

Dear APS Family,

As you may know, all elementary and middle school counselors are using the *Second Step* learning program in your child's classroom. The *Second Step* program teaches children important skills for getting along with others and doing well in school and community. We currently use both the main program and the Bullying Prevention Unit. Using these lessons helps our school be a safe and supportive place where everyone can learn.

As a natural extension of supporting our students with bullying, we recognize the sad fact of child abuse as one of the largest public health crisis facing children (ages 0 to 18) around the world.¹ For the past three years, elementary counselors across the district have incorporated the *Second Step* Child Protection Unit. Again this year we plan to deliver one grade level specific lesson to K-5 classrooms before winter break; students will learn ways to help them decide if something is safe or not: specifically, about safe, unsafe, and unwanted touches, and rules about touching private body parts (we define this to students as the area covered by swimsuits.) They'll also learn to say no to unsafe or unwanted touches, and to tell an adult if someone breaks rules about touching private body parts. Students will also practice asking an adult for help, telling an adult about an unsafe situation, and being assertive to get out of unsafe situations.

Our families are of course, the most critical part of safety for their children, therefore we work to provide you all with more information and training:

- If you have any questions about the Child Protection Unit or the *Second Step* program, please contact your student's school counselor. You are welcome to review with the school counselor the lesson(s) used. The Counseling page on the APS website contains additional details about our *Second Step* lessons. Please note, APS employees and volunteers receive annual training on these issues.
- **New this year**, we are encouraging caretakers to participate in Adult focused prevention efforts so you can better support your children. Please click this link for more information:
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0A45ACA829A6FD0-stewards1>

Ways to get help or support now:

- For a situation where you suspect or know a child in Arlington is or may be in danger please call Arlington Child Protective Services (703 228 1500) they are available 24/7.
- If you need additional help or support for a child outside of Arlington or for something that happened in the past anywhere, these 2 hotlines offer trained mental health professionals 24/7:
 - The Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline – 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422- 4453)
 - Darkness to Light – 1-866-FOR-LIGHT (866-367-5444) or text LIGHT to 741741

Thank you for helping us to make our school a safe and supportive place where everyone can learn.

Sincerely,

Diane Reiser

Colleen Shouse

Principal

School
Counselor(s)

Pam McClellan

Supervisor, Counseling Services

¹ <https://www.d2l.org/the-issue/>