



The ROI of Second Step® Programs

Investing in Student Success and Well-Being

In today's landscape, educators face mounting challenges—shrinking budgets, rising absenteeism, and deteriorating student mental health—all of which impact student outcomes, teacher satisfaction, and overall school success. However, research shows that investing in a human skills program addresses these concerns.

When funding is limited, programs that support emotional intelligence, well-being, and decision-making skills are often the first to be cut. But this short-term thinking can have long-term consequences.

The Second Step family of programs is the leading human skills curriculum, delivering a return on investment that helps educators create a healthier school climate. Even when budgets are tight, one thing is clear: students can't afford to miss out on this research-backed program—because it isn't a nice-to-have; it's a must-have foundation for PreK-12 students.

This innovative, integrated curriculum is a catalyst that strengthens human skills, the building blocks students need to achieve goals, overcome obstacles, and form meaningful relationships.

Setting students up for success in college, life, and future careers



When implemented with sufficient fidelity, the evidence-based Second Step K-8 digital programs have been shown to lead to **improved academic motivation and performance, fewer disciplinary referrals and suspensions, increased self-management, and reduced absenteeism.**^{1,2,3,4}

This guide outlines five ways that Second Step programs aim to equip students and educators with the essential tools they need to unlock academic success and emotional well-being, making it easy to make a difference in the classroom today and in the workforce tomorrow.

1. Promoting Student Wellness

Problem: Mental health challenges, including anxiety, depression, and stress, are on the rise among students and can contribute to academic struggles and behavioral issues.^{5,6}

Solution: Second Step programs aim to promote mental well-being by teaching students to recognize and manage emotions, develop healthy coping strategies, and build resilience. Human skills programs have been shown to lead to reduced emotional distress and internalizing problems, such as anxiety, depression, and stress.⁷

2. Reducing Chronic Absenteeism

Problem: Chronic absenteeism, where students miss 10% or more of school days, is a growing issue that negatively impacts academic performance.⁸ The most significant risk factors for absenteeism include physical and mental health problems, negative school or classroom climate, and negative relationships with school staff.⁹

Solution: Second Step programs help address risk factors of chronic absenteeism by supporting student well-being. Human skills programs have been shown to improve student engagement, sense of belonging, and school climate.⁷ Students who feel like they belong have better mental health, are more engaged, and do better academically.^{10,11}

3. Advancing Prosocial Behaviors

Problem: Educators report increases in classroom disruptions due to student misconduct and acts of disrespect.¹² In addition to distracting from learning, student behavior issues also negatively impact teacher morale.¹³

Solution: Second Step® programs teach essential human skills like self-regulation, empathy, and problem-solving. Students who participate in human skills programs exhibit improved prosocial behavior, attention, and self-control.⁷ Participation in these types of programs can also lead to fewer student conduct issues and decreased noncompliance, aggression, and bullying—allowing educators to spend more time on instruction and less time on discipline.^{7,14}

4. Supporting Teacher Well-Being

Problem: Educator stress and burnout are major challenges that can impact classroom climate and teacher retention.^{15,16} Diminished teacher well-being can also hurt teaching quality.¹⁷

Solution: The Second Step adult program is designed to support educator well-being, improve educator satisfaction, and reduce burnout—equipping educators with tools to manage stress, build resilience, and foster positive relationships. Participating in educator programs focused on developing human skills can lead to decreased burnout and improved teacher effectiveness and well-being.^{18,19} Educators with strong emotional and interpersonal competence also report higher levels of job satisfaction in addition to less burnout.²⁰

5. Maximizing Resources for Impact

Problem: Schools are often forced to make tough financial decisions due to budget cuts. Allocating resources toward programs that show measurable outcomes is critical.

Solution: Second Step programs offer a research-backed investment designed to address issues that are also prioritized by districts—such as improving student outcomes, enhancing

school climate, and supporting educator well-being. Second Step human skills programs are also a vital primary prevention tool for offsetting potential student behavioral issues. A benefit-cost analysis that evaluated six human skills interventions, including Second Step programs, showed an average return of \$11 for every dollar spent.²¹

A Strategic Investment for Lasting Change

The Second Step family of programs for Early Learning through Grade 12 is a multifaceted investment in the future of your students, your educators, and your school community. Second Step programs empower students to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

They provide educators with the tools and support they need to create positive learning environments, and they offer administrators a cost-effective solution that maximizes resources and delivers real results. Don't just address the symptoms—invest in strengthening the skills that build resilience, foster connection, and create a culture of success for everyone.

Start Building a Stronger Climate Today

Ready to create a positive impact in your school community with an innovative solution?

Request a free consultation to learn how Second Step programs can drive meaningful, measurable outcomes for your school or district.

Request a Free Consultation



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