# Strategic Partnership Plan

SECOND STEP® PROGRAMS | ESSEX WESTFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT

Second Step®

ESSEX WESTFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT

Essex Westford School District
76 Pearl Street
Suite 201
Essex Junction, VT 05452

**Dear Peter Drescher,**

You're balancing a lot at once: student achievement, educator capacity, school climate, attendance, family engagement, and preparing students for a rapidly changing world.

**Second Step® programs can help connect that work through one practical foundation: human skills.**

Students learn how to manage challenges, build relationships, solve problems, think critically, and make responsible decisions.

Educators receive practical resources and implementation support to make classroom integration simple.

District leaders get a scalable approach that reinforces priorities across schools without adding another disconnected initiative.

And **as technology continues to shape how students absorb information and engage with schoolwork, teachers, and peers, these skills matter more than ever**. The Second Step Digital Well-Being unit extends the human skills foundation into the digital world, helping students manage attention, navigate online relationships, evaluate information and influence, and use technology and AI responsibly.

The evidence behind the impact of Second Step programs is strong. **Independent research** involving more than 25,000 elementary and middle school students across 242 schools **found measurable improvements** associated with Second Step programs in areas including academic motivation and performance, school climate, behavior, and attendance.

**For Essex Westford School District**, the opportunity is to build on the work already underway with a connected approach that supports multiple priorities and can scale across schools.

We'd welcome the chance to explore what that could look like in your district, including a program trial at an appropriate school site.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to your students, educators, families, and community. **Together, we can make a meaningful impact districtwide.**

Best regards,

Sheridan Doerr
VP, Marketing & Client Relations
sheridan.doerr@cfchildren.org

# Table of Contents

01 About Second Step® Programs

02 Unmatched Evidence and Impact

04 Preparing Students for a Human Future in a Digital World

05 Strategic Partnership

06 Everything You Need to Plan, Implement, and Sustain Your Approach

08 Success Stories

16 Tiered Interventions

17 Additional Curricula to Support K–12 Programming

19 The Power of Student-Centered Engagement

21 Next Steps

# About Second Step® Programs: The Trusted Leader in Human Skills™ Education

For over 40 years, Second Step programs—created by Committee for Children—have set the standard for improving student well-being and academic achievement. As the world's largest provider of research-based human skills programs, we deliver a comprehensive, systemwide approach that equips students with the core competencies essential for learning and life.

Our PreK–8 evidence-based core curricula and professional learning solutions help districts create positive environments where students thrive, educators feel empowered, and schools achieve measurable results. Today, Second Step programs benefit 45,000 schools nationwide and impact over 20 million students across 70 countries, making us the trusted partner for districts committed to building future-ready learners.

## Why Districts Choose Second Step® Programs

- **Comprehensive PreK–12 solutions:** Universal programming for every grade level
- **Student-centered approach:** Core curricula for human skills development plus programs for bullying prevention, child protection, and out-of-school time
- **Flexible and easy to implement:** Simple rollout with ongoing, included support
- **Proven results:** Evidence-based PreK program improves executive functioning
- **Impact at scale:** K–8 digital programs deliver measurable benefits, as proven by studies of over 25,000 students

**Download the complete K–12 Scope and Sequence of our digital programs**

### Second Step® Elementary Digital Program

- Improved academic motivation
- Improved school climate (increase in schoolwide prosocial behaviors and parent involvement)
- Improved self-management
- Decreased out-of-school suspensions

### Second Step® Middle School

- Improved school climate, school belonging, and teacher-student relationships
- Increased academic improvement in ELA
- Fewer office disciplinary referrals and suspensions
- 2.5 more days of attendance compared to students in the control group

# Second Step® K–8 Digital Programs: Unmatched Evidence and Impact

A series of independent studies representing more than 25,000 students from multiple states shows that the Second Step K–8 digital programs deliver on outcomes, including:

## Academic Skills and Performance

- **6** percentile-point gain in academic motivation
- **7** percentile-point improvement in ELA grades
- **5** percentile-point improvement in self-management

## School Climate

- **11** percentile-point improvement in overall school climate
- **14** percentile-point improvement in school belonging
- **16** percentile-point improvement in teacher-student relationships

## Behavior and Attendance

- **36%** fewer suspensions and referrals
- **2.5** more days of average school attendance
- **14** percentile-point reduction in out-of-school suspensions

✦ Elementary ✚ Middle School

## Why Educators Choose Second Step® Programs

- Unmatched Evidence
- Districtwide Climate Improvement
- Simple Implementation
- Built on 40+ years — Decades of Research

Learn more about the evidence at secondstep.org/research

## As a trusted leader in Human Skills™ development, Second Step® programs are not only evidence-based but evidence-exceeding, as improvement levels exceed those found in a leading meta-analysis.

**2.8x more reduction in conduct issues***

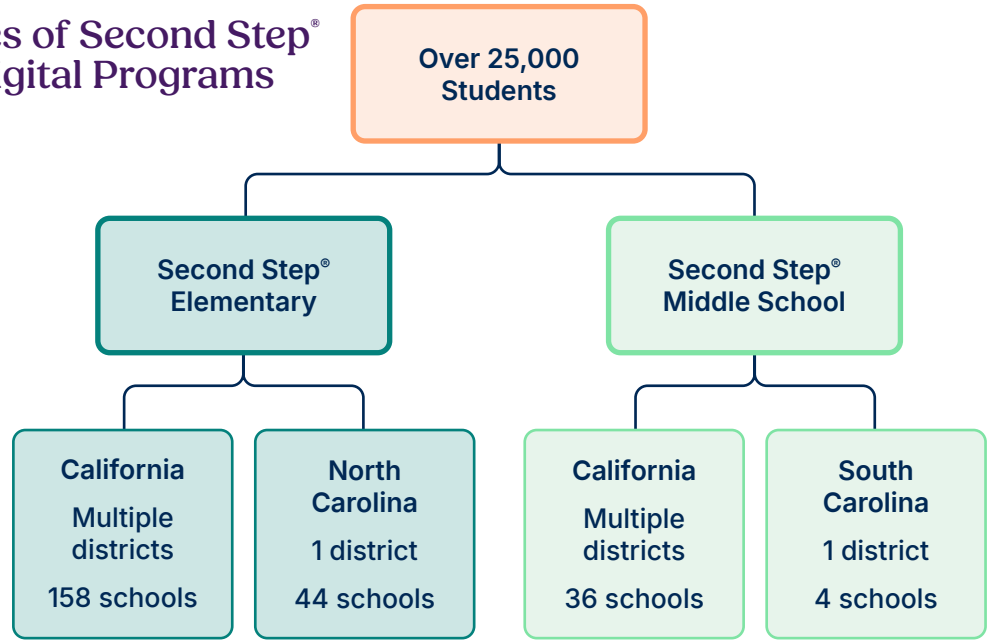
**1.5x more improvement in academic performance***

*Compared to percentile-point improvement found in meta-analysis of similar programs[1]

# Not All Evidence Is Created Equal

After extensive independent studies conducted at a national scale, Second Step K–8 digital programs have shown meaningful impact after just one year of implementation.
When reviewing the evidence for any program, look for multiple studies with converging findings. Studies should include large, diverse, and representative samples of students that reflect the makeup of your district.

## Studies of Second Step® K–8 Digital Programs




1. Cipriano, C., Strambler, M. J., Naples, L. H., Ha, C., Kirk, M., Wood, M., Sehgal, K., Zieher, A. K., Eveleigh, A., McCarthy, M., Funaro, M., Ponnock, A., Chow, J. C., & Durlak, J. (2023). The state of evidence for social and emotional learning: A contemporary meta-analysis of universal school-based SEL interventions. *Child Development, 94*(5), 1181–1204. https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13968

**Learn more about the evidence at secondstep.org/research**

# Preparing Students for a Human Future in a Digital World

## K–12 Digital Well-Being
### Specialized Unit

## Ready-to-Use Instruction to Increase Safe and Responsible Use of Technology

- 65 engaging, grade-specific K–12 lessons that reinforce core human skills
- Clear, easy-to-use structure for addressing digital challenges
- Robust, in-program educator supports, training, and integrated reporting
- Strong alignment with district goals for well-being, belonging, and safety

## Designed for Outcomes Leaders Can Stand Behind

- More intentional and balanced technology use
- Safer, healthier, and more responsible online behavior and decision-making
- Improved critical thinking around information and influence
- Greater educator confidence in addressing digital challenges

## Cohesive Implementation

Intentionally designed to complement Second Step® K–12 digital programs

**Learn more about the K–12 Digital Well-Being specialized unit**

# Strategic Partnership: Second Step® Programs + Essex Westford School District

Second Step programs help districts advance strategic goals through a coordinated human skills foundation, backed by research and supported by practical implementation resources. We work with districts to connect their priorities with relevant Second Step programs, educator support, and opportunities to measure progress.

## Safe and Responsible Digital Learning

EWSD is interested in cybersecurity and phishing solutions. Second Step programs can complement technical safeguards with human skills instruction in critical thinking, responsible decision-making, and healthy online interactions.

## Technology Integration and Educator Support

EWSD has a strong history of supporting technology integration and educator professional learning. Second Step programs' practical lessons, training, and embedded resources can help educators incorporate human skills instruction into daily routines.

## Reliable, Consistent Systems Across Schools

EWSD is evaluating device-management and technology solutions that support reliable school operations. Second Step programs' scalable approach and implementation resources can help establish consistent human skills instruction across sites.

**Access your personalized Second Step programs landing page**

# Everything You Need to Plan, Implement, and Sustain Your Approach

Second Step® K–12 digital programs come with practical tools, training, and ongoing support to help districts build educator capacity, promote consistent implementation, and connect human skills instruction to district priorities. From initial planning through ongoing evaluation, these resources help leaders and educators put the programs into practice with confidence.

## Planning and Implementation Resources

- **Comprehensive program overview:** An overview of the programs and supporting research, plus mid-year and end-of-year check-in presentations to review progress and guide next steps
- **Implementation Playbook:** Editable tools to customize rollout and plan implementation across schools
- **Staff Readiness Survey:** Short survey to assess staff readiness and identify implementation needs
- **Pacing guide:** Editable tool to support consistent program use throughout the school year
- **Advisory planning resources:** Guidance and sample schedules for middle school advisory programs
- **Family engagement resources:** Strategies and materials to help reinforce human skills beyond the classroom

### Support for Site Leaders and Educators

Resources to help build confidence and integrate Second Step programs into daily instruction

- Synchronous and asynchronous implementation tools
- Just-in-time training tools
- Teaching resources embedded within the platform
- Ongoing technical and user support

### Support for District Leaders and Teams

Resources to help coordinate implementation, build capacity, and support consistency across schools

- Live virtual planning meetings
- Onboarding and networking sessions
- Dedicated district leader resources web page
- Workshops to build staff awareness, engagement, and implementation capacity

## Leader Dashboard for Second Step® K–12 Digital Programs

The Leader Dashboard brings key implementation information and resources together in a single location. Administrators can monitor class creation by grade level and by staff member, and leaders overseeing multiple sites can access information across all of their schools in one place.

## Implementation Guide

The Implementation Guide provides tools and guidance for planning Second Step implementation, training staff, monitoring progress, strengthening implementation fidelity, and reinforcing Second Step skills and concepts schoolwide.

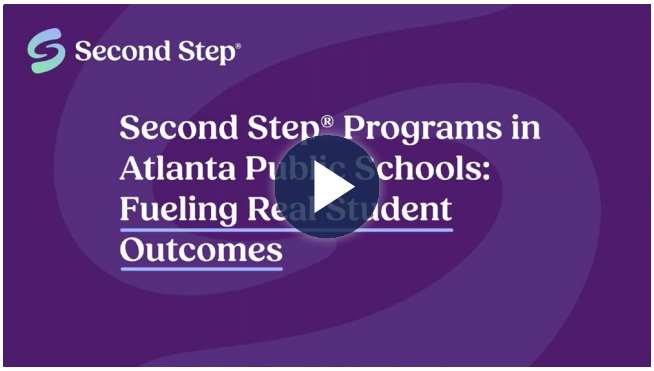
## Comprehensive Training and Support at No Extra Cost

Second Step programs include training, planning resources, and ongoing support to help educators and leaders implement with confidence. From rollout planning to day-to-day questions, the Client Support Team provides personalized assistance to help you and your staff build capacity, promote consistency, and sustain implementation across your district.

SUCCESS STORY

# Proven Results: How Atlanta Public Schools Boosts Academic Achievement with Second Step® Programs

Atlanta Public Schools (APS), a large and diverse district serving nearly 50,000 students, is showing how a thoughtful, data-informed approach can transform student outcomes. By implementing the Second Step® family of programs, the district is strengthening academic achievement, improving student well-being, and equipping every learner with essential life skills to thrive in school and beyond.




**Hear from Atlanta Public Schools about how their Second Step implementation fueled student outcomes.**

## Schools that completed 75% or more of Second Step lessons saw:[1]

- **32% fewer chronically absent students**
- **61% more students meeting academic proficiency standards**
- **Nearly 20% fewer behavioral referrals**

## Situation

With around 50,000 students across 87 learning sites, Atlanta Public Schools is focused on clear, student-centered goals: improving literacy and core academics, reducing disciplinary incidents, strengthening school climate, and preparing every student to graduate "enrolled, enlisted, employed, or as an entrepreneur."

> *"It's not just that their behavior changes—it's that they actually have the skills and the language to make different decisions and choices."*
>
>
>
> —Lindsay Wyczalkowski
> SEL Coordinator
> Atlanta Public Schools

## Approach

**Supporting every learner PreK–12:** Atlanta Public Schools has been implementing Second Step® programs in PreK through Grade 8, supporting positive skill-building and improving school climate for over a decade.

In 2025, the district deepened its commitment to human skills instruction by implementing the all-new Second Step® High School program, building toward a unified PreK–12 approach. This ensures students continue developing the key skills that allow them to thrive in and out of the classroom throughout their academic career at APS.

**Comprehensive data monitoring:** Atlanta Public Schools has taken a holistic, data-driven approach. Through a districtwide dashboard, leaders track Second Step program data in tandem with academic achievement, behavioral, and attendance data, allowing school and district leaders to make holistic and data-driven decisions. This empowers them to understand the links between Second Step implementation and other key performance metrics.

"We want people to implement Second Step lessons because we know what the outcome of consistent instruction is," explains Dr. Lindsay Wyczalkowski, SEL Coordinator for Atlanta Public Schools. "We trust that the program works, so we just have to show up for our leaders and support them with data and guidance."

Three social and emotional learning (SEL) coordinators oversee Second Step programming across grade bands: Dr. Lindsay Wyczalkowski (K–5), Dennis Toliver (6–8), and Dr. Veneschia Bryant (9–12). Additionally, APS designates key on-the-ground leaders—such as assistant principals, counselors, behavior specialists, and restorative practices coaches—to strengthen implementation and engagement across school communities in the district.

This team of coordinators leverages Second Step data to view lesson completion rates for every teacher, ensuring fidelity and consistency in instruction. Their data-driven approach fosters staff buy-in and continuous improvement, which are critical for achieving strong program implementation and student outcomes.[2, 3]

## Outcomes

**Student outcomes:** An independent study by Hanover Research of Atlanta Public Schools showed that schools that implemented Second Step programs with fidelity, 75% or more of the program, consistently outperformed others in several key areas, including academic performance, attendance, and behavior.[1]

Overall, the study showed that academic proficiency was 1.6 times greater in schools implementing with fidelity.

> *"If you teach the lessons with fidelity, not only will it change the students; it will also change you."*
>
>
>
> —Dennis Toliver
> SEL Coordinator
> Atlanta Public Schools

A separate qualitative study by Hanover Research echoed these findings.[4] Schools with higher lesson completion rates demonstrated stronger results in student referrals, attendance, and academic achievement.

> *"Seeing students in our district show improvements in these areas is really powerful. We're seeing that when you focus on implementing Second Step with fidelity, you get really great results."*
>
>
>
> —Lindsay Wyczalkowski
> SEL Coordinator
> Atlanta Public Schools

**Teacher buy-in and satisfaction:** APS has also seen strong satisfaction among educators using Second Step® programs. After a skills-focused professional development session, 90% of teachers reported that they received useful, actionable guidance for their classrooms.

This feedback suggests that educators feel equipped and supported in delivering Second Step instruction. Research has shown that higher staff buy-in correlates with stronger implementation fidelity, ultimately leading to improved student outcomes.[2, 3]

## Conclusion

Through strategic leadership, consistent data monitoring, and a long-term investment in human skills instruction, Atlanta Public Schools is proving how Second Step programs can drive districtwide change, bringing drastic improvements in attendance, behavior, and academic performance. Their experience shows that when schools implement Second Step programs with fidelity and intentionality, both students and educators thrive.

> *"I celebrate what's next for our students because I know that they have a toolkit of resources and skills that they'll carry with them in the next chapter."*
>
>
>
> —Dr. Veneschia Bryant
> SEL Coordinator
> Atlanta Public Schools

## References


1. Atlanta Public Schools. (2025). *SEL instruction linked to students gains in APS* [Fact sheet]. https://cfccdn.blob.core.windows.net/static/pdf/ research/sel-instruction-linked-to-student-gains-in-aps-2025-1.pdf
2. Scaccia, J. P., Cook, B. S., Lamont, A., Wandersman, A., Castellow, J., Katz, J., & Beidas, R. S. (2015). A practical implementation science heuristic for organizational readiness: R = MC$^2$. *Journal of Community Psychology, 43*(4), 484–501. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.21698
3. Durlak, J. A., & DuPre, E. P. (2008). Implementation matters: A review of research on the influence of implementation on program outcomes and the factors affecting implementation. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 41*(3–4), 327–350. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-008-9165-0
4. Hanover Research. (2025). *Emerging findings: SEL and restorative practices interviews: Atlanta Public Schools.* https://cdn.secondstep.org/ static/pdf/research/in-depth-interviews-preliminary-results-sel-and-rp-idis-atlanta-public-schools-second-step.pdf

SUCCESS STORY

# Building a Districtwide Foundation of Belonging in Ogden, Utah

## Situation

When Ogden School District (OSD) in Utah first piloted Second Step® programs, the district started small. A second-grade classroom was struggling with low engagement, high behavior incidents, and frequent disruptions that often required up to six adults in the room to manage.

After three months of consistently implementing Second Step® Elementary, the same classroom was unrecognizable.

Nicole Lovell, OSD's director of student advocacy services, noticed a major shift. Students who previously couldn't engage in any lesson were now actively participating and thoughtfully discussing what the lesson concepts looked like in their classroom. It was a visible, concrete turning point. Students weren't just behaving better. They were actively engaged in their own learning.

"That was a really notable time," Nicole explains. "Now those instances happen a lot within our district. . . . We're hearing the language around lessons that get taught. Our students can speak to it. We're even starting to get to that point where our parents can speak to it, which I think is really impressive."

## Approach

### Fostering Belonging Through Strategic Alignment

After seeing what was possible in the second-grade classroom, Ogden School District opted to use Second Step programs to provide universal instruction in PreK through Grade 6 classrooms.

> *When we initially started with our strategic plan, we identified, using different data pieces, that a low percentage of students were indicating a sense of belonging as a strength. So, we were really looking for and asking, how do we build that sense of belonging or that sense of community within our schools?*

—Nicole Lovell
Director of Student Advocacy Services
Ogden School District

The Ogden behavioral support team immediately appreciated the programs' ease of implementation, stressing the ready-to-teach lessons, program alignment, and scalable features.

> *We want to make sure we're putting in protective factors so we can create an environment where students know they are safe and can be successful.*
>
>
>
> —Nicole Lovell
> Director of Student Advocacy Services
> Ogden School District

Over the years, OSD has implemented several unique models for Second Step® instruction due to its flexible implementation options, including combining classrooms for designated Human Skills™ sessions. In this model, one teacher provides direction instruction of a Second Step lesson, another provides behavior or engagement support in the classroom as needed, and the third teacher uses the time to pull individual students for reteaching, progress monitoring, or other independent conversations.

Innovative strategies like these ensure every student receives high-quality Second Step instruction. It also builds a shared language around human skills that students and teachers continually use throughout their learning, across entire schools. For Nicole, the key operative concept is "reinforcement," where students experience multiple touchpoints of human skills concepts throughout the day and through multiple learning modalities.

### Teacher Empowerment

Ogden School District also stresses teacher efficacy in teaching human skills.

"Teachers leaving traditional education programs aren't necessarily trained or have resources or experience in teaching social skills to students at a Tier 1 level," Nicole explains. "And that's where we found Second Step."

The district has now been consistently implementing Second Step programs in PreK through Grade 8 classrooms for nearly a decade. Teachers are no longer asking whether they have time to teach Second Step programs. Now they're completing their lessons and asking, "What's next?"

## Outcomes

### Belonging Is Just the Beginning

Ogden School District's journey with Second Step programs began with identifying belonging as a core student need based on survey data. Today, belonging is no longer the primary objective in Second Step implementation, not because it's no longer important but because it's already there. With that foundation, the district can prioritize other outcomes like improving emotion regulation and attendance.

Student surveys also reflect improvements in school climate, which is difficult to quantify but easy to spot. It's visible in hallway conversations, classroom engagement, and peer relationships.

Ogden School District also began implementing Second Step® High School on a pilot basis in 2025. In the future, district leaders plan to expand instruction, primarily through instruction from in-school social workers.

## Conclusion

Building a districtwide culture of belonging takes time. But with consistent, coordinated instruction, the progress becomes visible everywhere.

Nicole reflects, "It's just part of our culture in Ogden that we provide this level of instruction. That, to me, is a big success story."

SUCCESS STORY

# Strengthening Student Success Through Integrated Tier 1 and Tier 2 Supports

Norman Public Schools (NPS) is a K–12 district serving approximately 16,000 students in 25 school sites just south of Oklahoma City. As the MTSS/Prevention Coordinator for NPS, Lori Hollingsworth oversees prevention and helps individual schools develop a comprehensive multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) for their building.

Currently, all PreK through Grade 8 classrooms use Second Step® programs to strengthen human skills across the district. But Second Step instruction in NPS is hardly a new experiment. "When I first started teaching, we were teaching the physical curriculum binders," Lori reflects. "Second Step's been around as long as I have in Norman."

Today, Second Step programs help create a consistent foundation for student belonging, learning readiness, and support across every PreK through Grade 8 campus in the district.

## Situation

Like many districts, Norman Public Schools sought to improve attendance, reduce behavior challenges, strengthen learning readiness, and deepen students' sense of belonging. "When students are dysregulated, when they don't feel like they belong or don't feel connected, they're not going to be ready to learn," Lori explains. "That has to be step zero in any education setting."

As part of their holistic approach, district leaders also sought to improve family engagement, strengthen educator buy-in, and make it easier for staff to consistently deliver instruction within busy school schedules.

> *It's making sure that everyone who enters our buildings, no matter what school site, feels seen, heard, and valued. We're thankful that Second Step programs provide that tool.*
>
>
>
> —Lori Hollingsworth
> MTSS/Prevention Coordinator
> Norman Public Schools

### Finding a Tier 2 Solution

With Second Step® programs in place for universal Tier 1 instruction, Norman Public Schools was ready to expand its human skills instruction to support students with additional needs. District leaders wanted a screening process that would help them quickly identify students who could benefit from targeted intervention and connect them with support before challenges escalated.

> *When students feel valued and part of a community, when they truly feel like they belong, they can relax. Their brains can settle in and be ready to learn.*
>
>
>
> —Lori Hollingsworth
> MTSS/Prevention Coordinator
> Norman Public Schools

## Approach

### A Focus on Human Skills and Belonging

The goal of Norman Public Schools is to create a districtwide culture where student well-being is a foundational priority. The district's six strategic pillars, which are well-known to every educator in every school site, reflect that commitment. "One of those six pillars is building a culture of belonging," Lori says. "It's making sure that everyone who enters our buildings, no matter what school site, feels seen, heard, and valued. We're thankful that Second Step programs provide that tool."

NPS tracks districtwide perceptions of belonging through surveys done with students, parents, community, and staff. Belonging ties directly to the learning readiness, attendance, and behavior concerns mentioned above.

Building on this foundation, NPS has developed a consistent implementation model across all schools. Second Step digital programs are taught in every K–8 classroom, while PreK classrooms use the Second Step® Early Learning classroom kit. Elementary students receive instruction in their homerooms at least once each week, while middle school students participate during advisory periods.

This consistency ensures students receive a shared experience and common language around human skills, regardless of which school they attend.

### Tier 2 Approach: Additional Support, Not Different Support

In implementing Second Step Tiered Interventions this year, Lori and district leaders emphasized the importance of framing Tier 1 and Tier 2 as complementary systems, not alternatives to one or the other. "Tier 2 doesn't mean 'something else,'" Lori says. "You're not throwing Tier 1 out the window. It means 'in addition to.' You're providing additional support, not necessarily different support. I've appreciated having Tiers 1 and 2 in the same platform so nobody feels like they have to find another resource."

Through behavioral and mental health screeners, site teams identify students who could benefit most from targeted, Tier 2 support. Behavior technicians then pull small groups from class and teach the Second Step Tier 2 lessons.

Because Second Step Tier 2 instruction is aligned with the same human skills students are already learning in the classroom, support feels familiar and reinforces existing learning rather than introducing an entirely separate framework.

## Outcomes

### Stronger Attendance and More Consistent Student Support

Through consistent Second Step implementation across schools, Norman Public Schools has seen improvements in lesson completion and student attendance. Last school year alone, the district saw a 1% increase in attendance.

The district has also seen evidence of the connection between implementation fidelity and

student outcomes. When one school counselor compared behavior referral data with Second Step® lesson completion rates, a clear pattern emerged: classrooms with the highest number of behavior referrals were also the classrooms that had fallen behind on lessons focused on cooperation, empathy, and problem-solving. The finding reinforced the value of strong Tier 1 instruction and helped school teams prioritize getting classrooms back on track before introducing additional interventions.

### Leveling Up Tiered Interventions

The district's investment in a connected Tier 1 and Tier 2 system has also helped schools provide more targeted support. With strong universal human skills instruction in place across PreK through Grade 8, site teams can more easily distinguish students who are struggling situationally from those who need more targeted intervention. This allows students to receive the right support at the right time. Behavior technicians delivering small group instruction have embraced the ready-to-teach Second Step Tier 2 curriculum because it connects directly to what students are already learning in the classroom.

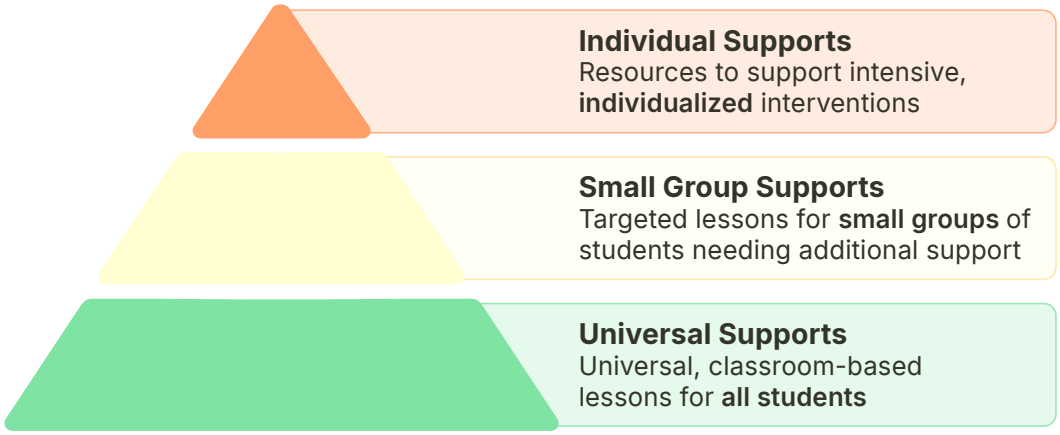
> *Those skills will help them not only now, as a student, but also in the future in the workforce. Being able to effectively communicate their needs and feelings can help them in so many areas, even outside of their K–12 experience.*
>
>
>
> —Lori Hollingsworth
> MTSS/Prevention Coordinator
> Norman Public Schools

## Beyond the Data

For Norman Public Schools, belonging isn't a standalone initiative. It's the foundation that supports learning, attendance, behavior, and long-term student success. By aligning Tier 1 instruction and Tier 2 intervention around the shared Second Step framework, the district has created a more consistent approach to helping every student feel seen, supported, and ready to learn.

# Second Step® Tiered Interventions

The Second Step® Elementary and Second Step® Middle School digital programs are an all-in-one, proven solution that strengthens essential human skills.




## Purposefully Built to Support All Students

**Universal supports:** Universal Second Step lessons and activities that support all classrooms

**Small group supports:** Fifty-four targeted lessons for small groups focused on:

- Emotions, Thoughts & Feelings
- Relationships & Prosocial Skills
- Executive Functioning

**Individual supports:** Added resources—such as educator professional development materials and individual behavior support materials—to help guide and support individual needs.

Our goal is simple: help educators, leaders, and districts support the development of human skills in real classrooms—without adding stress or steep learning curves. Second Step Tiered Interventions are built for flexibility, ease, and seamless implementation, removing barriers so educators can focus on what matters most—**supporting the needs of *all* students.**

## Assessment Toolkit Helps Drive Data-Driven Decisions

The Assessment Toolkit is an optional, streamlined, strengths-based human skills assessment resource adapted from the Delaware Social-Emotional Competence Scale and redesigned to help educators easily understand student needs and growth. It includes tools for both student self-assessment and teacher observation and aligns directly to the Second Step Tiered Interventions.

**Learn more about Tiered Interventions**

# Additional Curricula to Support K–12 Programming

## Second Step® Early Learning (PreK)

The Second Step Early Learning classroom kit offers a universal, evidence-based curriculum designed to increase children's school readiness and social success by teaching them skills to help them listen, pay attention, manage their feelings and behavior, and get along with others.

- **28 Weekly Themes,** with five- to seven-minute daily activities for teaching core human skills, such as self-regulation
- **Engaging physical materials** like posters, Weekly Theme Cards, high-quality puppets, take-home activities, a Teaching Materials Notebook, and family resources for reinforcement
- **Access to online resources** for staff training, teaching tools, and lesson media, such as sing-alongs and videos

## Second Step® Bullying Prevention Unit (K–5)

The Second Step Bullying Prevention Unit is a research-based prevention curriculum that promotes positive school climate and teaches K–5 students how to recognize, report, and refuse bullying.

- **Five easy-to-implement lessons** taught once per week for 30 minutes
- **Role-based training modules** (60–90 minutes) for administrators, staff, and lesson facilitators, covering how to recognize, respond to, and report bullying; includes completion tracking
- **Award-winning lesson videos** (CINE Golden Eagle & Telly Awards), available to stream or on DVD, featuring live-action and animation created with author Trudy Ludwig
- **Comprehensive resources** for principals, staff, students, and families that reinforce bullying prevention and clarify peer conflict versus bullying

## Second Step® Child Protection Unit (PreK–5)

The Second Step Child Protection Unit is a research-based personal safety curriculum that encourages help-seeking and positive student norms, teaching students to recognize, refuse, and report unsafe or abusive situations. It includes training, guidance, and resources for administrators, teachers, counselors, and families. Student lessons are age-appropriate and designed for Early Learning through Grade 5 classrooms.

- **Six easy-to-use lessons** taught once per week for 30 minutes
- **Role-based training modules** (60–90 minutes) that help administrators, staff, and lesson facilitators understand and recognize the signs of abuse or maltreatment, respond with trauma-sensitive practices, and report disclosures of abuse appropriately, with guidance to help educators feel comfortable; includes completion tracking
- **Comprehensive family materials**, including family letters to notify parents and caregivers about the sensitive subject matter being taught and take-home activities to reinforce skills and encourage family discussions

## Second Step® Out-of-School Time (K–5)

Second Step Out-of-School Time is an evidence-based human skills program designed specifically to meet the needs of out-of-school time settings. This program has four units: Community Building, Growth Mindset & Goal Setting, Emotion Management, and Empathy & Kindness. The activities are engaging and active rather than lesson-like.

- **12 durable, spiral-bound activity notebooks**, with 147 total activities across three grade bands: K–1, 2–3, and 4–5
- **Age-appropriate activities** average 20 minutes each, taught two to three times per week with elementary aged groups onsite at schools or in the community
- **Online resources** and included program training help site leaders build a positive environment
- **Also available in Spanish**—Second Step® Programa extraescolar has fully translated printed materials for Spanish-speaking adults and youths

# The Power of Student-Centered Engagement

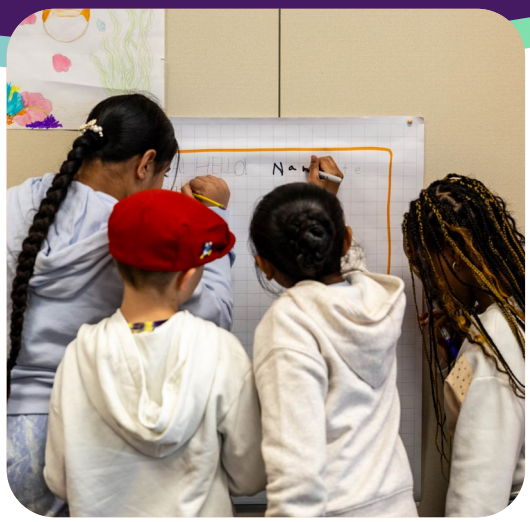
Today's students are more digitally connected but often feel less socially connected. Second Step® programs can help.

| Second Step® Programs<br>**Create authentic engagement through educator-facilitated human connection. Our approach centers on:** | Other Programs<br>**Rely heavily on screens, media, or gamified experiences that center on:** |
|---|---|
| Student-centered lessons to amplify **agency** and **voice** | Limited opportunities for student voice or shared experience |
| Authentic peer-to-peer connection to increase active **engagement** and **collaboration** | Limited meaningful peer-to-peer interaction |
| Engaging media with intention to model **real-world scenarios** and spark **discussion** | Short-lived interest rather than lasting impact |
| Integrated reinforcement to prioritize **application** and **transference** of core skills | Sit-and-get instruction with little to no application or reinforcement |
| More intentional and **balanced technology use** to support real-life learning | Passive engagement |
| **Scaffolded skill-building** that goes beyond just learning concepts | Reliance on screens and gamification, leading to overstimulation |

## Second Step® lessons are designed for:

### Peer-to-peer interaction

- Structured turn-and-talk partner and group discussions
- Perspective-taking and shared problem-solving
- Meaningful opportunities to reinforce and practice skills with peers



### Collaboration in action

- Cooperative learning activities
- Real-world scenarios and Real Voices videos
- Group reflection and feedback
- Aligned extension and advisory activities that support skill integration
- Interactive and student-centered learning

### Real outcomes

Schools using Second Step K–8 digital programs show:

- Stronger school climate
- Improved student-teacher relationships
- Increased family engagement

# Next Steps:
# Turn Your District Priorities into Action

**Your district's priorities are connected.**

**Your approach to human skills can be, too.**

Second Step® programs offer a coordinated foundation to help students develop the skills they need to manage emotions, build relationships, solve problems, think critically, and make responsible decisions. Backed by research and supported by practical implementation resources, this approach can help districts connect their goals with consistent human skills instruction across schools, without adding another disconnected initiative.

**The next step is to explore what this could look like for**
**Essex Westford School District**

## Get a Customized Consultation

Work with the Second Step team to explore an approach tailored to your district's priorities, needs, and implementation plans. Together, we can:

- Identify the Second Step programs and resources most relevant to your goals
- Explore how human skills instruction can support connected priorities across schools
- Discuss implementation planning, educator support, and ways to build consistency
- Identify relevant outcomes and ways to evaluate progress

The result is a practical path forward that builds on your district's existing work and connects priorities to measurable progress.

## Activate a Trial at One School Site

Experience Second Step programs in a real school setting before considering broader implementation. A school-based trial gives your team an opportunity to:

- See how the programs fit into everyday classroom routines
- Gather feedback from school leaders and educators
- Assess how the programs align with your school's and district's priorities
- Evaluate implementation needs and identify relevant indicators of progress
- Build insight and confidence to inform future districtwide decisions

A trial provides a starting point for evaluating how Second Step programs could support your broader goals.

**One Connected Approach.**
**A Clear Next Step.**

Let's build on the work already underway in Essex Westford School District and explore how a shared human skills foundation can support progress across your schools.

**Connect with:**
Sheridan Doerr
VP, Marketing & Client Relations
sheridan.doerr@cfchildren.org



#5842 10.22.2026