



Second Step® Community Rebuilding Unit

Middle School Lessons

UPDATED JUNE 2021

Welcome to the Second Step® Community Rebuilding Unit.

This unit is designed to support schools as they re-open after extended school closures. It aligns with Second Step programs, but can also be used by any educator looking to foster a positive school or classroom community.

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SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

Second Step® Community Rebuilding Unit Middle School Lessons

Lesson	Objectives	Overview
Lesson 1: Returning to School	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Describe challenges they might face returning to school after extended time awayIdentify people students can go to for help with these challenges	What challenges do students face returning after extended time away from school? Students' sense of belonging at school is critical to their success as they re-enter the classroom. It's likely that many, if not most, students will feel some anxiety about returning to school. This lesson serves to counter those anxious feelings, reassure them their concerns are normal, and create a positive mindset that will increase their sense of belonging.
Lesson 2: My Values	Identify their personal values and how they might have changed over time.	Giving students a chance to discuss their own personal values can help them cope with stress and anxiety and build community by helping them recognize values they share. This lesson addresses values by exploring how their values might have changed over time.
Lesson 3: Value of Friendship	Identify the qualities that make for a good friend	Students who have spent extended time away from school may experience challenges to their personal relationships. This lesson invites students to reflect on the work that goes into maintaining a strong friendship and encourages them to practice gratitude to further strengthen relationships.
Lesson 4: Community Values	Identify the values they'd like to see their whole school share	Adolescents have great power to shape the nature of their social world. This lesson taps into that power by having students identify the values they'd like to see reflected in their school community. Building on the previous lessons, students will explore what they'd like school to be and think of ways they can help make it happen.
Lesson 5: Making Our School Community Better	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify problems facing their school community and possible solutionsExplore ways to get help with solving problems	<p>Students face many challenges at school, and they can often feel powerless in the face of those challenges. When students feel like they can make a difference, though, it can be very empowering.</p> <p>This lesson is designed to engage students in both identifying issues at school and identifying ways they can help solve them. This sense of agency will not only help them manage stress; it can also encourage them to take ownership of their school community.</p>

Unit Description

The goal of the Community Rebuilding Unit is to help foster a sense of community among students and staff as they return to school after extended school closures or time away.

To achieve this goal, the Community Rebuilding Unit will have students engage in a variety of activities designed to help them build connections with their peers and school staff. Students will also have opportunities to express what's on their minds, ask questions, and identify what they have in common with each other.

Staff will also receive guidance on how they can help foster a positive school community and provide meaningful support to their students.

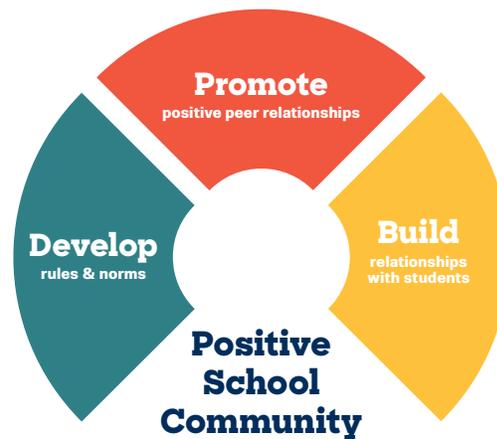
Why This Unit Matters

After long breaks from school or in-person learning, students can often feel isolated or disconnected from their school community or peers. Rebuilding community after long breaks can help students feel welcomed and supported, and can create a sense of belonging that can positively affect their overall well-being.

Building a Positive School and Classroom Community

A positive school community feels safe, respectful, welcoming, supportive, and affirming of their own identities, perspectives, and lived experiences.¹ Some ways to build a positive school community:

- Develop clear, fair rules and norms that support respectful behavior
- Promote positive peer relationships
 - **Teach the lessons in this unit**
 - Notice and reinforce positive interactions between peers
- Build positive relationships with all students
 - **Check in regularly with students using the class check-in/check-out templates below**
 - Get to know students and what's happening in their lives outside of school
 - Demonstrate kindness and inclusiveness in your interactions with students
 - Connect with students about their academic progress in a supportive and understanding way
 - Offer additional emotional support to students in need



1. Committee for Children. (2013). *Second Step Bullying Prevention Unit*. [Kit]. Seattle, WA: Committee for Children.

- Respond to behaviors in a supportive way
 - Understand that students who have experienced trauma or toxic stress may act out with disruptive behaviors, and that recognizing these behaviors as symptoms of trauma and stress is critical to building a positive school culture
 - Use the steps in "Safe Supportive Learning" on page 20 to help you respond appropriately

Check-Ins and Check-Outs

Overview

Making sure a caring adult connects with every student every day is an effective way to build strong student-staff relationships and a positive school environment. Daily check-ins are a practical strategy for facilitating these connections schoolwide. They also serve to identify students who may need more personalized social-emotional support. The weekly check-out provides students with an opportunity to reflect on and process the week.

Daily Check-In

Objectives

By the end of this activity, students will be better able to:

- Identify how they're feeling
- Ask for help with concerns and problems

Prep/Materials

- Paper and pencil

Lesson Note

Consider participating in the conversation yourself. When you share how you're feeling, you can help normalize these conversations for students.

If you're able to host digital polls in your classroom, consider adding a second individual check-in as an anonymous poll. It can be very affirming for students to visually see how their peers are responding.

Group Check-In (5 min.)

1. Set the purpose of the lesson: **Let's check in on how we're doing.**
2. **Pair students. What's something you're looking forward to today?** Give students time to reflect and talk to their partner. Call on volunteers to answer. *Seeing friends. Finishing a project. Getting out of school.*
3. **Is there anything you're nervous or worried about today? What is it?** Give students time to reflect and talk to their partner. Call on 2–3 volunteers to answer. *A test. Following safety guidelines. Dealing with drama.* Acknowledge students' answers and remind them that you're available to help them with today's challenges.
4. **Do you have any announcements for the class?** Call on volunteers to share announcements. *It's my birthday! I'm organizing a Fortnite team. Chess club is meeting at lunch.*



Bold—Teacher's script
Italics—Anticipated student responses

Individual Check-in (5 min.)

1. Have students write down answers to the following questions. Make sure to let them know you'll read their answers.
 - **How are you feeling today?**
 - **Is there anything you'd like me to know?**
 - **Is there anything you need help with?**
2. Read their answers. Note any students you'd like to follow up with or who you may want to refer to the school counselor.

Weekly Check-Out

Objective

By the end of this activity, students will be better able to reflect on their experiences over the last week.

Lesson Note

As with check-in, consider participating in the conversation yourself. When you share how you're feeling, you can help normalize these conversations for students.

Group Check-Out (10 min.)

1. Set the purpose of the lesson: **Let's reflect on how this week went for us.**
2. Have students talk to a partner about each of the following questions. Then call on volunteers to share their answers with the class. **What's one challenge you encountered and one success you experienced this week?** *I got in a fight with a friend. I got to school on time every day. I didn't get enough sleep. I finished a project.*
3. **What do you need to do to be prepared for next week?** *Study. Relax. Pick up school supplies.*
4. **What's one thing you're looking forward to this weekend?** *Sleeping. Playing video games. Playing with my dog.*

Remote Adaptations

The best adaptations for a lesson will depend on the technology tools available to you and your students, and on your knowledge of what works best for your kids. The following are suggested ways of delivering the lessons remotely. Choose what works best for you and your students.

Partner Work (Including Turn and Talk)

- Use breakout rooms. Your remote-delivery platform may allow you to create smaller groups for discussion or collaboration. It may be easier to create small groups instead of pairs. To increase effectiveness, keep breakout time fairly short, make sure students are clear on the task before sending them into groups, and consider assigning roles to group members or assigning one student to be the group facilitator.
- Make it a whole-class discussion. Give think-time, then call on volunteers. Encourage all students to participate by having them indicate when they agree or have the same idea.
- Use the chat window with the whole class. Call on a volunteer to type a response or allow all students to respond.
- Use online discussion boards or other collaborative tools.
- Have students write or draw on paper and share their responses by holding them up to the camera.
- For Kindergarten through Grade 2, have students turn and talk with a stuffed animal, doll, or action figure, or with a family member.

Whole-Class Discussion

- Establish guidelines for muting and unmuting microphones and for indicating when someone wants to speak.
- Call on a volunteer to respond while other students indicate when they agree or have the same idea.
- Consider having students use nonverbal response methods, such as hand signals or sticky notes, to show when they agree with the speaker or have a different response.
- Encourage students to add on to or make connections with others' ideas. For example, after a student shares an experience, ask the rest of the class to indicate whether they've had the same experience.
- Use online discussion boards or other collaborative tools.
- Have students write or draw on paper and share their responses by holding them up to the camera.

Physical Movement

- Some lesson activities include hand motions or movements while standing in place. If students have room, these can be done remotely without modification.
- Some lessons ask students to move around the classroom to find a partner. Modify these lessons by assigning partners instead or using the tips in the Small-Group or Partner Work section.

Lesson Visuals

- Some activities may require students to reference a lesson visual. Display the visual using the screen sharing function of your remote-delivery platform. You may also choose to read prompts to students or post them for students to see.

Lesson 1: Returning to School

Getting Started

Overview

What challenges do students face returning after extended time away from school? Students' sense of belonging at school is critical to their success as they re-enter the classroom. It's likely that many, if not most, students will feel some anxiety about returning to school. This lesson serves to counter those anxious feelings, reassure them their concerns are normal, and create a positive mindset that will increase their sense of belonging.



Bold—Teacher's script

Italics—Anticipated student responses

Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Describe challenges they might face as they return to school after extended time away
- Identify support people to go to for help with these challenges

Prep/Materials

- If possible, seat students so they can see each other
- Be ready to display the lesson visual during the activity
- Students will need a pencil and paper

Lesson Note

Before teaching this lesson, think of several school staff members who students can reach out to for help.

Warm-Up (3 min.)

- 1.** Set the purpose of the lesson: **Today we're going to talk about some of the challenges and questions you might have as you return to school and who you can reach out to for help.**
- 2.** Have students quietly reflect on the following prompt: **What's one thing that makes you nervous about returning to school after being away?**
- 3.** Call on volunteers to tell the class some things they're worried about. *Staying healthy. Figuring out the new schedule. Hanging out with friends I haven't seen in a while.*
- 4.** Write down student responses on the board.



Activity Instructions

Activity: Everyone Is Nervous About Something (5 min.)

1. Project the lesson visual for the class to see
2. Give students a moment to read the questions
3. Note questions that correspond to things students said during the warm-up
4. Ask students to identify other questions they can relate to

Discuss (5 min.)

1. **How do you think students who are nervous about these things can overcome them?** *Learn the new rules. Be open to trying new things. Ask for help if they need it.*
2. **Do you think it would be easy or hard for them to overcome these things? Why?** *Easy once they adjust to new changes. Hard because they might miss how things use to be.*

Activity: It Gets Better (8 min.)

1. Have students write answers to the following questions:
 - Do you think these things might get better for the students over time? Why or why not?
 - Choose a question from the list I showed you. What could you say to a student who has that question to help them feel better?

Wrap-Up (4 min.)

1. Let's take another look at the challenges you've identified. Who can you go to for help with these challenges? Think about the people we have at school, and the people in your life outside of school.
2. Give students time to reflect on the question.
3. Call on students at random to tell the class their ideas.

Lesson 1 Visual: Returning to School

Here are some concerns students might have about returning to school after spending time away.

- **How do I keep track of new rules?**
- **Will my old friends still want to hang out with me?**
- **Will I be able to make new friends?**
- **Will I be able to focus in class?**
- **Will school feel different now?**
- **Can I still join the sports teams and clubs I used to be in?**
- **Will my classes be harder than they used to be?**
- **Will I be able to get up in time for school? I'm not used to being on a schedule anymore.**
- **How will I handle doing work at school and online?**

Lesson 2: My Values

Getting Started

Overview

Giving students a chance to discuss their own personal values can help them cope with stress and anxiety and build community by helping them recognize values they share. This lesson explores how their values might have changed over time.



Bold—Teacher's script

Italics—Anticipated student responses

Objective

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify their personal values and how they might have changed over time.

Prep/Materials

- Students will need paper and a pencil
- Be ready to display the lesson visual during the activity

Lesson Notes

Think about what things you value most, and how your values might have changed over time.

Warm-Up (3 min.)

1. Set the purpose of the lesson: **Today, we are going to talk about some of the things we value most in our lives.**
2. Project the lesson handout on screen. **These are some examples of values people might have.**
3. Join the class in briefly answering the following prompt: **Your values are what matter to you most. Name something in your life you deeply value.**



Activity Instructions

Activity: Reflecting on My Values (10 min.)

1. Have students write answers to the following prompts. Let them know you will be collecting their answers at the end of the lesson. **Choose one or two things you value the most. Next, describe why they are so important to you.**
2. Have volunteers tell the class their answers.

Discuss (5 min.)

1. What are some values you share with others in the class?
2. How do you show your values here at school?

Wrap-Up (5 min.)

1. Have students quietly reflect on the following questions: **Think about the values you just listed. Have recent events changed them in any way? Why or why not?**
2. Call on students at random to tell the class their answers.

Lesson 2 Visual: My Values

Example Values

CREATIVITY	HELPING OTHERS	FAMILY	SUCCESS
NATURE	LEARNING	ATHLETICISM	WEALTH
RELIGION	CULTURAL AND/OR RACIAL IDENTITY	SENSE OF HUMOR	HONESTY
ART	INDEPENDENCE	FRIENDS	CURIOSITY
OTHER?			

Lesson 3: Value of Friendship

Getting Started

Overview

Students who have spent extended time away from school may experience challenges to their personal relationships. This lesson invites students to reflect on the work that goes into maintaining a strong friendship and encourages them to practice gratitude to further strengthen relationships.



Bold—Teacher's script

Italics—Anticipated student responses

Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify the qualities that make for a good friend

Prep/Materials

For each student, you will need:

- Several index cards or small pieces of paper
- A writing utensil
- A place on a wall or bulletin board for posting the index cards
- Tape or tacks for hanging up the cards

Lesson Note

You can reuse the "Example Values" handout from Lesson 2 to help students identify the values they want in a friend.

Warm-Up (4 min.)

1. Set the purpose of the lesson: **We are going to talk about what it means to be a good friend and celebrate what's special about our own friends.**
2. Have everyone in the class quietly reflect on the following question: **What values do you want your friends to have?**
3. Call on volunteers to tell the class their answers.

**Discuss (8 min.)**

1. **How has being away from school affected your relationships with your friends?** *I didn't talk to them as much. I met new friends online. I got to be better friends with my siblings.*
2. **What are you looking forward to doing with your friends, now that you're back in school?** *Hang out in person. Play sports together. Catch up and see how they've been.*

Activity Instructions**Activity: Friendship Board (8 min.)**

1. Introduce the activity: **Think about a really good friend in your life. This could be someone here at school, someone outside of school, or a family member. Why is this friendship important to you?**
2. Give each student an index card.
3. Have students write down one reason why that friendship is important to them. Tell students they will share their answers with the class.
4. Have students take turns posting their cards on the wall. If time allows, have students create more cards for more friends.
5. Read what students wrote for the class.
6. **Think about our class's answers. How are they the same or different?** Call on students at random to respond.

Wrap-Up (5 min.)

Have students reflect quietly on the following questions: **What has a friend done for you recently that you're grateful for? What's something you could do to show your gratitude to them?**

Lesson 4: Community Values

Getting Started

Overview

Adolescents have great power to shape the nature of their social world. This lesson taps into that power by having students identify the values they'd like to see reflected in their school community. Building on the previous lessons, students will explore what they'd like school to be and think of ways they can help make it happen.



Bold—Teacher's script

Italics—Anticipated student responses

Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify the values they'd like to see their whole school share

Prep/Materials

- Before the lesson, prepare your own list of the top three values you'd like to see demonstrated in your school community
- If possible, have students be seated in a circle
- You will need a whiteboard to record student responses
- Students will need writing utensils and paper

Lesson Notes

You can reuse the "Example Values" handout from Lesson 2 to help students identify the values they want their school community to share.

Be ready with your list of your top three school community values. In the Activity section of this lesson, students will engage in a "perspective swap" activity and try to guess what you listed.

If possible, compile students' answers from across the school and use them to create a word cloud to share with students. School administrators can use this as a starting point for developing shared school rules and norms.

**Warm-Up (5 min.)**

1. Set the purpose of the lesson: **Today, you're going to explore the values you'd like our whole school community to share.**
2. Call on a few volunteers to answer the following question: **What are some of your favorite things about school?** *Hanging out with friends. Clubs and sports. Learning new things.*

Activity Instructions**Activity: Shared Values (10 min.)**

1. Each of us has personal values. And together, our school has shared, community values.
2. Have students write down their answers to the following question: **What are three values you'd like everyone at school—both students and staff—to share?**
3. Have each student share the three things on their list with the group. Record their answers on the whiteboard. As ideas are repeated, make a tally mark next to them.
4. **What do you think I'd like to see our school community value?** *Kindness. Hard work. Inclusion.*
5. Share your prepared answers and add them to the board—because you're a member of this community, too! Explain to students why you chose those values.

Discuss (10 min.)

1. What do you notice about the responses overall? Do any of the responses surprise you?
2. Identify the most popular values on the board. Why are these values important to so many people?

Wrap-Up (5 min.)

You all have the power to affect what kind of school community we build. Choose one value from the board. What is one thing you will do this week to demonstrate that value and encourage others to demonstrate it, too?

Lesson 5: Making Our School Community Better

Getting Started

Overview

Students face many challenges at school, and they can often feel powerless in the face of those challenges. However, when students feel like they can make a difference, it can be very empowering.

This lesson is designed to engage students in identifying issues at school and the ways they can help solve them. This sense of agency can help them manage stress and can also encourage them to take ownership of their school community.



Bold—Teacher's script

Italics—Anticipated student responses

Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify problems faced by their school community—and think of possible solutions
- Explore ways to get help with solving problems

Prep/Materials

You will need:

- At least two pieces of paper and a writing utensil for each student
- A stopwatch or other timer

Lesson Notes

Problems that students identify may relate to current events, difficult personal experiences, and/or experiences of discrimination and oppression. Addressing these problems may bring up strong emotions.

What students share can help school staff in planning how they can support a positive school community. Consider sharing students' issues and suggested solutions with school administrators. If administrators use any of your students' suggestions, be sure to let your class know. This will help build positive student-staff relationships.

**Warm-Up (4 min.)**

1. Set the purpose of the lesson: **Today, we are going to work together to find some solutions to problems we're facing in our school.**
2. What are some ways school has changed since you've been away?

Activity Instructions**Activity #1: Break Down the Problem (9 min.)**

1. Our school community is not perfect. There are always things we can do to make it better. On your own paper, write down two problems many students are dealing with here at school. These can be big issues or small issues.
2. Present the activity: **It's not always easy to find solutions to problems. One thing that can help is to describe the problem as clearly as possible.**
3. Describe the steps of the activity to the class:
 - a. Have one student describe a problem in 30 seconds. They must use the entire 30 seconds.
 - b. Choose another student to restate what they heard, but in 20 seconds.
 - c. Have a third student restate what they heard again, but in only 10 seconds.
 - d. Finally, have another student restate the problem in only 5 seconds.
4. Repeat (a) through (d) for as many problems in the time allotted.

Activity #2: Finding Solutions (4 min.)

1. Have the students think about this prompt: **Choose one of the problems you identified, or one we broke down in class. Think of one thing you could do to help solve it.**
2. Give students time to reflect, then call on volunteers to tell the class what they came up with.

Discuss (4 min.)

1. **You don't have to solve these problems on your own.** Poll the class using a fist-to-five or thumbs-up on the following question: **When you encounter a problem, how likely are you to ask for help?**
2. Ask students to reflect on the following: **What can make it hard to ask for help? What can make it easier?** Call on a few volunteers to tell the class their ideas.
3. **Who are some people in our school community who could help make your solution a reality?**

Activity #3/Wrap-Up (4 min.)

Think of one person who can help you solve the problem you've identified. Now, write a note to that person asking for their help, and prepare to send or give it to them.



Next Steps

Completing this unit is just the first step to building community with your students. Here are some steps to continue building a safe and supportive classroom community:

- 1. Continue Check-Ins.** Checking in with your students lets them know you care about their lives in and outside of school, and can help them feel valued and supported.
- 2. Review and revise your classroom rules or norms.** Taking time to review the agreed upon rules or norms can help remind students how they want their community to run and feel. Any time new problems arise in the classroom, have a discussion about the rules or norms and revise them as needed.
- 3. Revisit activities.** Your students' interests, hobbies, values, thoughts, and feelings can change over time. Revisit activities after a long break from school or to help introduce new students to your classroom community.
- 4. Reinforce connections.** Look for opportunities to remind students what they've learned about each other and notice when students are using new skills they've learned in this unit. Skills like asking questions, being curious about others' interests and values, and recalling new things they've learned about others can help students continue to grow their classroom community.
- 5. Implement Second Step® Elementary and Second Step® Middle School.** The skills and concepts taught throughout the Second Step® programs will provide students with valuable social-emotional support throughout the year.



Safe Supportive Learning

When students are coming back after a long period of time, they may struggle to follow the class rules. It can be difficult to know the right thing to do, especially when you're trying to model social-emotional skills. Follow these steps to respond appropriately.

Self-Check

It's important to feel calm so that you can respond to a student's behavior in a supportive way. Choose an emotion-management strategy that works for you, like slow breathing and relaxing your body, so that you can feel calm. When students see you using social-emotional skills and emotion-management strategies, they will learn to value these skills.

Student Check

Do a Student Check to help you reframe a student's behavior so you can understand what the behavior is telling you. Thinking of the behavior through a supportive frame rather than a corrective frame can help you respond appropriately and avoid blaming or punishing students for their behavior.

Corrective Frame

This student is a problem.
What's wrong with this student?
I need to correct this student's behavior.

Supportive Frame

What is this student experiencing in his or her life?
What is this student trying to say with his or her behavior?
I need to support this student.

Respond

Once you've done the **Self-Check** and **Student Check**, you're ready to **respond** to a student's behavior in a supportive way by:

- Listening
- Showing empathy
- Providing support