't know about all this.

(Zoom out. Twilight has made the scene and is pacing with her copy of the EEA guidebook in her magical grip.)

Twilight: It's going to be fine. (*Pinkie returns without her helmet/goggles.*) Everything about this school just feels right. (*Close the book.*)

Starlight: (*floating up a stack of folders*) See? If Twilight isn't stressed, you've got nothing to worry about. (*She walks off with them; cut to all others but Twilight.*)

Applejack: (*to Twilight*) And you're sure you want *us* to be teachers? In...classrooms? (*Twilight's book floats to them, now open.*)

Twilight: (*from o.s., pointing out a passage*) The EEA is very clear on how schools should be run.

(Cut to her. Now a bust of Somnambula can be seen at a far wall on the same side as Starswirl's, along with a crescent-moon banner.)

Twilight: We have a huge responsibility—(*retrieving/closing book*)—and I need you all to do this by the book. That means no cannons in class, Pinkie.

Pinkie: (*holding up a miniature one on a front hoof*) Aww, not even a teeny cannon?

(It is barely one-quarter as long as her foreleg is thick, and it lets off what must surely be Equestria's smallest confetti blast as she offers a hopeful grin and two big shiny blue eyes. Twilight sets her book down.)

Twilight: I know it's not some big adventure against the forces of evil, but this could be the most important thing we've ever done. I can't run a School of Friendship without my best friends. Can I count on you?

Rarity: Of course you can, darling.

Rainbow: *(resignedly, but smiling)* Call me Professor Egghead.

(Extreme close-up of a point between the six mares as they pile up one hoof each.)

Rainbow: *(from o.s.)* I'm in.

(The six appendages are lifted toward the camera; cut to the mares. The shrill ringing of a school bell is met by a giddy yell from Pinkie.)

Pinkie: First day of school! So many new ponies!

Twilight: About that. One thing I forgot to mention.

(Cut to a long shot of the closed front doors and zoom in to a close-up as they swing open to admit a sizable crowd of ponies—as well as a dragon, griffon, changeling, hippogriff, and yak.)

Twilight: *(from o.s.)* It's not just ponies.

(The yak pivots past the camera, the view wiping behind the shaggy brown bulk to a close-up of four thoroughly flummoxed new teachers. Pinkie, the missing fifth, pops up next to them.)

Pinkie: That was unexpected.

(Snap to black.)

Act Two

(Opening shot: fade in to the now-full entrance hall and zoom in through the knots of new arrivals to stop on Twilight, Rainbow, and Rarity at the table. The Princess has her guidebook open and levitating so she can run an eye over the pages.)

Rarity: *(magically passing a folder to a mare)* Oh! Students certainly traveled from far and wide to attend our school.

Twilight: Princess Celestia helped me reach out to all the kingdoms. *(Rainbow gets another for a unicorn stallion to take in his field.)* After all, friendship is something that needs to be shared with every...

(Words fail her briefly upon noticing the changeling pace glumly across the hall. Pale blue hide; deep pink carapace with lighter spots covering the back; blue-green eyes; glittering, translucent pink wings. This is Ocellus, a female, who stands out from all other transformed changelings seen to this point in one respect: a mane-like fin running down the back of her head and neck that matches her wings.)

Twilight: ...creature.

(Poofing the book away, she moves to address the excited newcomers, who fall quiet as she begins to speak.)

Twilight: Welcome to the School of Friendship. I'm your headmare, Twilight Sparkle. Please follow Guidance Counselor Starlight to sign in and get your class assignments.

(On the end of this, cut to Starlight and Spike, the former waving to the group and the latter with quill and scroll in hand. The camera then returns to Twilight.)

Twilight: Then we can show you your living quarters.

(A light green earth pony colt, Sandbar, ambles away from the back of the crowd. Short, untidy, two-tone green mane/tail; medium green eyes; cutie mark of three sea turtles. His attention momentarily distracted, he runs into the rump of Gallus, a male griffon. Medium blue fur/feathers covering most of the body, with wings and tail tuft in a darker shade; tan coloration from chin down to chest and underbelly, with matching spots above annoyed, deep blue eyes; head plumage shading to golden brown at the tips. Sandbar's voice carries an easygoing "surfer dude" inflection.)

Sandbar: Whoa, sorry. *(Gallus wheels to face him.)* I'm Sandbar. Are you a student here too?

Gallus: *(sarcastically, rolling eyes)* No, I just figured I'd randomly stand here and see how many ponies would walk into me.

(He blows his plumes away from his eyes just before a crotchety old male voice with traces of an Irish brogue cuts in.)

Old voice: Gallus!

(The scornful eyes pop wide open in shock, and he drops his head and plods across the hall. A cut to the speaker nails him down as Gruff, the elderly griffon who told the story of the Idol of Boreas in "The Lost Treasure of Griffonstone." He is in no better shape now than he was then, and his hacking coughs clear away the nearest bystanders with remarkable speed as Rainbow flies over to him.)

Rainbow: Grandpa Gruff? What are you doing here?

Gruff: Flew all the way from Griffonstone to introduce Gallus.

(Who finishes slinking over, only to get another surprise when he notices the resident Wonderbolt. He rises to hover at her eye level.)

Gallus: Rainbow Dash, right? Gilda told me about you. You're a teacher? *(She nods.)* Ah. Thought you'd be... *(taunting tone)* ...cooler.

(That jibe throws her for a loop. So does the sound of the front doors crashing open again, accompanied by another familiar voice—this one gruff and booming.)

Prince Rutherford: *(from o.s.)* Ponies! *(He stands at the threshold; Pinkie pops up from the crowd.)*

Pinkie: Prince Rutherford!

(She bounds to a bit of clear space where a young female yak, Yona, is standing. Dark brown mane bound into two thick braids; green eyes; horns striped in two shades of dark gray; light green blanket on the humped back.)

Rutherford: *(crossing to them)* This Yona yak. She come to pony school. *(Chuckle.)* Make it better! *(Pinkie salutes.)*

Yona: Yak can't wait to meet ponies— *(charging about; a few flee screaming)* —and tell all about Yakyakistan!

(The end of one braid gets caught under a hoof, sending her sprawling and yelling in nearly every direction at once. She dislodges a small planter in a collision against one wall, then knocks the bust of Magnus, and ends by pulling a banner down before collapsing in a heap. All three items are saved only thanks to a last-second rush by Pinkie as Yona shakes her head clear.)

Applejack: Why don't I show you around before you destroy the place?

(Now a rather put-out Dragon Lord Ember trudges into view, pulling a surly young female dragon by the wrist. This one, Smolder, has a deep orange hide and wings, a lighter underbelly that matches the curved horns rising from the sides of her head, blue-green eyes, a ridge of unruly spines in deep magenta running down the back of her head, and a matching spade-shaped projection on the end of her tail. She is perhaps a head shorter than Ember.)

Smolder: But dragons are better than this!

(She pulls free of Ember's grip and turns huffily away in close-up, crossing her arms.)

Smolder: Why am I here? *(Zoom out to frame Ember on the start of the next line.)*

Ember: Because as Dragon Lord, I'm ordering you to be here!

(A sudden thought knocks her off the intimidating track; she turns and addresses herself o.s. with a smile.)

Ember: Hey, Spike! *(He is up at the front, taking notes.)* Come meet Smolder.

(He is only too eager to ditch the paperwork and hurry over.)

Spike: Great to see you, Ember! *(He hugs her; she recoils only slightly.)* Uh...which one is Smolder?

(Both pairs of reptilian eyes aim themselves confusedly across the space; cut to Smolder lounging against a pillar. Her eyes pop in surprise before the camera zooms out to frame a second dragon, this one taller and in varying shades of tan and brown. This newcomer quails in the face of her searching, skeptical gaze for an uncomfortable moment.)

Thorax: *(from o.s.)* Ocellus! *(Zoom out slightly; he steps up.)* What did we talk about?

(A lick of power washes over Tan and subsides to leave the uneasy little changeling standing in the spot as Smolder backs away.)

Thorax: I told you, stay in your own form. It's the polite thing to do. *(addressing himself o.s.)* Uh, sorry. Uh, she's shy.

(Spike and Ember regard the pair with smiles, but Smolder is still a bit unsettled by the shape-change. Behind them, a pale pink female hippogriff thrusts her head up from the crowd for a better look. This is Silverstream, whose beak and talons sport a darker hue; her mane displays two shades of light blue, with the forelock styled as a Mohawk, and her eyes are deep blue-violet. She wears a crystal pendant on a cord strung with three smaller pieces.)

Silverstream: *(excitedly, pointing over them)* What is that?

(She rockets up from the masses; Ocellus reacts by transforming into a bucktoothed yellow earth pony filly and hustling away. Silverstream's tail matches her mane for color when she swoops by in pursuit. Ocellus takes shelter beneath the long fall of Fluttershy's mane, and the mare and filly who had been talking with Fluttershy take their leave just in time for Silverstream to swoop down into a hover.)

Silverstream: No way! I didn't know ponies could turn into...um...what are you? *(Thorax joins them.)*

Thorax: A changeling.

Silverstream: Ponies can turn into changelings?!

Fluttershy: *(stroking Ocellus's mane)* No, but changelings can turn into ponies. *(Ocellus smiles tentatively.)*

Silverstream: Huh. *(scratching head)* That's confusing.

(A second hippogriff, this one a full-grown male, comes in for a landing and she touches down as well. Now good and scared, Ocellus drops her disguise and huddles down between Thorax's forelegs in close-up. Cut back to the newcomer, General Seaspray, on the start of the next line.

Blue-violet coat with darker beak/talons/hooves and lighter edging down the forelegs; two-tone pale green mane/tail, the former swept back from his face; stern blue-green eyes; same necklace as Silverstream. He speaks with a stuffy British accent.)

Seaspray: I am General Seaspray of Her Majesty Queen Novo's navy. I would like to introduce the Queen's niece, Silverstream. *(Who pops up into a hover again.)*

Silverstream: This place is amazing! *(rapid fire)* I've spent most of my life in a coral reef underwater. I was a sea pony, but now I'm a hippogriff. Long story. Anyway— *(perching on Fluttershy's head, looking across hall)* —wow! Is that a yak?

(She rockets away, blowing Fluttershy's mane over her eyes so that she has to part the pink strands in order to get a clear look at new developments. As Silverstream and Yona hustle cheerfully across the hall, Twilight steps up to address the gathering.)

Twilight: Thank you so much for supporting the grand opening of our school. *(Cut here and there among the audience; she continues o.s.)* I hope you'll all join us for Friends and Family Day to see the amazing progress your students are making.

(They respond with a round of wild cheering; she brings out her EEA guidebook.)

Twilight: Looks like school's in session.

Bright orchestral melody, fast 4 (A major)

(Dissolve to the packed hall and tilt up slowly.)

Students: The School of Friendship, first day of class
(Spike gives a folder of documents to one.)

Will we fail or will we pass?

(Sandbar trots forward and the other out-of-towners scatter near a staircase; Yona trips over her braid and tumbles o.s.)

Students come from far and wide

(Silverstream flies past; behind her, wipe to Starlight and Spike beckoning for all to follow them farther in.)

Brand-new friends here by our side

C major

(They open a set of double doors to allow the student body through, Twilight hovering above; Ocellus assumes her yellow-pony guise and Yona stumbles again.)

Twilight: Take a breath, look around, it's amazing
(She follows them around a well-appointed bend.)

I can't believe that it's real

Students galore, new ideas to explore

Can't contain the excitement I feel
(*She addresses Starlight and Spike as the baby dragon jots on a parchment.*)
Can't mess up, can't afford a mistake now
(*Dropping to the floor, she floats her guidebook into view and leads them both away.*)
Think success, keep it firmly in sight
(*Open it for all her friends to read.*)
Make sure to do things by the book
Make sure to do it all right

(*Dissolve to Rainbow behind the front desk of a full classroom, gesturing uncertainly at a blackboard filled with diagrams as she delivers a lecture. Cut in turn to Pinkie, Fluttershy, Rarity, and Applejack in a similar situation, none looking entirely comfortable with their new role as instructors. Ocellus appears in her natural form during this sequence, but a dissolve to a courtyard shows her as a pony again among the students dispersing in all three dimensions. The camera pans slowly across the grassy area and its fountain as the sky fades from day to night and back to morning, the students vanishing and reappearing to point up the time lapse.*)

(*Dissolve to Rainbow and the six core students gathered in her classroom. Yona is balancing precariously on one rear hoof atop a pyramid of desks as the other five cheer her on; Ocellus is back in her natural form now. Pinkie shows off the workings of her party cannon, laughing it up as confetti rains down over the group and Silverstream/Smolder cover their ears. Fluttershy has cleared out all the desks and brought in several animal friends for her class session, including Angel and Harry the bear, while Rarity has put the desks in a circle so the students can watch her levitate a hat onto a pony-shaped mannequin that stands on her desk in the center. Finally, Applejack bucks an apple off the top of a pile of desks, the others shifted out of the way. All five are much more at ease now.*)

(*Cut to the open door of one classroom, seen from the hall, and zoom in slowly as these six hurry eagerly toward it.*)

Students: The School of Friendship, must get to class
(*Inside; it proves to be Fluttershy's.*)
Will we fail or will we pass?
(*Close-up; they open their textbooks and get a faceful of confetti—Pinkie's session.*)
Students learning from the best
(*The pink goofball pops up among them. The tip of Gallus's quill snaps off as he takes notes, but Sandbar is quick to offer a spare; now they are in Rarity's class.*)
Taking notes to pass the test

Stoptime with flute/strings only (E flat major)

(*In Rainbow's class, Twilight catches the falling Yona in her field and returns her to the ground, instantly reducing the general enjoyment level.*)

Twilight: Wait, hold on, not like that, just a second

I'm not sure if that method's approved
(*She brings out her guidebook and checks a page.*)
Let me take a look— (*spoken in rhythm*) —yep, right here in the book
Full instrumentation in, heavy on brass (D major)

Rainbow: Come on! We just got in the groove

(*She is very surprised to find a mortarboard hat being settled onto her head. The thick volume slides past, spine to the camera; behind it, wipe to an extreme close-up of the party cannon's burning fuse. A longer shot frames Pinkie sitting atop the breech and a helmeted Gallus ready to be launched toward a mattress-covered wall as the others watch, all but Yona covering their ears. Twilight winks into view above them and instantly restores the normal classroom furniture before flying off, not noticing the gloomy/sour looks coming her way.*)

A major, modulating to C major

Twilight: Can't mess up, can't afford a mistake now
(*She vanishes a spider from Fluttershy's upraised hoof and puts this room back in order just as quickly.*)

We are shaping young minds to ignite
(*Applejack's classroom gets the same treatment, then Rarity's.*)
Do it like it says in the book, now
Make sure you're doing it right

(*The view slides away and is replaced by Pinkie frantically sketching on her blackboard, the chalk held in her mane.*)

Pinkie: There's not an equation on how to have fun
(*Slide to the students exhibiting varied degrees of disinterest, frustration, and boredom.*)

Fluttershy: The students look bored now, oh, what have I done?
(*Slide to Applejack at her board, which shows a pony's face with ridiculously elongated nose and covered by a red circle/slash.*)

Applejack: Can't teach bein' honest, not sure what to do
(*Slide to Rarity skimming the contents of a long scroll at ludicrous speed.*)

Rarity: I'm quite certain I'm lost
(*Smaller panels showing Twilight's other four friends slide in from top/bottom to tile the screen on either side of her.*)

All five: None of us has a clue

(*The screen briefly tiles itself with images of the six students, followed by a fullscreen view of them zigzagging their way down a long hall whose walls are lined with doors. Their freight of textbooks increases on every pass.*)

Students: The School of Friendship, another class
Wish it were more of a blast
Thought this school would be more fun

Can't wait for our classes to be done

(The cover of the EEA guidebook slides down to fill the screen, its seal turning 180 degrees to show a closely inked page beyond and Twilight on the flip side.)

Background lyrics are in square brackets and sung under the previous line (C minor)

Twilight: Can't mess up, can't afford a mistake now

Students: [School of Friendship]

(Cut to Pinkie at the head of her class, popping a balloon with a pin, then to a weary Fluttershy and a roomful of snoozing pupils.)

Pinkie: No way to have fun

Fluttershy: Oh, what have I done?

(They wake up; Twilight's translucent image superimposing itself on the view as the camera cuts quickly from class to class.)

Twilight: Think success, keep it firmly in sight

Students: [Bored with this class]

Students: Wish that we could leave our desks

Rainbow, Rarity: [We don't have a clue]

E flat minor

Students: Listen to this one request

(Starlight and Spike watch them plod/flap by with their piles of required reading.)

Make things fun, we're really stressed

(Close-up: Twilight flies up, book in tow. Zoom out slowly to frame the throng of exhausted, disgruntled attendees in the entrance hall.)

C major

Twilight: Make sure to do things by the book now

Hold the last note for several beats, then modulate to E flat minor when music resumes

(Cut from one scene of academic misfortune to another in quick succession, ending with a long shot of the entire campus.)

All others: Can we tell her this thing is a mess?

Song ends

(The cover of the EEA guidebook closes itself over the view. From here, dissolve to the six students trudging through the halls and voicing a chorus of groans and yawns.)

Silverstream: Is this what boring is? Am I bored? *(Cut to Gallus/Sandbar/Smolder, walking slightly ahead.)*

Smolder: Ugh, please. These ponies are the heroes of Equestria?

Sandbar: Listen. These ponies saved all of us from the Storm King.

Gallus: How? By boring him into surrender? (*Pan back to Ocellus/Silverstream/Yona on the next line.*)

Silverstream: Our teachers are...a little different than I expected.

Yona: Ugh! Pony school waste of time! Yak school teach how to braid yak hair! Braiding yak hair is best! (*She trips on a braid and stumbles ahead...*) Whooaa!

(*...and collides with Smolder, propelling her ahead as if she had just been hit with a wrecking ball. The hirsute youngster ends up crashed out on her back as Smolder gets upright.*)

Smolder: (*crossing to her*) Is there anything in Yakyakistan that isn't the best? (*Yona stands up.*)

Yona: Yes! Wait...No! Yaks best.

Smolder: No claws, no wings, no fire. (*She pulls Yona's mouth open to point up this last.*) What is it exactly you're proud of?

Sandbar: (*chuckling*) Whoa, cool it! No need to harsh Yona's love for her heritage, okay?

Gallus: (*snarky, sidling up to him*) Aww, are we not being sweet and friendly enough for you, pony?

Silverstream: That was sarcasm, right? Because you *weren't* being sweet or nice?

Smolder: Maybe dragons and griffons are just too tough for friendship. (*She bumps fists with Gallus; cut to Yona.*)

Yona: Yaks tough, just not nasty. (*Gallus leans into her face.*)

Gallus: Who you calling nasty, klutz?

(*The two butt heads and strain back and forth for some seconds, each trying to shove the other off balance.*)

Rainbow: (*from o.s.*) Okay, break it up! (*dropping into view behind them*) Break it up!

(*She has shed the mortarboard Twilight bestowed on her during the song, and she pushes each a step back from the other as the camera zooms out. Applejack and Starlight have arrived, the former lassoing Gallus to keep him back and the latter pulling Yona back with her field.*)

Starlight: What is going on here?

Gallus: Just a *friendly* discussion about the magic of *friendship* amongst *friends*. (*Applejack pulls her rope away.*)

Applejack: Everypony—I mean, *everyone*, go to your next class!

(*Starlight has released Yona as well by now. The six pupils grudgingly vacate the scene as the three mares gather for a talk of their own.*)

Applejack: I just can't believe it. Fights breakin' out when they're supposed to be learnin' friendship?

Starlight: Things definitely aren't going as by-the-book as Twilight planned.

Rainbow: That's because we're terrible teachers! Face it—this school isn't gonna work.

(*Fade to black.*)

Act Three

(Opening shot: fade in to a large round office that Twilight has claimed as her own. Display cases and tall bookshelves line the walls, the latter equipped with ladders to reach the top levels, and a number of stools are set out in front of the Princess's desk. She sits behind it with Spike off to one side, facing the rest of the gang as they voice a scramble of complaints and the camera zooms in slowly. Rarity has shed her schoolteacher outfit and undone the bun in her mane, and Rainbow drives her point home by showing a crude sketch of herself wearing her mortarboard and holding a book, the top of her cranium cracked open to play up the "egghead" angle. The others go quiet as she speaks.)

Rainbow: I don't look like that, do I?

(Not her own doing, then. Pinkie goes into the windup for a big snore, having somehow managed to put herself to sleep, but bites it off once Twilight begins to speak. Across the office from the desk is a pair of tall, closed double doors.)

Twilight: I get it. *(Pinkie shakes her head clear; zoom in.)* Things are getting off to a rougher start than expected. *(Spike climbs up onto the desk...)* But that's okay. *(...and turns her head to face him straight on.)*

Spike: Who are you and what have you done with Twilight Sparkle?

(She floats him off the desk, bringing up the EEA guidebook instead.)

Twilight: Every school in Equestria follows these rules. As long as we do too, we'll be fine.

Starlight: Maybe we should...try something new?

Twilight: The EEA will be here this afternoon for Friends and Family Day. They need to see a school that follows their guidelines.

Fluttershy: Even if those guidelines aren't working?

Twilight: *(needled, leaning out over desk)* Well, then, we have to try harder and make sure they do. *(She brightens at the ringing of the school bell.)* Another morning, another chance to inspire our students.

(The other six mares, far from convinced, file out of the office as she nods confidently; Rainbow opens the doors for them. Wipe to a hallway junction, at which Gallus and Smolder turn to go in the opposite direction from Sandbar.)

Sandbar: Hey! *(pointing)* Professor Dash's class is this way. *(The two encounter Ocellus/Silverstream/Yona.)*

Ocellus: Where are you going? You're not... *(Gasp.)* ...skipping, are you?

Smolder: *(fist-bumping Gallus)* That's exactly what we're doing.

Silverstream: *(panicked)* But Friends and Family Day—

Gallus: —is *after* class. Relax! This is just a quick... (*A moment's thought.*) ...mental health break.

(The other three huddle in for a quick, whispered discussion, which breaks once Silverstream speaks up.)

Silverstream: Oh! That sounds legit. We're in!

Sandbar: (*reluctantly, joining them*) I guess I'll tag along too—make sure you don't get into...trouble.

(The party of six starts off down the hall, Sandbar bringing up the rear as the only one of the six not giggling over their plan to go AWOL. However, the sound of Fluttershy's and the sight of her advancing shadow from a side passage bring them up short.)

Fluttershy: (*from around corner*) This way, Angel.

Silverstream: (*to others*) Professor Fluttershy! We're busted!

(Gathering her courage, Ocellus steps forward and assumes Rarity's appearance an instant before the yellow pegasus and her bunny buddy advance into view.)

Fluttershy: Oh, my! What are you all doing? (*pointing past the group*) Aren't classes that way?

Ocellus: (*as Rarity*) Uh... (*Clear throat; adopt an exaggerated version of her speech pattern.*) ...a generosity field trip, darling. (*Giggle.*) I'm taking the students to the lake— (*fiddling with mane*) —to look at our divine reflections.

(A bat of the vivid blue eyes is met by gobsmacked stares from the other five aspiring truants. Fluttershy buys it hook, line and sinker, completely missing the filthy look Angel is sending her way.)

Fluttershy: Oh! That sounds nice. Have fun!

(As she goes on her way, the white fuzzball narrows his beady black eyes at the six and voices a snarl that manages to be intimidating despite his small size. Once he has hopped after her, Ocellus drops the act and all six race off laughing.)

Smolder: (*to Ocellus*) I take back everything I said about you. That was cool!

Ocellus: Thanks! (*puzzled*) Wait. What did you say about me?

(Wipe to the courtyard, where Twilight and Starlight have gone for a walk.)

Starlight: You're sure sticking to the book is gonna work?

Twilight: My friends can handle anything. They'll have these problems turned around before we know it.

(On this second sentence, a portal opens in midair behind her and Neighsay steps through, a clipboard and quill held in his field. Away from his desk in the EEA meeting hall, he proves to be quite tall and long-legged, with a tail styled similarly to his mane.)

Neighsay: Problems? *(Both mares stop with a gasp and turn to him, Twilight forcing a smile.)*

Twilight: Chancellor Neighsay! *(The portal closes.)* You're here! *(Starlight gives her a funny look.)*

Neighsay: Yes. And you seem unprepared. *(taking notes)* If there are problems... *(Now Starlight smiles as well.)*

Twilight: Problems? Ha! Of course not! We can't wait to show you around.

(He says nothing, but keeps his quill moving as she voices a shaky giggle through locked teeth. Dissolve to the six hooky-players cooling it at the shore of a lake and pan slowly across the scene.)

Gallus: *(dramatically)* And that's why griffons breathe fire when we get mad. *(Close-up.)*

Silverstream: They do not! *(Pause.)* Wait. Do they? No! Really?

Yona: *(laughing)* Griffons just full of hot air! *(All join in the mirth; close-up of Smolder and Yona.)*

Smolder: And yaks are actually good at jokes. How about that? *(Zoom out to frame Ocellus and Sandbar on the next line.)*

Ocellus: What are dragons good at? *(Smolder zips into the air.)*

Smolder: Competition. Who's up for a race?

(In just a bit more than no time flat, the other five are up on their hooves/talons/paws and all attention. Wipe to Twilight and Starlight leading Neighsay down a hall, he still jotting away at his clipboard; they stop short when Rainbow zooms in from a side corridor and screeches to a midair halt.)

Twilight: Rainbow Dash, why aren't you in class teaching?

Rainbow: Because my students are gone!

(Cut to the other three. Twilight and Starlight get a real scare thrown into them by the news, the former drawing a hoof across her throat in a "cut it out" gesture.)

Rainbow: *(from o.s., thinking fast)* Uh...g-gone... *(Back to her.)* ...somewhere else! *(Grin.)*

Doing a loyalty lesson. And—And I was just going to grab a...

(After a quick, jittery glance around herself, she peels out. Cut to the three horned ponies as she holds a pencil into view.)

Rainbow: *(from o.s.)* ...this pencil! Because they need it— *(Back to her.)* —uh, wherever they are, which I know, 'cause...I'm the teacher! *(Cut to Twilight and Starlight, the latter clapping a hoof to her forehead.)*

Twilight: *(forcing a smile/chuckle.)* I see. Well, Chancellor, we have other classes. We can just go— *(Zoom out to frame Neighsay on the next line.)*

Neighsay: Let's follow the professor. I'm quite curious about this lesson in loyalty.

(Realizing that she is well and truly foxed, Rainbow slumps in midair and flaps listlessly away. Wipe to a long shot of the prodigal youths at the lake and zoom in as they race laughing around its shore; those with wings are airborne. As before, Yona steps on the end of one braid and topples forward with a yell; this time, though, Sandbar darts in to support her chin with his back so she can right herself.)

Twilight: *(voice over)* Of course, we want to instill a sense of loyalty towards others.

(The flying four hold a quick, whispered discussion and zip down.)

Twilight: *(voice over)* We encourage acts of generosity and kindness.

(Gallus hoists Sandbar clear of the turf, while Silverstream and Smolder tackle the job of lifting Yona. Mixed shouts of fear and delight as Ocellus brings up the rear.)

Gallus: Figured we shouldn't be the only ones enjoying the view.

Yona: *(yelling in terror)* Yaks not best at flying! *(But she starts to get into the spirit, laughter drifting around her.)*

Twilight: *(voice over)* An appreciation for the value of laughter...

Yona: Flying is best!

Silverstream: Congratulations, Yona! *(eyes spinning in sockets)* You are officially the weirdest thing I've seen so far!

Smolder: What do you say, Ocellus? Can you be weirder than a flying yak?

(The shape-shifter throws them a resolute nod and lets her magic engulf her, the view instantly shifting to the other five and zooming out as the shadow of something very, very large extends over them. Whatever Ocellus has become, it puts them all to shame for sheer size and earns her a round of awed murmurs.)

(Dissolve to Rainbow unwillingly leading Twilight, Starlight, and Neighsay along a corridor.)

Twilight: ...and to always be honest in any situation.

Neighsay: *(impatiently)* Honesty is imperative. *(Stop.)* Princess, are we going in circles?

Twilight: *(levitating an open pocket watch)* Uh, look at the time. *(tucking it away)* We'd better head to the lake for Friends and Family Day. *(walking ahead)* I'm sure all the students and faculty will be there.

(The other two mares do not share even a scrap of her faint hope. Dissolve to a long shot of a meadow off to one side of the School grounds, zooming in slowly as ponies congregate here and there, and cut to Applejack, Fluttershy, Pinkie, and Rarity near a refreshment table. Pinkie points out the approaching delegation of Ember, Gruff, Rutherford, Seaspray, and Thorax, led by Spike.

All are soon enjoying themselves in conversation and drinks, but the merriment comes to a grinding halt as Ember picks up on the sound of a rapidly approaching, insect-like buzz.)

Ember: *(pointing into sky)* What is *that*?

(“That” proves to the missing students, and the sound is courtesy of Ocellus. Her enormous new form is something of a dragonfly/bumblebee cross, with the elongated proboscis of a mosquito and four jointed legs that end in long, curved claws. Their landing approach tips the gathering into full-scale pandemonium that clears the grounds in record time, leaving seven very confused mares and one Chancellor whose disapproval yields to a cry of terror as he hunkers down behind Twilight.)

Neighsay: The School is under attack!

(Sandbar slips out of Gallus’s grip and bounces heavily across the grass, knocking Gruff/Rutherford/Seaspray/Thorax silly as he barrels through them like a wrecking ball. Yona’s weight finally proves too much for Silverstream and Smolder to support, and all three drop screaming into the nearest snack table, launching a cake directly into Gruff’s face. Last is Ocellus, who pulls up just in time to avoid a spectacular crash landing; however, her redirected momentum carries her into one of the School’s peripheral towers and smashes it. Chunks of masonry rain down, barely missing the freaked-out crowds, as she reverts to her normal form and goes down with them. The crash of a particularly large stone mass throws up enough dust to fill the screen.)

(To a symphony of coughs and moans, the view clears to frame the four elders who took the brunt of this colossal screw-up. Gruff wipes a glob of icing from his face and tastes it, while Twilight gets an eyeful of the six across the meadow.)

Silverstream: Uh, maybe skipping class wasn’t the best idea?

Neighsay: *(to them)* How dare you! This act of aggression against ponies—

Twilight: I’m so sorry, Chancellor. We clearly had some students get a little carried away.

Neighsay: *Those* are students?! *(pacing)* But—you said you were opening this school to protect Equestria! To defend ponies from— *(eyeing the four elders, all upright/clean and now joined by Ember)* —dangerous creatures who don’t have our best interests at heart!

Twilight: My school teaches for all of us to work together through friendship.

Neighsay: *(stomping for emphasis)* And how do you know these creatures won’t take what they have learned here and use it against us?

Twilight: Friendship isn’t just for ponies.

Neighsay: *(leaning toward her)* It should be.

Rutherford: Unicorn think yaks don’t need friendship? *(leaning into Neighsay’s face)* Maybe yaks don’t need pony school!

Neighsay: *(pushing him back)* Well, then, perhaps you should return to *your kind*. *(Ember and Thorax take this very badly.)*

Ember: *(needled)* “Your kind”? Smolder, let’s go!

(She lifts off, the young orange dragon following her after a rueful glance back at her new friends.)

Seaspray: Queen Novo will want to hear of this! *(He strides off.)*

Gruff: Well, this place seemed lame anyways. *(Follow Seaspray.)*

(Gallus, Silverstream, and Yona slog after their elders, spirits all the way down to the bottom of their particular appendages, as Thorax crosses to Twilight and Ocellus. The other staff members gather in during the next line.)

Thorax: It's fine. We know not everypony sees us the way you do. *(flying away with Ocellus)*
We're used to it.

(An indignant Twilight strides over to Neighsay.)

Twilight: Princess Celestia helped me reach out to all the kingdoms! When she hears you closed the School because—

Neighsay: *(overlapping her last word)* —because *you* failed to meet the EEA's standards?

Twilight: *What?*

Neighsay: Irresponsible teachers! Students skipping class! Endangering ponies! Your school is a disaster! Perhaps if you had higher standards for who was admitted— *(pacing past her)* —this could have been avoided. *(Stop on a hillock.)* Regardless...

(A brief press of one hoof against the medallion on his cloak causes it to blaze gold and feed power into his horn as it warms up. The two magics combine into a red/gold beam that lances up several yards at an angle, terminating in a large, crackling orb that disappears after a long moment. It is replaced by loops of glowing chain links that encircle the entire complex and constrict toward the central building. A flash causes a large wax seal to materialize some yards out from the front door; it shows a closed eye within a capital Greek omega letter, a keyhole, and two lengths of chain crossed to form an X. The ends of the magic chains hook into the edges, and the whole lot zooms toward the doors and flashes blinding white on contact. When the view clears, the seal has affixed itself to the doors and the chains extend only as far as the frame to hold it in place. Wisps of smoke dribble up from the seal as viscous rivulets of wax trickle down from its lower edge.)

Neighsay: *(stomping for emphasis)* By order of the EEA, I am shutting this school down!

Twilight: *(softly, aghast)* Oh...

(Cut to a "To be continued..." title card and snap to black.)

Continued in Part Two