

Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum teach social skills, build academic success

Create a respectful learning environment

Disruptive students, unfocused learners, and kids with poor social skills can derail even the most well-thought-out lesson plans. Teaching problem-solving and emotion-management skills reduces disruptive behavior in the classroom and helps students focus on their work, freeing up time to teach. *Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum* is a research-based program that teaches middle school students the core social and emotional skills that will help them succeed in school and throughout their lives. Educators around the globe use the *Second Step* program to reduce disruptive behavior, help students focus on learning, and create a respectful school climate. This award-winning program is taught in more than 20,000 schools in 21 countries, including the United States, Canada, Britain, Denmark, Germany, Sweden, Slovakia, and Japan.

How do social skills increase student achievement?

Research shows important connections between children's social and emotional skills and academic achievement. According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), "Social and emotional learning has been demonstrated to increase mastery of subject material and motivation to learn; to reduce anxiety, enhance attention, and improve study skills; and to increase commitment to school and the time devoted to schoolwork. Social and emotional learning has also been shown to improve attendance and graduation rates...while it reduces suspensions, expulsions, and grade retention." Research also shows that socially and emotionally skilled students score higher on standardized tests and earn higher GPAs. Additionally, research shows that strong emotions such as anxiety and anger can interfere with the ability to remember and understand information. The *Second Step* program teaches children empathy, impulse control, problem solving, and emotion management to help them succeed in school and in life.

Can the program reduce aggression and problem behaviors?

The *Second Step* program is based on extensive research about social development and aggression prevention. It has been shown to reduce problem behaviors, aggressive behaviors, and peer rejection. Backed by more than 20 years of research, the *Second Step* program is effective with students across socioeconomic and racial backgrounds and geographic settings. Research also shows the *Second Step* curriculum is linked to improvements in students' social and emotional knowledge and skills, pro-social attitudes, and behavior.

The most recent *Second Step* study appears in the March–April 2005 issue of the *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*. Here are some highlights from the study:

- Teachers indicated a 78 percent improvement in student social competence.
- Students required 41 percent less adult intervention for minor conflicts.
- Students were 42 percent less aggressive.

Skills taught in the *Second Step* program are also important in preventing other risky behaviors, such as substance abuse. According to CASEL, "Many of the elements important to social and emotional learning are also key to preventing high-risk behaviors, including drug use, violence, HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, adolescent pregnancy, and suicide."

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