



Second Step® Community Rebuilding Unit

Middle School Lessons

Welcome to the Second Step® Community Rebuilding Unit.

This unit is designed to support schools as they re-open after extended school closures related to the COVID-19 pandemic. It aligns with the Second Step program, but can also be used by any educator looking to foster a positive school or classroom community.

This unit is part of a broad range of supports for Second Step educators during this crisis, including:

- Guides to adapting Second Step lessons for remote and hybrid learning environments
- Remote advisory and class meeting guides to support schools that are still closed
- Online resiliency training for adults
- Online training on how to recognize, respond to, and report signs of abuse and neglect
- Live and on-demand webinars on important topics

All these resources will be released throughout August 2020.

For more information, visit the Second Step COVID-19 support page: www.secondstep.org/COVID19support

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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 coronavirus-related school closuresIdentify people students can go to for help with these challenges	What challenges do students face returning after extended school closures? Students' sense of belonging at school is critical to their success as they re-enter the classroom after this extended closure. Many, if not most, students are anxious about the challenges they might encounter. This lesson serves to counter those fears, reassure them their concerns are normal, and create a positive mindset that will increase their sense of belonging.
Lesson 2: My Values	Identify how recent events have influenced their personal values	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 recent crises may have changed or affirmed what they most value.
Lesson 3: Value of Friendship	Identify the qualities that make for a good friend	During the past several months, students have navigated unexpected 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>There are many issues students face at school. Some are related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and others are ongoing. Students can often feel powerless in the face of these challenges, and times of crisis often make those feelings more intense. 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 the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic; it will 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 renewed sense of community among students and staff as they return to school after extended COVID-19-related school closures.

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 explore their thoughts and feelings about the unprecedented events they are living through. In doing this, they can better recognize the experiences they've shared and support each other as they begin to reflect on and process those experiences.

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

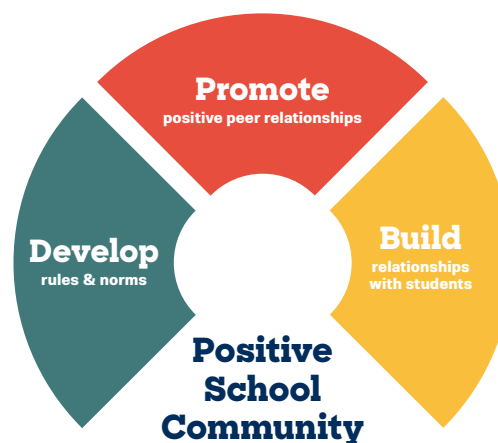
Why This Unit Matters

The twin crises of the COVID-19 pandemic and the issues of systemic racism (highlighted by the killing of George Floyd) have damaged students' sense of safety and placed them at risk for traumatic stress and other adverse childhood experiences. Schools can play a critical role in moderating the effects of that stress by providing a safe and supportive environment—one where friends and caring adults can provide students with the social-emotional support they need to cope with what they're experiencing.

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 warmth 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. **Bullying Prevention Unit.** 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 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. **What's something you're looking forward to today?** Give students time to reflect and call on volunteers to answer. *Seeing friends. Finishing a project. Getting out of school.*
3. **What's something you're not looking forward to today?** Give students time to reflect and call on volunteers to answer. *A test. Following safety guidelines. Dealing with drama.*
4. **Do you have any announcements for the class?** Call on students 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 everyone in the class (including you!) briefly answer the following question: **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.*

Lesson 1: Returning to School

Getting Started

Overview

What challenges do students face returning after extended school closures? Students' sense of belonging at school is critical to their success as they re-enter the classroom after this extended closure. Many, if not most, students are anxious about the challenges they might encounter. This lesson serves to counter those fears, 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 coronavirus-related school closures
- 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 handout 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 you might be worried about as we return to school and how you can get help with those challenges.**
2. Have students quietly reflect on the following prompt: **What's one thing that makes you nervous about returning to school after being out so long?**
3. Call on volunteers to tell the class some things they're worried about. *Staying healthy. Figuring out the new schedule. How to hang out with friends while social-distancing.*
4. Write down student responses on the board.



Activity Instructions

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

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

Discuss (5 min.)

1. **How do you think the students who made these statements will overcome the things they're nervous about?** *They learned the new rules. They found new ways to hang out with friends. They asked for help.*
2. **Do you think it was easy or hard for them to overcome these things? Why?** *It was easy because they just had to get used to the new situation. It's hard because you can't stop being careful.*

Activity: It Gets Better (8 min.)

1. Have students write answers to the following prompts:
 - Write about why students might feel nervous coming back to school right now
 - Write about why this will get better for most students after school starts

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 Handout: Returning to School

Since last May, students around the world have been returning to their schools and dealing with how things have changed because of COVID-19.

Here are some of the worries they've expressed about going to school during this pandemic:*

- **How do I keep track of all the new rules?**
- **How can I keep myself from catching the coronavirus?**
- **Will I be able to make new friends?**
- **Will I be able to focus on class when I'm thinking about staying safe?**
- **Will my school clothes still fit?**
- **I don't want to have to wear a mask all day**
- **How will I keep my hands clean?**
- **Will I be able to play sports or join after-school clubs?**
- **How do I hang out with my friends safely?**
- **Where will I keep my stuff without lockers?**
- **How is lunch going to work?**
- **Will I be able to get up in time for school? I'm not used to being on a schedule anymore.**
- **What happens if I get a fever?**
- **How will I handle doing work at school and online?**

**Compiled from several televised news interviews. See page 20 for full list.*

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 addresses values by exploring how recent crises may have changed or affirmed what they most value.



Bold—Teacher's script

Italics—Anticipated student responses

Objective

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

- Identify how recent events have influenced their personal values

Prep/Materials

- Students will need paper and a pencil
- One handout to project on screen

Lesson Notes

Be prepared to project the lesson handout on screen at the beginning of the lesson.

Think about what things you yourself value most, and how recent crises have influenced your answers.

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.
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 a Tough Year (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 the crises we're facing changed them in any way? Why or why not?**
2. Call on students at random to tell the class their answers.

Lesson 2 Handout: 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

During the past several months, students have navigated unexpected 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 students at random to tell the class their answers.

**Discuss (8 min.)**

- 1. How has the COVID-19 pandemic 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. I'm not friends with my siblings anymore.*
- 2. What are you looking forward to doing with your friends, now that school is starting to reopen?** *Hang out in person. Play sports together. Have longer conversations.*

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

1. Introduce the activity: **Think about a friend in your life. This could be someone here at school, someone outside of school, or a family member. What is it about that person that makes them special to you?**
2. Give each student an index card.
3. Have students write down one thing that makes their friend special.
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. **Notice what you find special about your friends and what other students find special about theirs. How are these 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
- 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 Discuss part 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?** *Visiting with my friends. The activities I participate in. Learning new things.*

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

1. Individuals aren't the only ones with values. Communities of people can share common values. **This school is a community.**
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 students 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.

Discuss (10 min.)

1. **What do you notice about the responses overall? Do any of the responses surprise you?**
2. Now, ask students to think about what you, as their teacher, value about school. **What do you think I'd like to see our school community value?**
3. Share your prepared answers and add them to the board—because you're a member of this community, too! Have students reflect on why your answers were similar or different from what they thought you'd say.
4. 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

There are many issues students face at school. Some are related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and others are ongoing. Students can often feel powerless in the face of these challenges, and times of crisis often make those feelings more intense. 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 the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic, 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 social distancing, remote/hybrid learning, issues of systemic racism, and/or the COVID-19 pandemic. 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 are facing in our class/school, especially challenges related to COVID-19.**
2. What are some ways school has changed since last year?

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 students 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 one thing you can do to support your students during this difficult time. Here are some other steps you can take:

- 1. Use the Second Step® SEL for Adults Resiliency Module:** You cannot support your students without also taking care of your own needs. This module, which is free through 12/31/20, will provide you with concrete strategies to manage your own stress during this difficult time. For more information and updates, please visit our resource page.
- 2. Teach the Student-Facing Resiliency Lessons.** The Second Step SEL for Adults Resiliency module also contains lessons for students to help them manage their stress. Once you have completed the module yourself, use these lessons with your students.
- 3. Complete the Second Step Middle School program.** The skills and concepts taught throughout the Second Step program will provide students with valuable social-emotional support throughout the year.



Lesson 1 Handout References

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Safe Supportive Learning

Respond to Behaviors in a Supportive Way

Self-Check

Do a Self-Check to calm down so you can respond to a student's behavior in a supportive way.

1. Stop
2. Name your feeling
3. Calm down: breathe, count

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



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