The activities in the Old Babylonian school
Inculcation of ideology through ritual behavior

The cuneiform script used in the Old Babylonian school, the eduba’a, was syllabic and contained logograms, which made it much more difficult to read and write than the alphabet script. Just as in pre-modern Europe, learning by heart and reading aloud was central in the eduba’a. How can we understand the practices in this school? I will argue that it can be interpreted as ritual behavior. This will be done through analyzing the practice in the eduba’a through the lens of ritual theories. The theories used emphasize that the function of ritual is to transmit social memory and ideology (Connerton; Whitehouse; Leach; cf. Veldhuis), that ritual is highly repetitive (Whitehouse; Grimes), and that punishments are part of constituting a new identity of the participant (Whitehouse; Turner). It will be shown that the function and outline of the activities in the eduba’a correspond well to these ritual theories.