

- **Asynchronous Activities:** Asynchronous activities allow students to engage with their classmates in a shared activity (e.g., online discussion forum) on their own time. Allowing students to engage in an activity collectively on their own time is a great way to bridge technology and access gaps. For example, educators can post an [image of a quote with a few guiding questions](#) onto an [online jamboard](#). Students can type their responses onto digital post-its and add these to the class' board. Based on the [guide](#), students independently respond to activities in a shared online forum as a way to engage in conversation.

Because asynchronous activities do not require live class meetings, educators may not always be able to address harmful comments, especially since students are responding to assignments on their own time. Therefore, we recommend APS educators to provide clear guidelines about posting (e.g., comments should be respectful of other students' viewpoints). As a class activity, students and educators can define what it means to be respectful and supportive of one another and discuss what this looks like in an online space. APS educators might refer to these [cyberbullying resources](#) to generate conversation starters for this activity.

- **Individual Activities:** Individual activities allow students to work on projects or assignments independently. Final products may be reviewed by a peer and/or the teacher. Currently, the [guide](#) states that individual activities "...are an excellent way to build the strong student-teacher relationships that can buffer against the effects of trauma." However, the types of trauma students are being protected from are not specified in the [guide](#). The [guide](#) was also unclear as to how forming a buffer from trauma is accomplished. We encourage APS educators to check in with how students feel routinely, especially if they are completing any assignments involving sensitive topics. It will also be beneficial for educators to have regulation strategies ready for students experiencing challenging feelings (e.g., breathing exercises, prompts for free-writing or drawing, [grounding techniques](#)). On another note, educators must also remain mindful of the [increase in trauma and child abuse since the start of the pandemic](#), as many students may be living with their perpetrator(s). It is imperative that APS provide educators and school staff with guidance on how to recognize signs of abuse or child endangerment in addition to clear reporting guidelines. APS might refer to the following resource newly released from the Washington State Department of Health: [COVID-19 Guidance for Educators - Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect in Online Education Settings](#).

- **Student Check-Ins (p. 7)**

- Second Step's [remote learning guide](#) instructs educators to conduct daily group check-ins by asking:
  - How are you feeling today?
  - What's something you're looking forward to today?
  - What's something you're not looking forward to today?

Checking in with students allows APS educators to gauge how their students are feeling and whether some students might need an alternative to participate in a class activity (e.g., inviting students who are not comfortable engaging in a class conversation to journal or type their responses). These are also opportunities for



students fine-tune their self-awareness skills in terms of recognizing their emotions. Gaining a sense of how students feel can prompt APS educators to lead an emotion regulation activity with students (e.g., deep breathing exercises, stretching, playing upbeat music) if need be. Modeling these strategies can help students learn more ways to regulate their own emotions in addition to improving their feelings of readiness to learn and interact with others.

Routines such as daily check-ins are essential opportunities for maintaining meaningful connections between educators and their students, especially as they continue to charge and forage through this pandemic while dealing with the unique barriers of in-person, hybrid, and remote learning (e.g., increased stress and anxiety due to fear of contracting the coronavirus, worsening depression due to extended isolation and minimal contact with loved ones, mental exhaustion from overexposure to computer screens). Being invited to share their feelings can help students and teachers remember that they are not weathering this storm alone which, in and of itself, can nurture a stronger sense of community. On this note, APS educators are encouraged to practice DEB when leading daily check-ins. Give students options to check-in publicly on a shared platform (e.g., jamboard) or privately via direct message or in their journals. It's important for students to know that they can pass on check-ins altogether if they feel uncomfortable and educators can connect with them individually at a later time.

We also recommend APS educators to give students opportunities to build their feeling words vocabulary so that they can practice recognizing and labeling their emotions more accurately. For example, students can take turns picking an [emoji from this chart](#) and explore what this feeling means and looks like as a class. APS educators might ask students to share or journal about a time they might have experienced this feeling. As for more challenging emotions, educators can challenge students to identify when this feeling word comes up as they explore characters in literature or film and discuss what may have led the character to feel that way. A collaborative extension activity APS educators might consider is to have students design and label their own emojis using this [free online art program](#) and to combine their creations into a class emoji chart. These activity enhancements will help develop students' self and social awareness and activate their critical thinking skills (responsible-decision making).

- [Grades 2-5 My Family \(p. 18\)](#)
  - The “[My Family](#)” activity in the [remote learning guide](#) focuses on comparing different types of families and cautions students from “making fun” of others whose families are different from their own. This activity encourages students to celebrate differences rather than rejecting them. Currently, the [guide](#) asks students to discuss differences between their own families and that of their classmates but does not provide additional materials that highlight different family structures. To enhance this activity's DEB practice, we encourage educators to use literature as an avenue to foster students' understanding of different family structures and to consider titles from the following booklist: [Early Childhood: Learning about Family Structures \(Social Justice Books\)](#)

Last, we ask APS educators to revisit the closing question of this activity which asks, “After hearing about other families, what do you appreciate about your own family?” Although it seems as if Second Step is attempting to incite students' gratitude for their circumstances, we feel that



this question can be reframed to read as less isolating. Educators might consider updating this activity by using a K-W-L chart for exploring different family structures, pairing charts with [stories](#), and having students list what they have learned afterwards. These activity enhancements will help students further develop their self and social awareness and capacity for perspective-taking and empathy.

- [K-5 “Same and Different” \(p. 23\)](#)
  - The [K-5 “Same and Different”](#) activity asks students to discuss what similarities and differences they notice between themselves and their classmates and to reflect on how they feel about these comparisons. This activity is an opportunity to lean into DEB more deeply by helping students think about how people are not always treated equally because of such differences, especially more noticeable distinctions such as skin color, hairstyle, and physical abilities. We encourage APS educators to expand the “Same and Different” activity into more engaging lessons that explore race, gender, ability, and other identifiable and non-identifiable differences more meaningfully in the context of belonging. APS might consider leading the lessons listed below which creatively use art and film as a medium to build students’ responsible decision-making and social awareness skills as they explore and reflect on the experiences of people at the margins:
    - [Colorful Self-Portrait Collages](#)
    - [“The Present’ and Living with a Disability”](#)
- [Grades 2-5 “My People” \(p. 44\)](#)
  - During the [“My People”](#) Activity, 2nd through 5th grade students are given a set of questions to interview one of their family members. This activity gives students the opportunity to practice their self-awareness, social-awareness, and self-management skills (e.g., students build up their self-confidence in their ability to conduct an interview and actively engage their listening skills as they get to know their family better). While the questions listed in the [guide](#) are helpful conversation starters, we caution the use of questions such as, “How is this current COVID-19 pandemic affecting you? How does it compare to other big events in your life?” These questions may trigger trauma for students and their families, especially those who have tragically been impacted by the pandemic. Living through a pandemic is traumatic as a whole whether or not one experiences loss. The functional definition of [trauma is believing \(whether it is accurate or not\) that you or a loved one are in danger](#). As such, we recommend the application of a trauma-informed lens to this activity and any other lesson references the pandemic. Some resources that support this include:
    - [Lesley Institute for Trauma Sensitivity \(LIFTS\)](#) \*Included as a resource according to APS SEL District Plan.
    - [National Child Traumatic Stress Network \(NCTSN\)](#) created two online storybooks for families and caregivers to read with [younger](#) and [older](#) students to help generate family conversations about understanding COVID-19.
    - National Association of School Psychologists’ (NASP) [COVID-19 Family and Educator Resources](#)
  - Second graders might find Second Step’s [interview questions](#) difficult to understand, so asking them might be even more challenging. Some alternative questions students could ask include:



- “What song makes you want to dance or move your body every time you hear it? Can we listen to it together?”
  - “What are some things you have learned about yourself during quarantine?”
  - “What do you hope will change or stay the same after the pandemic?”.
- We encourage APS educators to take care in instructing students to interview only a family member they trust and feel safe to be around. For some students, their home may be a source of trauma. As such, it is important for educators to check in with students before family engagement activities. Educators might also consider expanding the list of whom a student considers a trusted adult.
  - Interviews are a wonderful opportunity for students to practice their note-taking, communication, and listening skills. They are also developing their self- and social awareness, for example, as they observe their interviewees. Before students engage in interviews, provide students with an interview guide or teach them how to hold an interview. For instance, you might teach your students about leading questions and trying to steer clear of those. To ask good questions, give students time to do some research and develop some prior knowledge of their interview subject. Additionally, interviewers need to be able to share with their interviewees that they have the freedom to pass on questions they might not feel comfortable asking. For more information on interviews, we recommend these resources that could complement this lesson:
    - [Memory Kit Guide: How to Conduct an Interview](#)
    - [BrainPOP: Conducting an Interview](#)
    - [How to Help Students Develop Interviewing Skills](#)

**Resource:** [Second Step Elementary Grades K–1 Community Rebuilding Unit](#)

During the [K-1 Community Rebuilding Unit](#), students are engaged in lessons that introduce and reacquaint them with their classmates, review class rules about keeping each other safe, explore self-regulation examples using pretend play, and discuss noticeable differences and similarities about themselves and their peers. Comparing similarities and differences is a recurring theme throughout this [unit](#). Finding common ground in interests and experiences is undoubtedly one way to spark conversation and relationship-building. However, if similarities and differences are constantly framed as a binary without seeking more context, students miss out on gaining a more enriching understanding of each other as people. For example, two students may share that they both love the colors red and blue: one student may love these colors because of their favorite shirt but for the other student, red and blue reminds them of their first home and the Dominican Flag. Instead, we ask APS educators to highlight that people have multiple experiences of being “the same” and multiple experiences of being “different.” We also encourage APS educators to ask students questions to stir their curiosity about others (social awareness) and to help them practice inquiry (e.g., What is something new you learned about each other today? What is something you want to learn more about?).

When discussing similarities and differences, especially with younger students, questions may come up that might feel pointed, offensive, or isolating. To prepare for this, we recommend APS educators to read Chapter 7 of [Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves](#) by anti-bias educators, Louise Derman-Sparks and Julie Olsen Edwards. This chapter outlines identity-affirming strategies for building understanding and empathy while exploring cultural differences.



Derman-Sparks et al. (2010) advises educators and caregivers to "immediately address signs of misinformation, discomfort, fear, or rejection of cultural differences" instead of ignoring or silencing the student(s) behind the commentary. Remaining silent during these instances strays from DEB practices as it hurts the person receiving the negative comment and communicates that that kind of demeaning language or mindset is acceptable (Derman-Sparks et al., 2010).

Last, we respectfully encourage APS educators to be mindful of students who may be alone in holding an identity within their class community. The manner in which educators draw attention to this unique identity might leave students feeling special or isolated. Nonetheless, we ask that APS educators take care not to inadvertently tokenize students or ask them to speak on behalf of the whole culture or community to which they belong (e.g., [students with disabilities are often called upon to share their viewpoints on all types of disabilities even though the needs and experiences of people with disabilities are far from identical](#)).

**Resource:** [Second Step Elementary Grades 2–3 Community Rebuilding Unit](#)

- [Lesson 1: "Hi, My Name is \\_\\_\\_\\_"](#) promotes DEB by having educators emphasize to students the importance of pronouncing people's name correctly as this demonstrates one way of being respectful of others' identity. During the [lesson](#), students are told that "being respectful means that we think about how others want to be treated and treat them that way," and are later invited to name ways they can be respectful to people in their community. This is a great way to practice social awareness and responsible decision-making, as it challenges students to consider the different needs and feelings of others around them. We encourage APS educators to push students' thinking further by associating "respect" with feelings of safety and belonging. Below are some guiding questions educators might consider:
  - What does it mean to feel safe? What does this look like in our class? What does this look like in the communities we live in?
  - How does being safe feel like in our mind and body?
  - What does it mean to belong? What does this look like in our class? What does this look like in the communities we live in?
  - How does it feel in our mind and body when we belong?"
  - In our class, how do we help each other feel safe and that they belong in our community?
- [Lesson 2: "Exploring Classroom Norms"](#) provides students with structured rules and routines "as a way to help alleviate students' fear and uncertainty" of returning to school in person during a global pandemic. Second Step [asserts](#) that communicating rules and safety precautions to prevent COVID-19 from spreading helps empower students to do things to keep themselves and others safe. This is also a way to strengthen students' self and social awareness and responsible decision-making skills since they must constantly be mindful of their surroundings and also make sure their personal protective measures are intact (i.e., masks and face shields). [Lesson 2](#) can be enhanced to be more engaging for students. Currently, the class creates a poster where they suggest and commit to class behaviors such as caring, responsible, and focused before signing their name. APS educators might consider creating a short video with clips of each student sharing one of their classroom rules and an example. To protect young children and respect families' privacy, be sure that caregivers sign a media release form granting APS permission to film students, especially for any public presentations of students' videos. If students are comfortable, teachers can print out enlarged stills from the video featuring a student and a captioned rule beneath their picture. Seeing themselves



reflected around the classroom can help enhance students' sense of belonging and serve as a visual reminder to keep each other safe.

- [Lesson 3: "We Are Linked"](#) covers different challenges students and schools face as a result of COVID-19 safety measures. This activity invites students to reflect on what is worrying and exciting them about returning to school and what questions they have about the transition back to the classroom. Students are asked to write down their feelings on pieces of paper and connect them to another person to form a paper chain. This is great practice for self-awareness, particularly identifying emotions and forming an accurate self-perception. We recommend supplementing this lesson with books related to experiencing challenging feelings in response to change. Books will also help create a buffer for students who might not feel ready to share their feelings with others. APS educators might consider a resource such as Books for Littles and their recently updated booklist, ["Books to Reassure Kids During Coronavirus Isolation."](#)

We ask APS educators to be explicit in giving students 1) the option to opt-out in sharing their feelings or 2) the choice to share something less personal if they are not comfortable or do not feel safe to talk about their feelings publicly. Additionally, if students feel unsafe to share, this is valuable data for prompting educators to further investigate their classroom climate and ways they can ensure feelings of safety.

**Resource:** [Second Step Elementary Grades 4–5 Community Rebuilding Unit](#)

- During [Lesson 3: "Let's Talk,"](#) 4th and 5th graders are asked to share how they are feeling about the school year and resuming classes. Currently, the lesson instructs students to write down what they are "excited, worried, and wondering about" on sticky notes prior to sharing with the class. Feelings change often and are especially unpredictable during a global pandemic. This ambiguity can exacerbate stress and anxiety among students, especially those worried about the health and well-being of their loved ones. Instead of limiting discussions about feelings to this one lesson, we recommend APS educators incorporate a quick check-in (e.g., students can drop a popsicle stick in a labeled feeling jar or post an emoji and feeling word together in the class' online chat) at the beginning and end of all lessons to gain a sense of how students are feeling and to also help students deepen their practice of self-awareness (i.e., identifying their emotions and reflecting on what events may have caused them to feel that way). Since APS uses Second Step, students can share their feelings as they are comfortable during morning meetings. Educators can also lead an exercise inspired by Pride Leader, Marcus Moore (Urban Prep Schools, Chicago, IL), who uses a ["snowball toss" activity](#) with his students that allows them to anonymously write down things that are currently stressing them out, exchange answers in a fun and safe way, then have an open conversation where students can offer their peers support and advice. These activities enhance students' self-perception of their own feelings, tap into responsible decision-making (i.e., sharing helpful advice about managing stress), and social awareness (e.g., students develop a sense of what others are feeling and going through, which can help students build empathy).
- Second Step advises educators to gather resources for their students prior to [Lesson 3](#) should they need additional support such as the names of staff members that students can seek help from and also designating a space in the classroom for taking breaks. With the former in mind, we recommend giving students directions on how to locate and contact support staff and to also consider the needs of ELL students who may need to



speak to a bilingual adult. As for the latter, we recommend equipping a break corner with self-regulation therapy tools when possible (e.g., stress balls, play-dough, coloring books, origami paper) for students who prefer engaging with sensory activities to regulate challenging feelings.

**Resource:** [Teacher Training \(Bullying Prevention Unit OLT: Module 2\)](#)

**Bullying Prevention**

Second Step's [Teacher Training Module on Bullying Prevention](#) includes expert knowledge on different types of bullying, distinguishes between bullying and teasing, and provides educators with strategies on how to respond to different scenarios of bullying. We identified areas of growth in terms of user-friendliness and content. The module's current setup requires educators to sit and complete a 75-90 minute course without the ability to navigate back and forth. If one's internet connection drops or a web page is refreshed, the user must start an entire section over. Conversely, the Second Step training module is prescriptive and non-dynamic in structure. That is, teachers are not necessarily invited to think about their own experiences and challenges with addressing bullying among their students. This leaves APS educators with additional work and in need of resources outside of Second Step to tailor bullying prevention and intervention plans that encompass their students' needs.

In general, the training module is informative, as it provides basic bullying intervention methods. By itself, however, the module falls short in terms of DEB as it lacks in-depth guidance on how to respond to bullying incidents using a lens of equity and cultural responsiveness. For instance, during the [scenario](#) about Max and Sierra (two students being bullied), their teacher responds to the incident by asking Max and Sierra if she can talk to the principal about what happened. This puts the onus on the students, which could be taxing for the student. Moreover, the teacher in the scenario goes straight to the principal without speaking with the student who engaged in the bullying behaviors. By not speaking to the student who engaged in the bullying behavior, the teacher misses the opportunity to teach the students about bullying and dismisses herself as a resource that could support students with how they interact better with each other.

Although Second Step marked all of these steps pictured on the right as the acceptable way to address bullying, this approach risks over-policing. The module's animated scenario featured a teacher who went straight to the principal to report a bullying incident without attempting to understand all of the students involved first. What if the student who did the bullying was projecting trauma they may have been experiencing at home? This resource might be enhanced by including trauma-informed considerations. Without applying an equitable and culturally responsive lens to diffusing bullying incidents, potential biases might remain unchecked and APS may unintentionally contribute to existing school discipline disparities across and at the intersection of [race](#), [gender](#), and [students with disabilities](#). As pictured in the graph below, the U.S. Department of Education found that [one-third of students arrested at school or referred to law enforcement are Black students, even though Black students only make up 15% of overall enrollment](#), contributing to the school-to-prison nexus:

What did the staff at Seven Oaks do to address the bullying problem? [Click to select one or more answers.](#)

- ☒ Took preventive measures by teaching social-emotional skills
- ☒ Recognized there was a problem
- ☒ Responded quickly and with empathy
- ☒ Reported to the principal



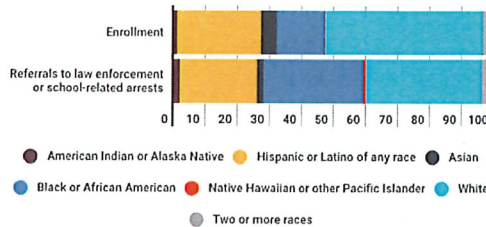
That's right! All answers are correct. This module will walk through each of these strategies and how to apply them.



## School-Based Arrests, Referrals to Law Enforcement

Black students make up nearly a third of all students arrested at school or referred to law enforcement, but only 15 percent of overall enrollment.

Percentage of distribution of students referred to law enforcement or subjected to school-related arrests, by race



Note: Data may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.  
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights Data Collection, 2015-16

EDUCATION WEEK

Despite its current title, Second Step's [Teacher Training Module on Bullying Prevention](#) focuses primarily on how to *intervene* and *respond* to bullying once it has already happened rather than teaching educators prevention strategies. Additionally, [the training module](#) did not address [identity-based bullying](#), a more pervasive and mentally scarring type of victimization (Price, Hill, Liang, & Perella, 2019). To fill these gaps, we offer actionable steps below to support APS in enhancing their current safety plans (i.e., how to implement more equitable preventions and responses to different types of bullying). APS might also refer to the following recommendations for guidance as they evaluate the district's existing disciplinary practices:

- **Foster classroom and school communities that prioritize and validate all student identities, especially intersecting identities.**

Preventative measures such as [establishing safe, supportive, and inclusive environments significantly mitigate harmful behaviors such as bullying](#). However, it is imperative for districts to leverage DEI when preventing identity-based bullying and harassment. Specifically, students at the margins are more likely to become targets of bullying and harassment as a result of their identity (i.e., race, gender, physical disabilities, and neurodivergence) and even more so when students possess intersecting identities. For instance, research examining the prevalence of bullying among teenagers revealed that first-generation migrants or individuals belonging to ethnic minority groups are at higher risk for being bullied (Cabrera, Guerrero, Sánchez, & Rodríguez-García, 2019). On the other hand, [individuals with intersecting identities such as LGBTQ teens with a disability have reported feeling less safe in classroom settings compared to LGBTQ teens without a disability](#). To disrupt these discriminative patterns and to prevent further marginalization of students who, historically, are more prone to being targeted, we ask APS educators to consider applying the following strategies:

- Refrain from grouping homophobic or transphobic acts of bullying under the same umbrella as bullying. One scenario in Second Step's [training module](#) involved a case of identity-based bullying. A male student was repeatedly made



fun of for taking pleasure in wearing a crown and dancing. To remedy this, the [module](#) suggested that educators engage in some perspective-taking and centered the rest of the safety plan on getting the student bully to behave more respectfully. [Second Step](#) did not include advice on checking in with the student who did the bullying and also missed the opportunity to provide recommendations on how to directly address gender-based bullying. Domínguez-Martínez and Robles (2019) argue that reducing homophobia and transphobia to basic bullying “does not eliminate stigma because the systems of power that marginalize and threaten the safety of LGBT students...remain undisturbed.”

- Establish and provide students, families, and teachers with identity-related school resources. For example, build relationships with [Black Student Unions \(BSUs\)](#) and [invite BSUs to speak at school assemblies and mentor younger students](#). Start [Gay-Straight Alliances \(GSAs\)](#) within schools to expand LGBTQ students' support systems.
- Dedicate time for educators to examine and explore their own identities and biases. We recommend using [Zaretta Hammond's self-inquiry tool for identifying cultural frames of reference](#). APS educators might also consider using [Layla F. Saad's \*Me and White Supremacy\*](#) workbook.
- Affirm students' identities by ensuring that there is a balanced amount of “[mirror and window](#)” materials used throughout the curriculum and displayed around the classroom so that students see relevant reflections of themselves and their lived experiences.
- Model receptivity and positivity when students share elements of their identity or their own cultures.
- Model and ensure correct pronunciation of students' names and use of pronouns. When mistakes occur, apologize and self-correct immediately in front of the student.
- Connect with students' families as much as possible to build stronger relationships with them and gain insight into how activities and lessons can be modified to affirm students' identities or culture (e.g., [being considerate of how students and their families celebrate or observe religious holidays and cultural traditions](#)).
- Choose safe and appropriate activities that allow students to experience success. For collaborative projects, pre-assign groups to ensure students are not excluded.
- Teach social and emotional skills by praising students for demonstrating SEL competencies such as teamwork, conflict resolution, and perspective-taking.
- **Increase opportunities for adult supervision to prevent bullying.**  
Bullying tends to be committed more frequently if there are opportunities to inflict harm covertly and anonymously (Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010). Review APS' current safety plans and ensure that adult staff are stationed in areas where bullying tends to happen (i.e., during recess, in the school gym, in hallways, and during lunch).



- **Hold classroom meetings to discuss bullying (Simmons, 2014).**

Use mediums such as video clips from familiar and age-appropriate shows/movies to talk with students about the different types of bullying. Be explicit when explaining differences between teasing and bullying (i.e., bullying involves repeated physical, verbal, or emotional harm and an imbalance of power [Simmons, 2014]). If students feel comfortable, ask them to try and differentiate teasing and bullying based on the videos presented to the class. It is also important to acknowledge that we may encounter bullies under circumstances outside of our control (i.e., [sibling bullying](#) and [identity-based bullying](#)).

Segue into a discussion about how students want to feel when they are in each other's company and emphasize values such as "safe," "respected," "understood," and "accepted." Talk about what this looks like in the classroom, during a Zoom call, or in other spaces such as the playground or lunch area. This is aligned with RULER's Charter. Collaborate with students to come up with a list of ways their class community can respond to challenging situations in these different settings to help restore or protect the feelings they want to feel. Display these actions on a poster and have each student sign their name to symbolize a class promise to help each other feel safe and respected.

- **Integrate bullying into the curriculum (Simmons, 2014).**

Discussing bullying directly in class may feel triggering for some students. As an alternative, literature is a viable tool to teach students about the different types and consequences of bullying and the importance of allyship (i.e., speaking up when someone is saying or doing something harmful to another classmate; using a buddy system to accompany peers who may be at risk for bullying; notifying a teacher or trusted adult about the bullying incident). Teaching through books also helps create a buffer from emotionally triggering students who may have adverse experiences with bullying. We recommend the following resources which include lesson plans for all grade levels:

- ["Words that Heal: Using Children's Literature to Address Bullying"](#)
- [The Anti-Defamation League's \(ADL\) Booklist on Identity-Based Bullying](#)

- **Respond swiftly and consistently to bullying incidents (Simmons, 2014).**

In addition to responding swiftly to bullying incidents, we also ask APS educators to take care in deciding whether the situation needs to be immediately escalated to an administrator's attention (as seen in Second Step's [Teacher Training Module on Bullying Prevention](#)) to mitigate unnecessary suspension or expulsion. It is important that adults in charge are consistent in the ways they respond to bullying incidents:

- Talk to all students involved in bullying incidents. APS educators will benefit from having strategies such as deep breathing techniques ready to do with students who may need help regulating their emotions prior to sharing.
- Enforce non-punitive graduated consequences of bullying for bullying behaviors (Simmons, 2014). On this note, APS might consider looking into [Responsive Classroom's approach to discipline with compassion](#) for non-punitive alternatives to disciplining students.

- **Avoid corporal punishment or other punitive measures and provide support to students who need support (Simmons, 2014).**



Researchers Okonofua, Pauneskua, and Waltona (2016) found that [taking an empathic approach to disciplining students reduced the number of adolescent school suspensions by half](#). In practice, this requires listening to students with intention. Gain a sense of what environmental stressors are impacting students physically, mentally, and emotionally and consider what needs are being unmet in their lives (e.g., the student who did the bullying may be experiencing abuse at home, might be at risk for being displaced or unhoused, or are being bullied themselves by another classmate). With this information in mind, refer back to APS bank of interventional approaches to 1) help decipher whether students are exhibiting connection-seeking behaviors or escape behaviors and 2) decide on which approach from [APS student SEL Landscape](#) would be the most helpful to the student(s).

- **Evaluate APS' current school safety plans and ensure there are policies in place meant to address and protect students from identity-based bullying.**

Second Step's [training module](#) instructs educators to assign SEL skill-building activities to student bullies as part of their intervention plan. All students and educators can benefit from developing SEL skills. Limiting SEL skill-building to disciplinary interventions impedes on equitable practices as it becomes another form of [emotional and behavioral policing](#). Additionally, the current framing of Second Step's bullying prevention training places the onus on the student to change rather than promoting a collective healing effort between students and educators. This approach does not encompass DEI as it falls in step with "[growth mindset](#)" and "[grit](#)," which ignore deterring factors such as discrimination, financial strain, family dynamics, history of trauma, a lack of access to resources, and other forms of systemic oppression. Adults in the district have the ability to make systemic changes to nurture safe, supportive, and inclusive communities. As such, we recommend using the following resources for guidance on updating school safety plans and policies to support and protect students, families, and teachers who belong to historically marginalized groups.

- [Actionable Strategies to Eliminate School Discipline Inequities](#)
- [Learning for Justice: How to Respond to Coronavirus Racism](#)
- [School Discipline Disparities Recommendations](#)

**Resources:** [Teacher Training](#) (Child Protection Unit OLT: Module 2 for Grades K-5); [Early Learning Child Protection](#) (Child Protection Unit OLT: Module 2 for Early Learning)

Second Step's Child Protection Unit consists of training videos tailored for educators to recognize signs of abuse and provides staff with recommendations on how to safely respond to potential cases of child abuse. The unit also includes scenarios and exercises on how to discern between behavioral signs of child abuse versus challenging behaviors resulting from external factors (e.g., caregiver separation; misunderstanding with a friend).

\*Note: The [Child Protection Unit OLT: Module 2 for Early Learning](#) and [Grades K-5](#) are identical in content and structure with the exception of the student characters' ages being slightly older in the Grades K-5 module.

- Currently, the introductory training video cautions at the end of the video clip that the scenarios involving abuse and neglect could be upsetting for educators, especially if they have had such experiences themselves. The trainer in the video advises educators to seek support if needed and direct them to the Second Step website for additional



resources. It would be helpful for APS to share a list of emotion regulation strategies and resources (e.g., [PTSD Hotline Numbers](#)) ahead of time for educators as they go through the training should they feel triggered by any of the sensitive material.

- Second Step provides a [template of a Student Support Plan](#) meant for students “experiencing something difficult.” The support plan includes teaching the student (social and emotional) skills. Instead of limiting these teachings to students expressing challenging behaviors, we highly recommend that educators extend opportunities to learn SEL skills to all students and to implement these essential practices throughout the school year during lessons, activities, and group projects. By being inclusive of all students in practicing all five primary SEL skills, classrooms are more likely to develop a stronger sense of community and empathy for one another. Nurturing empathy is especially important in influencing how students might respond should they see their friend or classmate exhibiting challenging emotions (e.g., bystander students might engage in perspective-taking by considering what their peers might be feeling and / or responsible decision-making by asking their peers if they need anything or notifying their teacher). We also recommend incorporating a daily emotion check-in so that all students practice self-awareness (i.e., recognizing and naming their emotions). It would also be helpful to give students the option to express what they need when they are experiencing something difficult.
- Second Step’s Child Protection Module is thorough, clear, and helpful in breaking down how educators should respond when they suspect a student may be experiencing abuse at home. We encourage APS to review their current reporting guidelines to see if they are consistent with Second Step’s recommendations so that educators are clear on what to do.

The [module](#) provides several realistic scenarios with sample conversations on how an educator might approach their student with care and concern. SS cautions educators to be mindful of potential cultural differences in terms of how families discipline their children. Considering DEB, however, educators would be in a better position to serve students from historically marginalized communities if they were also equipped with culturally responsive domestic violence/child abuse resources as these are not always readily provided at institutions. As such, we recommend that APS supplement this training with additional child protection resources tailored for immigrant and indigenous communities. We provide examples of these resources below:

- Domestic Violence Resources for Indigenous Communities
  - [Strong Hearts Native Hotline](#)
  - [National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center](#)
- Domestic Violence Resources for Immigrant Communities
  - [National DV Hotline - Abuse in Immigrant Communities](#)
  - [Casa de Esperanza](#)

Last, educators might refer to the following website to explore [Resources for Safety and Support During COVID-19](#) for students who are distance learning.

**Resource:** [Remote Teaching Recommendations](#)



Second Step prepared a [guide](#) with recommendations for educators teaching the Bullying Prevention Unit remotely. Specifically, Second Step noted that their overall recommendation is for educators to teach the Bullying Prevention lessons in the context of cyberbullying and interactions online. To support educators with these modifications, Second Step provided age-appropriate online resources to accompany each lesson which include a series of video clips and comics from [Imagine Neighborhood](#), [Common Sense Media](#), [Being Internet Awesome](#), and the [Captain Compassion Comic](#). We offer a few recommendations regarding content delivery below for APS educators to consider:

- Similar to other resources we reviewed from Second Step, the [guide](#) is straightforward and scripted. Second Step does not weave in opportunities for educators to expand on bullying concepts or make relevant connections to students' lives and their communities. To help remedy this gap and make the content more meaningful for students, APS educators might consider incorporating perspective-taking activities to supplement the unit's bullying videos. For example, educators can ask older students to imagine Macho from "[Macho is Cyberbullied](#)" as their friend or a person they care about. Have students write an email to Macho to show him support or offer him advice on how they would handle the situation of being bullied. Younger students could meet in smaller breakout groups and talk about how they would respond to Macho if he were their friend. These types of lesson extensions can strengthen student engagement and also lets students practice subskills of social awareness (i.e., perspective-taking and empathy) that are key to understanding the consequences of bullying and the importance of allyship.
- During Lesson 2 of the Bullying Unit, the [guide](#) instructs educators to ask 2nd and 3rd grade students, "Why does meanness make more meanness?" and "How does kindness stop meanness?" While acts of kindness can certainly help prevent or diffuse some bullying situations, we ask APS educators to communicate to students that sometimes, people will continue to be mean or bully others even when they are shown kindness. Caution students to tell an adult they trust if they ever find themselves in situations where someone continues to be mean to them.
- The [guide](#) instructs educators to pair the 4th and 5th grade bullying lessons with a [Captain Compassion comic](#) created by the [Committee for Children](#) called, "[Refusing Race-Based Bullying](#)" which is a story about dealing with cyberbullying in an online game. The storyline is problematic because the main character is a young Black teenager who is targeted online and called a "thug" specifically because his gaming avatar wears a hoodie. Bystanders and allied characters in the story briefly acknowledge that such acts "are not okay" but neglect to address how identity-based bias is particularly harmful and especially dangerous in real life. The [comic](#) writers missed this opportunity to guide a discussion on breaking down stereotypes with students and instead, risked priming young readers with biased thinking around Black boys and men wearing specific clothing. Research on shooter bias found that hoodies are often associated with "criminality, danger, and 'thugs'" and are perceived as "threatening, particularly when worn by Black males," (Kahn & Davis, 2017). Moreover, the Second Step [guide](#) failed to provide any supportive resources or guiding questions to address race-related bullying despite their [stated commitment to anti-racism and list of resources on their main website](#). Without disrupting the narrative about Black people appearing dangerous because of the clothing they wear, Second Step and the [Committee for Children](#) might inadvertently perpetuate negative and dangerous stereotypes that place Black lives at risk, especially in the eyes of law enforcement and authority figures.



We urge APS educators to consider finding an alternative to the [Captain Compassion comic](#) to supplement Second Step's bullying unit so that students can develop a clearer understanding of identity-based bullying. Students would also benefit from being exposed to resources and activities that allow them to engage in empathy-building and social awareness since both of these skills are vital for challenging biases and motives that incite bullying among students. APS educators might consider using the following resources to assess current titles in their class' reading list, check for biased messaging within assigned literature, and to select new reading materials that are both culture and identity-affirming:

- [Assessing Children's Literature](#)
- [Guide for Selecting Anti-Bias Children's Books](#)
- [Early Childhood Anti-Bias Education Booklists](#)

Once APS educators have updated their reading lists, we suggest they explore the nuances of bullying versus identity-based bullying with students to build students' prior knowledge. Next, educators and students can collaboratively operationalize definitions for an ally, a bystander, and an [active bystander](#) in these contexts (e.g., "What would an active bystander do or say when they are standing up for a friend being bullied because of their race/gender/ability?"). Collectively reflecting and planning safe ways to respond to identity-based bullying as allies and active bystanders engages students' social awareness and responsible decision-making skills (i.e., critical thinking) as well as students' self-confidence and self-efficacy skills (i.e., students believe in themselves and harness their own courage to stand up for someone who is being bullied or harmed). We also ask APS educators to explicitly address that there are some bullies who are not safe to stand up to, especially at home or in spaces where students are without a trusted adult. Ensure that students fully understand that active bystanders who seek help from a trusted adult to intervene during a bullying situation is also a brave and helpful act.

- Practice DEB by ensuring that exceptional learners have the opportunity to participate and engage with the content (e.g., provide students with hearing limitations with a script of the ["Macho is Cyberbullied"](#) recording).

Limitation: The Common Sense Media activities included in the guide required a user log-in and could not be accessed at this time.

**Resource:** Second Step Elementary Classroom Kits (Grades [K](#), [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), and [5](#))

The units provided in Second Step's K-5 Elementary Classroom Kits are primarily centered on growing students' skills for learning, empathy, emotion management, and problem-solving. In general, the classroom kits come with clear facilitation instructions and do not require much preparation on the educators' part since supplemental media (e.g., videos, sing-along songs, games, take-home activities, mini-posters for display) are already included. In terms of content, however, Second Step's classroom kits are dated, prescriptive, and do not invite much creative or critical thinking from students or their teachers. Additionally, Second Step does not explicitly provide opportunities for educators to make relevant connections between the [units](#) and students' lives. These discrepancies impede on fostering student engagement and learning. Moreover, lessons within the classroom kits lack much alignment with DEB which can compromise feelings of affirmation (i.e., seeing their culture and identity reflected in the curriculum) and belonging among students from historically marginalized groups. We identified opportunities for enhancing DEB within the classroom kits and provide recommendations for APS educators below:



- **Differentiate lessons and activities for exceptional learners.**

Second Step lessons often check for students' understanding and listening skills by requiring a physical gesture (e.g., sitting, standing, moving around the room, signaling with their hands) or verbal response. Currently, Second Step's classroom kits do not include differentiation strategies for exceptional learners. As such, we ask APS educators to help all students feel like they can participate successfully by preparing adaptations accordingly. We include some recommendations below:

- Offer alternative movements and physical gestures (e.g., clapping versus standing/sitting quickly, pointing or touching different-colored answer cards) for students with limited mobility.
- Consider using the following free resource for additional differentiation strategies to support neurodivergent learners during Second Step activities that require physical movement: [CATCH Inclusive Health Video Series](#).
- Provide braille print-outs or materials with enlarged text to students with limited vision. For remote learning, provide students with pre-recorded instructions of more extensive activities ahead of time when necessary. Regularly conduct checks for understanding.
- Emphasize rhythm during sing-alongs to involve students who are Deaf or have limited hearing.
  - For example, APS educators can provide the class with copies of song lyrics, mark parts of the song that call for particular beats, and invite students to mimic the beat with hand-drumming on a shared flat surface. This allows students with limited hearing to feel rhythmic vibrations and visualize hand movements that can help make it easier for them to join in. During remote learning, encourage Deaf students or students with limited hearing to invite a family member to join in the drumming activity if possible.
- Incorporate checks for understanding and ensure English Language Learners (ELLs) are clear on how to participate in the activity.
- Provide ELLs with translated versions of class songs.
- During writing activities, allow ELLs to write their responses in their home language.

For additional information on how to support exceptional learners, consider exploring the following resources:

- [Bridging Distance for Learners with Special Needs](#)
- [Special Education Resources for Remote Learning](#)
- [ELL Strategies and Best Practices](#)
- [Distance Learning for ELLs](#)

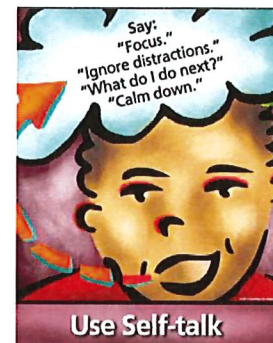
- **Modify or find alternatives to Second Step lessons that induce tone-policing and racial bias.**

The takeaways from lessons within Second Step's Classroom Kits are framed in managing students behaviors and are reinforced with instructional language that could inadvertently foster an environment that tolerates tone-policing- a microaggressive communication practice that "prioritize the comfort of the privileged over the oppression of the disenfranchised," (Nuru & Arendt, 2019). When teachers tone-police their students

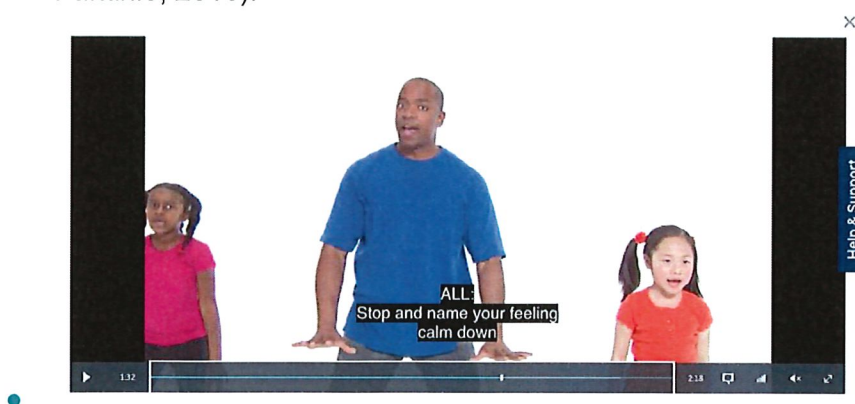


in class, for instance, the feelings of the adult are prioritized over what students may be trying to communicate to them. Getting students to “calm down” is a trending focus of many of Second Step’s lessons which can distract educators from teaching complementary and equally important skills such as self- and social awareness (i.e., helping students process what happened and try to understand what led them to feel mad, scared, or even excited). It’s important to note that tone policing can be exceptionally harmful when it is racialized and when it is used to assert dominance over someone else’s race, gender, or [ability](#). Tone policing zeroes in on the “way” a message is communicated as opposed to the content of the message itself which can not only invalidate how students feel but also make students at the margins (i.e., Black students and students of color) especially prone to being judged more harshly when exhibiting challenging feels and being disciplined more excessively than white students, (Annamma, Anyon, Joseph, Farrar, Greer, Downing & Simmons, 2016). As seen in the links and screenshots below, there are concerning examples of biased messaging in Second Step’s classroom kits that promote policing the bodies, voices, and feelings of BIPOC students:

- This first grade deck of rules promotes images of BIPOC children being “still,” “quiet,” and “listening” attentively while the white child is the one watching her surroundings. Similarly, this drawing of a Black child as seen on the right is featured in many of the Second Step mini-posters. He is often depicted as having to discipline himself to be focused, quiet, and calm while non-Black children in the remaining posters are speaking up or merely paying attention:



- The 3rd grade “Calm it Down” music video features a Black man singing and dancing to lyrics telling children to “stop, name (their) feeling, calm down.” The messaging behind this video is problematic and seems to reinforce the notion that BIPOC students and particularly Black males must always appear calm or risk being racially profiled as aggressive or receive unjust punishments (Smiley & Fakunle, 2016).



In lieu of Second Step’s mini-posters and music videos similar to “Calming it Down,” we encourage educators to have alternative emotion regulation strategies ready and to nurture learning spaces where students’ feelings are validated, no matter how



challenging they may be perceived by others. Moreover, we ask educators not to focus too much on having students name their emotions right away as some students may still be developing their knowledge of feeling words or might simply need more time to process their feelings. During in-person learning, APS educators might consider setting up an area in their classroom intended for students who may feel triggered or upset and need to take a breathing break or engage in a quiet and independent activity (e.g., drawing, journaling, assembling puzzles or legos). Other students may need to decompress or clear their minds with a more physical activity such as taking a short walk outside with their teacher or friend, interacting with stress toys, or throwing a ball back and forth. As for distance learning, APS educators might do some breathing exercises with students (e.g., [square breathing](#)), ask students to pace around their area or tap out the beat to their favorite song on their lap. Educators might also give students some time to listen to music, create their own mix of [nature sounds](#), play a relaxing online game such as [Winter Bells](#), or [create digital art](#).

Additionally, another concerning pattern we identified in Second Step's classroom kits is their messaging around feelings of "anger." For example, the [Managing Anger](#) lesson states that "everyone feels angry sometimes, but hurting other people's feelings or bodies is not okay. It's important to calm down angry feelings so you don't do something hurtful." Communicating the assumption to students that anger must be immediately named and suppressed to prevent "doing something hurtful" deters students from learning that anger can be channeled into something good and, in greater contexts- social change. Social justice educator, Dr. Cierra Kaler-Jones, pointed out that historically, ["righteous anger" has played its part in "fuel\(ing\) movements that have and continue to propel our nation forward towards justice."](#) Furthermore, civil rights activist, feminist, and poet, Audre Lorde reasoned that when anger is ["focused with precision, it can become a powerful source of energy serving progress and change."](#) On this note, we ask APS educators to explain to students that while physically harming others out of anger is discouraged and unsafe, there are safer ways to channel anger such as fighting for a cause that is against social injustice. APS educators might consider looking into "activism" (a combination of art and activism) and teach [Learning for Justice's Art and Activism units in class](#). In addition to learning emotion regulation skills, expanding Second Step's lessons on anger into conversations and projects about social justice help students practice self-awareness (e.g., what does it feel like in my body when I am left out, ignored, or made fun of? What does it feel like when someone is being unfair to me?) and social awareness (i.e., perspective-taking).

- **Take care in vetting Second Step materials (i.e., curriculum, activities, scenarios, examples) for safety, bias, harmful messaging, and gaps in cultural responsiveness prior to facilitating lessons.**
  - Similar to the majority of SEL approaches currently implemented within APS, Second Step is not grounded in cultural responsiveness, and anti-bias / antiracism (ABAR). Second Step's teacher-facing and student-facing resources do not provide cultural or sociopolitical context. This lack of representation compromises DEB since "invisibility erases identity and experience" while "visibility affirms reality," (Derman-Sparks et al., 2010). For instance, the [Being Assertive unit](#) promotes the importance of assertiveness using the following language:
    - Model assertive posture, tone of voice, and words at transition times.



- Remind students that the best way to get your attention is by using Assertiveness Skills.
- Have students reflect on how being assertive helped them get what they needed or wanted.

Considering the example above, Second Step does not leverage cultural context and neglects to address that not all families view assertiveness as a “respectful way to get what you want or need.” If a young person were to approach an elder with an assertive tone in more collectivistic cultures (e.g., Asian families), this may generate intergenerational conflict and be viewed as a sign of disrespect, (Pham, Lui, & Rolock, 2020). To prevent cultural misunderstandings, we urge APS educators to avail any opportunities to get to know students and their families in terms of their cultural values, traditions, and beliefs (e.g., ask families and caregivers about different kinds of music, stories, and s/heroes they grew up learning about and passed on to their children), in addition to their perceptions around emotions. APS educators can use their findings to help inform the ways they modify curriculum and activities so that students can participate in different ways that still align and affirm their cultural identities (e.g., model a variety of ways students can express what they want or need to someone that does not require being assertive; explore examples of when being assertive can be used for protection such as telling a stranger to stop following them or a classmate to stop teasing their friend).

- It is important that APS educators review Second Step’s take-home resources and omit any activities that may be unsafe for students. For example, the [4th grade home link activity on “Calming Down Anger”](#) instructs students to, “...ask your adult to think about situations that make him or her feel angry,” and to list what makes their caregiver angry. This could put a student in an unsafe situation if they ask an adult who is easily angered. Before a student engages in any take-home activity with an adult, we encourage APS educators to have students choose a caregiver that they trust and feel safe around and to also give students the alternative to opt out if they are uncomfortable asking someone at home.
- We ask APS educators to find alternatives to any of Second Step’s media materials that promote insensitive, racist imagery. For example, the 5th Grade empathy lesson includes a music video called, [“Walk, Walk, Walk.”](#) The idea behind the song is to teach students empathy by imagining themselves “walking in each others’ shoes.” However, the [music video](#) included problematic scenes as pictured in the screenshots below:







Showing students videos or pictures that glorify whiteness (i.e., placing the heads of children of color on the bodies of white children) is a racist and dehumanizing form of [curriculum violence](#). How can Second Step expect students to develop and practice empathy when the animators themselves neglected to empathize with or consider the feelings of BIPOC students when watching this [video](#)? Additionally, empathy is more complex than imagining oneself “walking in another person’s shoes.” It is important for educators to explicitly acknowledge that although our experiences and identities (e.g., race, gender, culture, abilities, and beyond) may prevent us from fully empathizing with another person’s circumstances, we can still exercise perspective-taking and compassion. To model this, educators can encourage students to ask themselves questions such as, “What was it like for that person? How do you think they felt when \_\_\_\_\_? Do you think what happened to that person was fair or unfair? How do you think you would feel if something like that happened to you?” Last, we implore APS educators to replace this [video](#) and similar problematic materials from Second Step with other alternatives when teaching students empathy. We include some recommendations below:

- Older students can explore the story of [Aubrey Fontenot, a Texas dad who befriended his son’s bully](#) by showing him empathy. Students can meet in groups of 2-3 and discuss their thoughts on Aubrey’s story and consider the feelings of each person involved. If students feel comfortable, they might also share about a time someone unexpectedly showed them empathy. How did they feel before and after someone empathized with them?
- Younger students can learn more about empathy and considering the needs of others by reading or listening to books such as [Can I Play Too](#) by Mo Willems and [Tiny T-Rex and the Impossible Hug](#) by Johnathan Stutzman. Invite students to think about a friend or loved one that helped them feel included or that they belong and have students create a thank-you card for that person.



**Resource:** [Early Learning Scope and Sequence](#) (and Resources)

According to [Second Step's scope and sequence](#), the early learning units are to be implemented in the following order:

- Unit 1: Skills for Learning
- Unit 2: Empathy
- Unit 3: Emotion Management
- Unit 4: Friendship Skills and Problem-Solving
- Unit 5: Transitioning to Kindergarten

The above sequence is developmentally appropriate in terms of building the SEL skills necessary for preschool students to transition into kindergarten. APS students will certainly benefit from learning about empathy and developing perspective-taking skills earlier on because it engages their self- and social awareness skills. That is, in addition to students learning about their own feelings, students also learn to be more cognizant of other people having feelings too (e.g., paying closer attention to people's facial expressions and physical gestures and associating meaning behind why they would behave that way). These SEL competencies are essential for students to learn how to manage their own emotions and build relationships with others. For example, a student might consider how they would feel if someone took away their favorite toy or didn't give them a chance to play a game with a group of peers. This knowledge can help students begin to consider the feelings of others and inform their responsible decision-making skills (e.g., "I can share my toy with my friend to cheer them up" or "I can ask my classmate to play with our group so that we can all have fun").

While it is valuable for students to learn and understand empathy, being able to practice empathy while navigating different social contexts as they grow older is also significantly important, especially in regards to DEB (i.e., understanding different identities and unlearning societal biases that perpetuate identity-based discrimination). Multiple studies have shown that racial differences are noticeable to preschool-aged children who, in turn, may begin excluding peers of color during group activities (Cole & Verwayne, 2018). Moreover, researchers advocating for anti-ableist curricula argued that "early childhood classrooms should be spaces that reflect the full range of human differences" where every aspect of our identities are valued (Lalvani & Bacon). Currently, [Second Step's scope and sequence](#) only requires educators to use the "brain builders and songs" they included in their units. Therefore, we ask APS educators to enhance the early learning units with DEB using the resources below which include a plethora of tools and guidance on how to integrate cultural and sociopolitical contexts into lessons and activities.

- [Becoming Upended: Teaching and Learning about Race and Racism with Young Children and Their Families](#)
- [Rethinking "We Are All Special:" Anti-Ableism Curricula in Early Childhood Classrooms](#)
- [Woke Kindergarten](#)
- [Early Childhood Resources and FAQs for Anti-Bias Education](#)

One method to integrate cultural and sociopolitical context while simultaneously fostering engagement is to build relevant connections to students' lives and current events. For example, APS educators might consider supplementing Units 2 and 4 ("Empathy" and "Friendship and Problem-solving," respectively) with the story of "[Min Jee's Lunch](#)"- a timely piece by [Liz](#)



[Kleinrock](#) which speaks to the rise of anti-Asian racism as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Invite students to think about how Min Jee must have felt when their classmate not only made fun of their packed lunch but made mean assumptions about Min Jee's culture. Break students up into small groups to discuss ways they might have stepped in and stood up for Min Jee before sharing their answers with the class at large.

**Resource:** [Resource Library](#)

[Second Step's Early Learning Scope and Sequence](#) included a [resource library](#) that contained guides (powerpoint presentations) for [hybrid adaptation](#) and [remote adaptation](#) during the pandemic. In essence, both guides are similar in stressing the value of nurturing students' SEL skills and providing a safe space for students to convene in person and in online spaces. The [hybrid adaptation guide](#) is distinctly explicit about the importance of "rebuilding positive classroom communities" (i.e., providing students with structure using consistent rules and norms; creating fun opportunities for students to get to know each other; and fostering "strong, supportive relationships between students and staff"). Students enrolled in remote-learning would also benefit from Second Step's community rebuilding strategies as these help mitigate the negative impacts of being separated from their peers and teachers. Additionally, Second Step emphasized in *both* guides that students require the following skills in order to succeed in either [hybrid](#) or [remote learning](#) environments:

### Social-Emotional Skills for Remote Learning

SECOND  
STEP

#### Students require specific skills to succeed in remote learning environments:

- The ability to work independently
- Willingness to proactively ask for help
- Executive-function skills
- Independent problem-solving skills
- A growth mindset



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Second Step's requirements do not emanate DEB as it is neither student-centered or considerate of students' needs. Specifically, Second Step is more focused on what skills students are required to bring to the table to be deemed "successful" rather than helping schools and educators ensure that students are well enough to participate or engage at all in class. Students' SEL skills thus far may also be strained due to feeling emotionally depleted or stressed from dealing with numerous barriers exacerbated by the pandemic (e.g., food security, inconsistent internet access, physically fatigued). We advise APS to use a culturally responsive approach to hybrid, remote, and in-person learning. Instead of requiring students to have and maintain SEL skills listed above such as "growth-mindset" (a problematic mindset that relies heavily on individual grit and resilience instead of holding systems of power accountable for oppressing and disenfranchising communities at the margins), consider ways to support students' wellness and to respect the capacities at which they can function as human beings. To begin, APS' SEL team can partake in a shared reading of ["Becoming a Warm Demander"](#) and ["Can Teachers Be Warm Demanders During the Pandemic?"](#) The former describes [Lisa Delpit's](#) framing of educators as warm demanders who "expect a great deal of their students" while simultaneously affirming students' individual brilliance and helping them achieve success in "a



disciplined and structured environment.” The latter article factors in DEB by reframing this approach in the context of the pandemic and provides strategies for districts to serve as warm demanders who are considerate of the unique needs of students, families, and teachers.

Limitations: [Second Step's resource library](#) contained inaccessible links for “SEL for Adults Resilience During Crisis Module” and Second Step’s “Brain Builders and Songs.” Therefore, an analysis of these resources could not be provided at this time.

## CONCLUSION

The goal of this curriculum analysis was to review the SEL programs and approaches used within APS and to share findings, critical feedback, and recommendations in relation to SEL practice, pedagogy, and professional development in the context of diversity, equity, and belonging (DEB). We provided guidance on how APS can leverage DEB to enhance existing SEL interventions to not only strengthen skills but to also push curriculum and practice to be more inclusive of the needs and lived experiences of students at the margins. Moreover, our recommendations are grounded in creating more equitable, safe, and just classrooms, curricula, pedagogies, and systems that affirm and [support all students' experiences and their feelings in the comfort of their own skin](#). Last, APS provides a wealth of SEL resources to faculty, family, and students. However, this report also shows that the abundance of resources may be overwhelming and confusing to educators and students. This challenge may be remedied with collaboration (i.e., forming a multi-stakeholder SEL team to oversee SEL implementation), consolidation of approaches (i.e., identifying which SEL approaches best serves APS students in need of different tiers of support), and clarification (i.e., providing teachers with clear directives about expectations for programming and assessment in addition to implementation support). Last, while APS' commitment to SEL is clear (especially given their critical practices included in their [SEL district plan](#)), the bulk of SEL resources are not explicit in terms of DEB, and APS must integrate the two to provide inclusive SEL to all students.



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