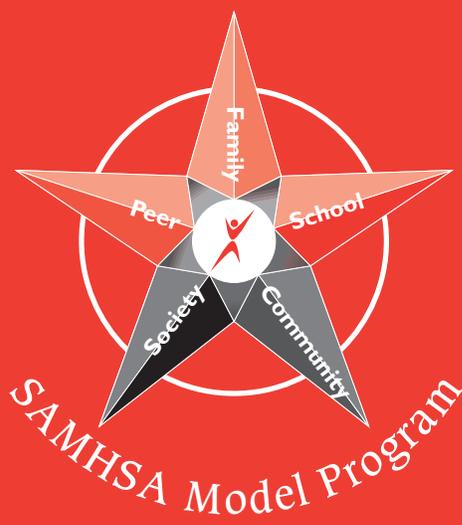




Also available  
in Spanish



*Effective Substance Abuse and  
Mental Health Programs  
for Every Community*

## Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum

Second Step is a classroom-based social skills program for preschool through junior high students (4 to 14 years old). It is designed to reduce impulsive, high-risk, and aggressive behaviors and increase children’s social-emotional competence and other protective factors.

Group discussion, modeling, coaching, and practice are used to increase students’ social competence, risk assessment, decisionmaking ability, self-regulation, and positive goal-setting. The program’s lesson content varies by grade level and is organized into three skill-building units covering:

- **Empathy**—teaches young people to identify and understand their own emotions and those of others;
- **Impulse control and problem solving**—helps young people choose positive goals; reduce impulsivity; and evaluate consequences of their behavior in terms of safety, fairness, and impact on others; and
- **Anger management**—enables young people to manage emotional reactions and engage in decisionmaking when they are highly aroused.

### INTENDED POPULATION

Developed for preschool through ninth-grade students (4 to 14 years old), the program’s curriculum is intended for use with a broad population of students. Second Step has been proven effective in geographically diverse U.S. and Canadian cities, in classrooms varying in ethnic/racial makeup (predominantly African American, predominantly White, or highly racially mixed), and in schools with students of varied socioeconomic status.

### Proven Results\*

- 20% reduction in physical aggression during lunchtime and recess, compared to control group, which increased 41%
- 10% increase in positive social behavior during lunchtime and recess
- 36% less aggressive behavior during conflict/arousing situations
- 41% reduction in the need for adult intervention during conflicts
- 37% more likely to choose positive social goals

*\*Compared to control group.*

### INTERVENTION

- Universal**
- Selective
- Indicated



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

## OUTCOMES

Significant outcomes in preschool-kindergarten included:

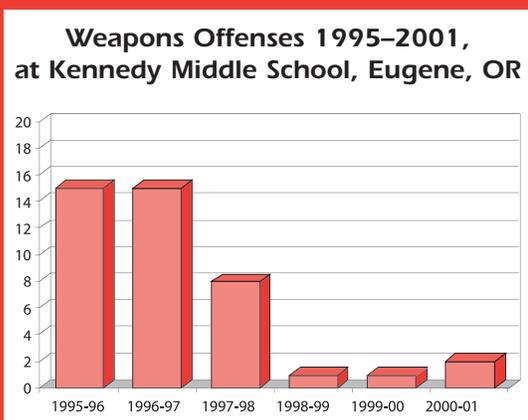
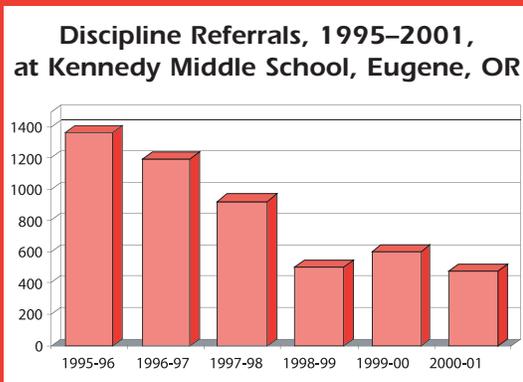
- Decreased verbal aggression, disruptive behavior, and physical aggression
- Improved empathy skills and consequential thinking skills

At the elementary level, Second Step has led to:

- Decreased aggression on the playground and in conflict situations
- Decreased need for adult intervention
- More prosocial goal-setting
- Increased social competence and positive social behavior
- Higher levels of empathic behavior in conflict situations (girls)

Middle and junior high school students showed:

- Less approval for physical, verbal, and relational aggression
- Increased confidence in their ability to regulate emotions and problem-solve
- Improved ability to perform social-emotional skills



Second Step is widely used in the United States and Canada, and has been adapted for use in several other countries. Spanish-language supplements are available.

## BENEFITS

- Decreases disciplinary referrals
- Increases positive goal-setting
- Increases social competence and positive social interaction
- Decreases approval of physical aggression, verbal hostility, and social exclusion
- Provides practice in peer pressure resistance skills
- Increases risk-assessment and decisionmaking ability

## HOW IT WORKS

Second Step lessons are based on interpersonal situations depicted in 11- by 17-inch black-and-white photos and/or videos. The accompanying scripted lesson guides the class discussion and skill practice. Teachers model the skills and children practice them. The pre-K level curriculum includes puppet scripts and sing-along tapes. The middle/junior high school curriculum includes homework assignments.

All lessons recommend ways to transfer skills to the classroom and practice and reinforce them during regular school activities. To promote transfer of learning, posters listing anger management and problem-solving steps are provided. In addition, the curricula for preschool through fifth grade contain a parent education video designed to orient families to the Second Step program.

## IMPLEMENTATION ESSENTIALS

Second Step program kits contain everything teachers need to present the program to students. Guides and resources that support a schoolwide implementation are provided to administrators. Between 20 and 25 lessons per year are provided for elementary grades. The middle/junior high school curriculum includes 15 lessons in year 1 and 8 lessons in years 2 and 3. The developmentally appropriate lessons build sequentially within and between each grade level, and should be taught in order.

### Materials

Basic program materials include:

- Administrator's and Teacher's Guides
- Photo cards with scripted lesson on reverse side (preschool to fifth grade)
- Classroom videotape

- Posters
- Parent education videotape and reproducible letters
- Sing-along tape (preschool)
- Puppets (preschool)
- Overhead transparencies and reproducible homework sheets (secondary grades)

### **Training and Technical Assistance**

To obtain the best possible outcomes, it is strongly recommended that all school staff be trained in the program. The options are a 1-day staff and teacher training and a 3-day training of trainers. Ongoing program implementation support is available free of charge by phone. The developer also provides free printed materials to help with program selection, implementation, and onsite evaluation, and a quarterly client newsletter.

### **Resources**

Other materials available include:

- Family Guide materials for presenting six workshops to parents
- Segundo Paso, a Spanish-language version used in conjunction with the Second Step student materials.

## **PROGRAM BACKGROUND**

Second Step was developed in the mid-1980s by Committee for Children, a not-for-profit organization of educators and mental health professionals. Previous work provided training for teachers and parents regarding sexual abuse prevention and reporting. CFC program *Talking About Touching* taught personal safety skills to children. In 1985, the organization's mission broadened to include children's aggressive and high-risk behaviors. A development team led by Kathy Beland, M.A., worked to translate scientific research into a school-friendly program with a positive focus—Second Step.

Phillip Kendall's work on cognitive-behavioral interventions formed the backbone of the new program. This was integrated with techniques derived from social learning theory (Bandura), empathy research (Feshbach; Eisenberg), social information-processing models (Dodge), and Spivak and Shure's work on problem solving. Educators appreciated the easy-to-use format and scientific base. In 2002, Second Step was revised with updated lessons and materials, and more videotapes were added.

## EVALUATION DESIGN

At least a dozen evaluations have been conducted on Second Step, by itself or in conjunction with complementary programs (e.g., literacy programs, B.E.S.T.). Among those focusing on only Second Step are:

A randomized pre- and posttest comparison of 790 elementary school children in experimental and control schools. Observers, blind to school condition, made systematic observations of aggressive and positive social behaviors in class and on school playgrounds. Teachers rated student social competence and anti-social behavior.

A study of more than 800 second- and fourth-grade students for 2 years compared experimental and control students on measures of social competence, antisocial behavior, and social beliefs. Observers, blind to school condition, counted aggressive and collaborative behaviors in conflict situations.

A pre- and posttest comparison of behavior and knowledge was conducted with a sample of inner-city African American preschool and kindergarten children. Observers, blind to condition, measured disruptive and aggressive behaviors. Interviewers assessed children's social skills knowledge.

Middle school and junior high school students in intervention and non-intervention classrooms were compared for pre- to posttest changes in social skills knowledge, approval of aggression, and perceived ability to manage emotions and perform social skills.

## PROGRAM DEVELOPER

### Committee for Children

Committee for Children is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to promote the safety, well-being, and social development of children, by creating quality educational programs for educators, families, and communities. The organization develops social-emotional learning curricula for children—programs include *Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum* (teaches social-emotional skills), *Talking About Touching: A Personal Safety Curriculum* (teaches sexual abuse prevention skills), and *Steps to Respect: A Bullying Prevention Program*. Committee for Children provides program implementation training and support for these programs.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

For program and training information, contact:

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## RECOGNITION

Model Program—Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Exemplary Program—U.S. Department of Education

Rated “A” Program—Drug Strategies