



CASE STUDY

Tooele County School District

Second Step Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) continues to help the community heal after a year of crisis.



Situation

The Tooele County School District (TCSD) is in a rural county 35 miles west of Salt Lake City, Utah. It consists of 16 elementary schools and five junior high schools. TCSD serves a diverse population of approximately 14,000 students from Kindergarten through Grade 8, encompassing a military base and an Indian reservation, across 7,286 square miles.

The county has experienced significant growth in the past 15 years, becoming a bedroom community to the Salt Lake Valley. This growth highlighted a need for elementary school counselors and greater social, emotional, and behavioral support for all students.

In 2013, the district applied for and received an Elementary and Secondary School Counseling federal grant, funding counselors and enabling the purchase of Second Step SEL for implementation in seven of the district's elementary schools.

Approach

During the first year of implementation, the district experienced multiple crises—each school experienced trauma that spread throughout the community.

It was critical to provide education and training to ensure that students and staff were equipped to deal with the grief and loss. The district applied for and received a 5-year School Climate Transformation Grant, focusing on Positive Behavioral Intervention & Supports (PBIS) in every school and teaching Second Step SEL in every K–8 classroom.

“We believe Second Step contributes to our success in creating healthy and safe learning environments where students’ educational and behavioral needs are consistently supported—leading to improved educational outcomes and long-term success for our students as they enter higher education and the workforce.”

Kara Strain, Safe Schools Coordinator
Tooele County School District



Recognizing that emotional well-being is closely tied to academics, Tooele administrators felt that social-emotional learning would be the key to increasing positive behavior and supporting mental wellness.

They looked for a widely used and evidence-based curriculum that would promote these improvements and provide the foundation for a safe, respectful learning environment. The Second Step curriculum has become a crucial piece of the district's larger PBIS effort.

Outcomes

Easy to use with relevant content, the program was swiftly implemented in every K–8 classroom. All teachers are now on board and enthusiastic about Second Step SEL, even those who were initially resistant. Teachers take time to teach all of the lessons.

The district conducts regular program integrity measures, including coaching and teacher observation. TCSD has seen great progress in social-emotional learning, positive school climate, and staff readiness. Teachers proactively identify triggers that could negatively affect their students, intervening and redirecting earlier than before.

Tooele City's Communities That Care and the Tooele City Police Department assist with program integrity reviews and delivering certain lesson. All prevention agencies use a common language to reinforce Second Step, strengthening its positive influence in the lives of students.

“Second Step is a great tool for our teachers and staff to be able to teach resilience, hope, and compassion to our students. Throughout our district, we have a common language and a way to work with students who move from one school to another, and transition between grades. We are hoping that this helps us never have another year like we did five years ago.”

Marianne Oborn, CTE/Counseling Director
Tooele County School District

Building a positive school culture has become the key priority for this large community. Second Step has introduced and reinforced SEL as a crucial piece in helping every student thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

SOURCES:

Interview: Marianne Oborn, CTE/Counseling Director; Julie Spindler, Safe Schools Coordinator Elementary; Kara Strain, Safe Schools Coordinator Secondary, 1/31/2017

Interview: Dr. Scott A. Rogers, Superintendent, 2/6/2017

Contact

Research-based Second Step SEL is a universal, classroom-based curriculum for Preschool through Grade 8 that teaches students the skills they need to be safe, succeed in school, and get along well with others.

Learn about more educators' experiences with Second Step SEL at SecondStep.org/success or call Committee for Children at 800-634-4449, ext. 1.

Who We Are

Though we're best known for our innovative SEL-centric programs for schools, Committee for Children is involved in all kinds of initiatives to improve the lives of children. Founded as a nonprofit in 1979 to help victims of child sexual abuse, we continue to advocate for policies and legislation to protect kids and provide equal opportunities for all. From our headquarters in Seattle, Washington, we partner with researchers, publishers, and nonprofits around the world. Our programs reach students in over 70 countries, and we work to make sure all children have a chance to thrive.