ALIGNMENT CHART
TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES IN SCHOOLS

Second Step® Programs
Early Learning–Grade 8

SECOND STEP® ELEMENTARY DIGITAL PROGRAM

Every classroom in every school has students who have experienced trauma. Trauma can result from adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), including household dysfunction, abuse, or neglect. Witnessing or being a victim of such things as violence, racism, poverty, housing instability, or natural disasters can be equally traumatizing, as can immigration and refugee experiences. In school, students who have been traumatized may act out, withdraw, or have difficulty paying attention, all of which impede their ability to benefit from school. Schools can address these children's needs and improve their ability to learn by implementing trauma-informed practices. These practices help create trauma-sensitive schools in which all children feel safe to learn.

Creating a trauma-sensitive school is a whole-school effort. It requires that leadership, staff, and families work together to identify and prioritize the policies and practices that fit best with the school culture and context. The following charts describe foundational trauma-informed practices that can help schools become trauma-sensitive and how Second Step programs can support these practices.

Foundational Trauma-Informed Practices	How the Second Step® Family of Programs Supports These Practices
Create a safe, supportive learning environment. In order to learn, all students need to feel safe and supported in school. This is particularly true for students who have experienced trauma. They need school to feel like a sanctuary from the difficulties they experience in their homes and neighborhoods. Creating a safe, supportive learning environment is a central trauma-informed practice.	Second Step programs for Early Learning through Grade 8 help create a climate of social-emotional safety in schools. When all students in a school are learning and practicing the social-emotional skills taught in the programs, a safe, supportive learning environment can develop.

Trauma-Informed Practices in Schools

Foundational Trauma-Informed Practices	How the Second Step® Family of Programs Supports These Practices
Implement a social-emotional learning (SEL) program. SEL has emerged as a powerful lever for changing school climate and improving overall student success. Implementing a research-based, universal SEL program schoolwide is considered foundational to creating a safe, supportive school climate. Teaching social-emotional skills to all students is also a recognized and recommended universal-level support for students' trauma and behavioral health needs. Students who have experienced trauma may struggle with regulating their emotions, behaviors, and attention in order to learn in school. However, when schools implement SEL programs, the skills taught—such as perspective-taking, emotion management, and problem-solving—can help address traumatized children's skill gaps and improve their ability to benefit from school.	Created by Committee for Children, the research-based Second Step family of programs is one of the most widely used SEL programs in the United States. The universal programs promote development of students' social-emotional competence and self-regulation skills. Students with these skills are better able to maintain healthy relationships with peers and adults and have more coping strategies to manage stressful situations.

Foundational Trauma-Informed Practices

Train all staff.
First and foremost, school staff need to understand that trauma is much more common than they might imagine. Then the following knowledge and skills can help prepare staff to create a trauma-sensitive learning environment.

All staff need to know that trauma can:

- Affect students' learning, behavior, and relationships at school

- Compromise students' cognitive and social-emotional development

- Contribute to behavioral issues (such as acting out or withdrawing)

All staff need to be able to:

- Create safety and support for students who have experienced trauma

- Teach and model social-emotional skills

- Identify students who may need accommodations to help them succeed academically and socially

- Manage their own responses to students' challenging behavior so they're able to respond in a supportive way, rather than just reacting

- Reframe students' behavior through a trauma lens, which involves being curious about what lies behind a student's behavior rather than reacting to it with judgment and punishment

How the Second Step® Family of Programs Supports These Practices

The Second Step family of programs has online resources and training to help prepare staff to teach the programs; this training includes developing an understanding of why social-emotional skills are important for students' school and life success. Through training for, teaching, and reinforcing the lessons, staff become better able to model and reinforce social-emotional skills. Staff are also more prepared to help children dealing with trauma learn to manage their emotions, a key strategy for diminishing trauma symptoms and helping these children reach their full academic potential. The Second Step® Bullying Prevention Unit and the Second Step® Child Protection Unit (additional units for the Second Step® Elementary digital program) and the Recognizing Bullying & Harassment Unit (included in Second Step® Middle School), emphasize training for all adults in the school. The following resources accompany these units to help create safety and support for students.

Second Step bullying prevention resources (Grades K–8):

- Behavior-Change Plan

- Student Safety Plan

Second Step Bullying Prevention Unit (Grades K–5):

- Positive Classroom Climate Games

- Responding to Bullying: Ensuring Safety

Second Step Child Protection Unit (Early Learning–Grade 5):

- Creating a Safe and Supportive Classroom

- Child Check: Reframing a Behavior of Concern

- Student Support Plan

Trauma-Informed Practices in Schools

Foundational Trauma-Informed Practices	How the Second Step® Family of Programs Supports These Practices
Prevent bullying. Making changes to the school climate can help decrease bullying and create a safer, more respectful learning environment. This is especially important for students dealing with trauma, for whom a calm school environment with no bullying or teasing is recommended. It's also critical for these students because being victimized at home or in the community puts them at risk of further victimization.	Implementing the Second Step® Bullying Prevention Unit for the Second Step® Elementary digital program and the Recognizing Bullying & Harassment Unit included in Second Step® Middle School can provide schools with an excellent foundation upon which a safe, supportive learning environment can grow. The goals are for students and staff to develop specific knowledge and skills for preventing bullying, dealing directly with bullying situations, and fostering a climate of safety and respect for all. They do this by changing multiple levels of the school climate through intervention components that affect schools and classrooms, peer norms and behavior, and individual attitudes, norms, and skills. The core components are staff training, student lessons, positive classroom climate activities, and family engagement materials.
Protect children. Prioritizing comprehensive child protection policies, procedures, and practices can help schools strengthen the layers of protection, safety, and support all students need before they can learn. For students experiencing trauma, a protective layer that includes adults who will intervene when necessary and support them during the healing process is especially important. These students can't recover if trauma is still happening, and when it does stop, healing is bolstered when students feel safe with and supported by the adults they rely on.	Implementing the Second Step® Child Protection Unit for Second Step® Early Learning and the Second Step® Elementary digital program can help schools further enhance their safe, supportive learning environment. The goal of the Child Protection Unit is to develop staff, adult caregiver, and student knowledge and skills for protecting students from unsafe and abusive situations, both in and out of the classroom. Specific skills for recognizing and reporting abusive situations and responding supportively to students who disclose abuse are also targeted. These goals are accomplished via the four core components: staff training, student lessons, staff support resources, and family education and engagement materials.