



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Somerville Public Schools' Director of Student Services, Elizabeth Doncaster, Receives Inaugural Director Innovator Award for Excellence in Social-Emotional Education

The Second Step® Educator of the Year Awards honor K-12 educators and district leaders nationwide for their exceptional impact on social-emotional development and fostering positive school climates.

Somerville, MA – With a strong emphasis on student well-being and teacher resilience, outstanding educators and leaders like Somerville Public Schools' Director of Student Services, Elizabeth (Liz) Doncaster, are being recognized for their influential contributions to the social-emotional development and well-being of students.

Global nonprofit and leading social-emotional learning provider [Committee for Children](#) selected Liz Doncaster as one of the 2024 recipients of its distinguished [Second Step® Educator of the Year Awards](#) and first-ever District Innovator Award.

As the only award of its kind, the Second Step Educator of the Year Awards honors educators who are setting new standards in social-emotional practices that support academics and create lasting change in their school communities. New this year, the District Innovator Award recognizes district leaders whose advocacy has brought social-emotional learning to the forefront, enriching the lives of students and educators alike.

Doncaster, who is also a former SPS prekindergarten educator, was selected for her demonstrated ability to build a supportive learning environment where students thrive socially, emotionally and academically. In addition to her work implementing [Second Step programs](#), the leading research-based social-emotional learning curricula for Early Learning through Grade 12, Doncaster has been instrumental in advocating for and securing investments in social-emotional programs and supports in each of the Somerville Public Schools' 11 PK-12 schools. Today, each school has an SEL Specialist and a school-based social worker who support implementation of social and emotional curriculum as well as provide critical wraparound supports for students.

“It has been my pleasure to work with the Second Step team at the Committee for Children. Their online platform is user-friendly and the online training model helps us to on board new educators throughout the year with ease, Doncaster said.” The Somerville Public Schools is currently rolling out a multi-year, districtwide Social Emotional Development plan, of which the Second Step curriculum is the critical learning component. With our district's deep commitment to SEL and Restorative practices in our schools and classrooms, Second Step overlaps perfectly with these concepts. I am incredibly proud of the work we have done in Somerville, and more importantly,



how deeply we have impacted student achievement and wellbeing especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

As a Second Step Educator of the Year award winner, Doncaster joins a prestigious list of K–12 educators and district leaders supporting children’s development of essential life skills — like communication, perseverance and problem-solving — that will support success in the classroom and throughout their lives.

“Liz continues to be a champion of social emotional learning and wellbeing in the Somerville Public Schools, and has been a driving force behind Second Step implementation in our district. It’s no secret that in Somerville, we have a proven commitment to supporting the whole child, providing wraparound support and resources empower students to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally through tailored supports and equitable access to opportunity,” said Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Ruben Carmona. “We are so proud and fortunate to have Liz here at SPS, and look forward to continuing to grow and strengthen our social-emotional platforms for the benefit of our entire school community.”

For more information about the Second Step Educator of the Year Awards, visit <https://www.secondstep.org/eya24>.

For additional information on how Second Step programs are making it easy for educators to make a difference in the lives of students, visit [SecondStep.org](https://www.secondstep.org).

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About the Somerville Public Schools:

The Somerville Public Schools (SPS) is a diverse community of about 5,000 students. We envision a student-centered learning community where every student – honoring their unique strengths and background – is empowered to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally through tailored supports and equitable access to opportunity. Our primary mission is to cultivate independent and inspired learners who are equipped to make a positive impact on the world. We achieve this by fostering rigorous and joyful learning environments where students, families, staff and community partners collaborate with a shared commitment to academic excellence and well-being.

About Committee for Children

Committee for Children is a global nonprofit dedicated to helping children everywhere thrive emotionally, socially, and academically. The organization has been working in partnership with educators and families for 45 years. Visit [cfchildren.org](https://www.cfchildren.org) to learn more.

About Second Step® Programs

The Second Step family of programs includes social-emotional learning curricula for Early



Somerville Public Schools

Education • Inspiration • Excellence

Learning through Grade 12, along with offerings for out-of-school time and adults. Used in over 45,000 schools nationwide, Second Step programs reach 26.9 million children annually.

Visit [SecondStep.org](https://www.secondstep.org) to learn more.

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