



**National Center for Mental Health Promotion
and Youth Violence Prevention**

Second Step Teleconference
Thursday, December 07, 2006
3:00 – 4:00 P.M. Eastern Time

ON THE CALL

Facilitator: Woody Clift, Technical Assistance Specialist, National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention

Presenters: Jennifer Kitson, Technical Assistance Specialist, National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention; and Linda Nelson, Project Coordinator for Skagit County Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative

Supporting National Center Staff: Lauren Gilman, Technical Assistance Specialist and Teleconference Lead; and Jamie Griesbach, Research Assistant

Grantee Participants: Shannon Raper, Lynne Vincent, Karie Brinke, Janet Goodliffe, Linda Gutierrez, Paula Grant, Karen Wynn, Jared Tonks, Mary Kate Powell, Denise Lewis, Denise Smith, Gary Pate, Kristin Werts, Matthew Tolbert

PURPOSE OF THIS CALL:

- To provide information to grantees about Second Step, an evidence-based intervention
- To identify strategies to implementation and address challenges through the examples of two sites using the Second Step program
- To provide a networking opportunity for grantees interested in Second Step

OVERVIEW OF TELECONFERENCE

The National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention hosted this event. Facilitator, Woody Clift, provided a brief overview of the Second Step program, accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation. Guest presenter Linda Nelson discussed Second Step in her district, Skagit County, Washington, including its application in early childhood centers and partnerships with community colleges. National Center Technical Assistance Specialist Jennifer Kitson described the Second Step program in Hays, Kansas and strategies to ensure teacher buy-in. Grantees on the call addressed questions to Linda, Jennifer, and Woody regarding the successes and challenges of their work.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM PRESENTATION

Second Step Introduction: PowerPoint Presentation:

Woody Clift: Based on the questions sent to us in advance, it appears that some grantees are interested in learning more about the program, while others are in the throes of

implementation. In light of the background of the participants, we thought we would provide a brief overview and then move into the specifics of two successful Second Step programs. We will try to address all the questions sent to us prior to the teleconference and will also provide several opportunities for those on the call to ask additional questions that may come up during the course of this meeting.

Second Step curriculum is tailored to children ages 4-14. One of the facets that many people appreciate is that it includes materials to support parental engagement. Most of the materials are also available in Spanish and English.

The curriculum is divided into three skill building units:

- Empathy: Teaching children to identify and understand their own emotions and those of others
- Impulse Control and Problem Solving: Teaching children how to evaluate consequences of their actions in terms of safety, fairness, and impact on others
- Anger Management: Providing children with strategies and opportunities to practice managing their emotions and make good decisions in highly charged situations

When grouped together, a curriculum that focuses on these three areas consistently demonstrates positive outcomes, both in the immediate situation, as well as in the long term. Second Step provides protective competencies through the adolescent years and into early adulthood, particularly in some of the areas that the Safe Schools/Healthy Students initiative tries to target. Children with these skills are better able to make good decisions.

I have seen Second Step work in many classrooms and have noted changes in the school climate pretty quickly through my work as a project director. Most importantly what I have heard and seen that teachers find it to be very user friendly. This is crucial because if a teacher doesn't find it user friendly, it's much less likely to be adopted.

It's important to note that the lessons are sequentially designed and intended to be delivered by the teacher 1-2 times per week. At the elementary level, there are 20-25 lessons, 20-25 minutes long, and at the middle school level, there are 15 lessons in year 1 and 8 lessons in year 2 and 3, all 50 minutes long. We will talk later about strategies for getting teachers to adopt Second Step within their already burdensome load of standards and requirements.

The program uses varied instructional techniques, based on the theory that you need to model a skill, allow students to practice, and provide opportunities to reward and reinforce this positive behavior. You also need to identify someone who can model for teachers and create opportunities for teachers to learn from one another. As teachers begin to learn about this curriculum, I have seen a high level of interest in implementation spread contagiously through grades and through schools.

Some of the important questions to ask are, how does it build on academic standards, and how does it connect with academic requirements? This is because many schools will be

more receptive to the program if they can align it with their state standards. It's important to consider these questions and implement right the first time. If Second Step or any evidence-based program is not well received in a school or district, it can make it more difficult to gain support and implement other programs in the future.

Linda Nelson: Second Step in Skagit County

Linda Nelson: We are really excited about our program at Skagit, and I appreciate being on this call today. Skagit is a culturally, economically, and geographically diverse rural district located in the northwest corner of Washington, and our SS/HS grant is a full-county initiative. We have seven school districts that range in size. Our implementation is in the early childhood arena: we aim to reach as many early childhood providers as possible. Our other goal is to work with the school districts to help them recognize the benefits of this program. We hope to move towards getting Second Step into the schools, in grades kindergarten through middle school.

Currently, the program has three early childhood educators (ECEs) who have attended a Training of Trainers in Seattle, plus a Skagit Valley College ECE instructor who also attended the CFC course. I have the three ECEs with us today, so I'll ask them to chime in as we go along.

We also have an agreement with our local community college, Skagit Valley College, to offer a course in training early childhood providers in Second Step. This quarter, we have 20 early childhood providers enrolled in a training class (4 home providers, 4 Head Start staff, 4 Migrant Head Start Staff, 1 school district employee, and 7 center providers). We have provided them with the kits and are working with them to get them acclimated to the curriculum. Our ECEs also step in to mentor them to help them start the program. Our goal is to have 150 classes or programs implemented by trained Second Step providers. This program is offered to Head Start and YMCA staff and to the local migrant Head Start staff. Because there is a large Spanish-speaking population in the district, we provide Spanish kits and mentoring to Spanish speaking providers.

In addition to this class, we are going to have refresher classes for those who have already had Second Step training. This course might be offered to centers that may have lost staff and now need to train new providers, or simply need the skills that they previously learned to be reiterated.

Our implementation plan, which is posted on the teleconference Web site <http://learn.aero.und.edu/pages.asp?PageID=92563>, shows what we have done, how we have done it, and where we are now in the process. As a matter of fact, yesterday I met with the directors of Committee for Children, the developers of the Second Step program. Two things have come from that. One is that if this group is interested, they said they would sit in to discuss implementation. Secondly, we are looking to partner with them to do a full-fledged research project on Second Step in early childhood education centers. Hopefully, we will be able to do this, and so we can all find out what works best, and what doesn't work with this program and this population.

Questions and Answer with Linda Nelson:

Denise Smith: Are you using the parent outreach component of Second Step in your program?

Linda Nelson: Yes, we will. That is the second phase of the program once we get further along in training and implementation. We plan to have a trainer come to Skagit, and we're going to provide the training for the family guide. We plan to help them put together family meetings so that families can support what their kids are learning in the centers.

Matthew Tolbert: How are your community college training courses set up?

Linda Nelson: We have an early childhood education center here at our educational service district where we all work, and it provides services and training to the whole tri-county. We have a really good relationship with the early childhood education program at the local college. When we talked with them, I wanted to make sure that there was something in it for the providers implementing Second Step. They need clock hours and/or academic credit to keep their certification. We decided to create a class. This way, they will be getting credit each quarter to learn about and implement Second Step. We have been able to pay for some of the providers through our grant. At least half of the participants are Spanish speaking home providers and operate Spanish speaking home centers.

Matthew Tolbert: How are your classes set up?

Kelly Pingley (Skagit Early Childhood Education Specialist): We broke up the courses into four different areas: empathy, emotion regulation, problem solving and transfers of learning. In the meantime, we are also mentoring them one-on-one each of those days, and that is going very well. The classroom is the overview, broken up into the four different areas, and the mentoring piece is really what makes all the difference.

Jennifer Kitson: Presenting on Second Step in Hays, Kansas

Jennifer Kitson: Supporting material that provide information about the RURAL (Rural Underpinnings for Resiliency and Linkages) SS/HS project in Hays, KS is found on the web link to this event. We served the three school districts in Hays County, about 6,000 students, preschool through twelfth grade. We trained staff in Second Step in all elementary schools, and four middle schools, one of which is an alternative school, and provided flexibility in training, ongoing support and mentoring for implementation, integrated this program throughout school and afterschool, and were successful in sustaining the program by providing tools and commitment to continuing this in each school.

When we approached this program, our conceptual model was a three-tiered triangle of prevention, intervention, and treatment. For the universal level, we felt that it was really

important to find programs that could be implemented throughout the district and could be used from preschool through the middle school. We wanted programs that could be infused in everything that was done at the schools, and Second Step fit that quite well. We also wanted a program that the teachers could be implementing, that could be taught throughout the school day, and that the adults working most with the kids could teach. We felt that children would process the skills most if they were using them during all of their daily activities.

In these three school districts, there is building-based decision making, so we needed to get staff buy-in at each location. I think the important piece is that we were very flexible in how we arranged this. We let staff make decisions about when they were able to train or what tools they needed in order to learn this program. We just did whatever we could to provide tips and tools for teachers and developed extra materials for follow-up activities when they needed it.

Some of the teachers were initially reluctant, and we didn't require anyone to do it. Given time, often what we found is that those who were the most reluctant eventually became our best supporters.

We also trained all the partners: mental health, law enforcement, juvenile justice, school resource officers, secretarial staff, and bus drivers. One of the outcomes was that the teachers and other adults were beginning to prompt kids to use their skills. They allowed the students time to use the anger control steps and solve their own problems. The staff was not intervening as much and letting the kids work it out. We didn't anticipate this, but it worked very well.

We also had some initial resistance from the guidance counselors. They were already doing work around character building, and they were afraid Second Step would conflict. But we worked with them to see how they could align some of the concepts from both programs. Second Step could help them work with kids on character development and vice versa, and that seemed to work out very well.

Final Question and Answers

Kristen Werts: Was your school district also having a bunch of other initiatives at the time? My district is dealing with an extreme resistance from teachers.

Jennifer Kitson: Well, this was at a time before the emphasis on the No Child Left Behind Act, and so we had fewer programs to compete with. There were certainly a lot of initiatives going on, and each school had their own priorities because they were very building focused. We tried to reframe some of their concerns to show how Second Step might support their efforts. Some teachers were resistant because they just didn't feel that they had the time. Once they saw how this program actually allowed for more time for teaching and less time spent disciplining, they became more supportive of the program.

Woody Clift: I think the question of how Second Step maps on to other programs is very important. Is it overlap and overkill? Those are reasonable questions to ask.

Kristen Werts: When I consider all the other district and states requirements, I understand why teachers are resistant. But I also know that you have to do a little extra work, and it pays off.

Jennifer Kitson: I just remembered that we were also doing the Olweus Bullying Program at the time we added Second Step. We needed to work with the Olweus program and the Committee for Children to design a guide for schools that would use the problem solving steps from Second Step as they were working with the bullies. We were able to integrate aspects of those two programs together.

Jared Tonks: I have limited time to be in the classroom with the teachers, and I am wondering if you have every tried to condense lessons and make it more doable in terms of time.

Jennifer Kitson: We had teachers asking about this in our district, and we allowed teachers to choose when they wanted to implement. We also asked the Committee for Children how they felt about collapsing it, particularly for the fourth grade where it seems that teachers must cover a great deal more academic material. The Committee for Children didn't recommend condensing lessons, but suggested doing two to three lessons a week as opposed to once a week to get everything in.

Woody Clift: This question is for Linda: How do you envision bridging Second Step from early childhood setting into the schools? What is your plan?

Linda Nelson: Each of our early childhood specialists are assigned a school district, and they are meeting with the kindergarten teachers and elementary teachers. By bringing them together, they are helping them see the impact of Second Step on those kids that are coming from these programs. They are really helping these teachers see the difference. For us, it's about taking the success from early childhood and preschool and making kindergarten and elementary schools aware of it.

Karrie Brinker: Our high school has recently looked into Aggression Replacement Training (ART). How does that work with Second Step? I want to make sure that Second Step dovetails into ART.

Jennifer Kitson: Second Step is designed to go up to the eighth grade. I don't know if that program has utilized the Second Step strategies. I know that by using Second Step, the students are better able to think before they act and to regulate their behavior. I would think that this program has utilized some of Second Step strategies, and I think that some of the components would very much go together. One suggestion I would have is to contact the Committee for Children. They are very good at providing support, and I think that they could help p with this program.

Linda Nelson: Jennifer can we get a copy of the template of the crossover between Olweus and Second Step, because we are also using Olweus as well?

Jennifer Kitson: Sure, I can get that for you.

Lauren Gilman: That resource is also something that can be added to our Web site for anyone interested in seeing how these two programs can work together.

NEXT STEPS

Participants expressed an interest in a follow-up call to continue the discussion on Second Step. This might be scheduled for January.