

WHY LOCAL SCHOOLS ARE USING “SECOND STEP”

By Mikelle Dankert, Ed.S

RURAL Prevention Team School Psychologist

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Quotes from Teachers in Ellis County...

“When disciplining my class it is natural to refer to what we talk about in *Second Step*. “

“We often refer to how others might feel when using the problem solving model.”

“I have begun to realize how nice it is to take time out of the day to discuss things that normally don’t get discussed. It was especially nice when we had a new kid since *Second Step* talks about empathy and how we need to accept differences.”

What is Second Step?

Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum for preschool–grade 9 is designed to reduce impulsive and aggressive behavior in children, teach social & emotional skills, and build self-esteem. Children learn how to identify problems and feelings, reduce their anger, solve problems, and get along with others. A *Family Guide to Second Step* teaches parents how to practice and reinforce *Second Step* skills at home.

Who is teaching Second Step?

Second Step was designed to be taught by classroom teachers. Research indicates that the program is most effective when students receive consistent instruction and ample opportunities to practice skills throughout the day.

Teachers from all elementary and middle schools in Ellis county have received *Second Step Training* and the schools are currently implementing *Second Step* to some degree.

FHSU education students are also being trained in *Second Step*.

Why is Second Step needed in our schools?

As more and more children are experiencing conflict at home, substance abuse within the family, less access to their parents, and television as their primary source of entertainment and values, consequently they are displaying impulsive and aggressive behaviors both at home and at school. Teachers find themselves spending increasing amounts of time attending to student’s disruptive and angry outbursts, interpersonal conflicts, and off-task behavior. Although teachers are expected to concentrate on teaching academics, they are finding that student behavior often prevents them from doing so.

Second Step helps children change attitude and behaviors that contribute to violence. The curriculum teaches social and emotional skills to reduce impulsive and aggressive behavior in children and increase their level of social competence. Current research links academic success with these skills.

Why do some children act this way?

Children with minor behavior problems, as well as high-risk children, fail to act prosocially because they have one or more of the following deficits: They...

- Do not know what appropriate behavior is, due to a lack of modeling of alternative ways for resolving conflict;
- have the knowledge but lack the practice due to inadequate reinforcement;
- have emotional responses, such as anger, fear, or anxiety, which inhibit the performance of desirable behavior (Cox and Gunn, 1980);
- have inappropriate beliefs and attributions regarding aggression (Dodge & Frame, 1982; Perry, Perry & Rasmussen, 1986); or
- have developmental delays due to physiological problems, sometimes caused by the mother’s substance abuse during pregnancy (Rutter, 1982).

How do children learn to act prosocially?

Children learn to act prosocially in some of the same ways they learn to act antisocially. They learn through modeling, practice, and reinforcement. The approach of this curriculum is to develop skills in empathy, impulse control and anger management.

EMPATHY

Empathy appears to be a significant factor in the control of aggressive behavior. Because empathetic people tend to understand other points of view, they are less likely to misunderstand and become angry about others' behaviors. The *Second Step* approach views empathy as a "skill set" that includes the abilities to recognize, experience and respond to the feelings of others.

IMPULSE CONTROL

Two strategies that have shown promise when used with groups of impulsive and aggressive youngsters are *Problem Solving* and *Behavior Skills Training* (Spivack & Shure, 1974; Michelson, 1987). Here is the *Problem Solving* model used in *Second Step*...

1. What is the problem?
2. What are some solutions?
3. For each solution ask:
 - Is it safe?
 - How might people feel?
 - Is it fair?
 - Will it work?
4. Choose a solution and use it.
5. Is it working? If not, what can I do now?

ANGER MANAGEMENT

This strategy is comprised of the recognition of anger cues and triggers, the use of positive self-statements and calming-down techniques to prevent the onset of angry feelings, and reflection on the anger-provoking incident. Here is the *What To Do When You Are Angry* model used in *Second Step*...

1. How does my body feel?
2. Calm down:
 - Take three deep breaths.
 - Count backwards slowly.
 - Think nice thoughts.
 - Talk to myself.
3. Think out loud to solve the problem.
4. Think about it later:
 - Why was I angry?
 - What did I do?
 - What worked and didn't work?
 - What would I do differently?
 - Did I do a good job?

Why was Second Step chosen over other character education programs or social skills trainings?

Because Second Step is research based and proven to be effective. "Over the past twenty years researchers have identified early indicators of violent behavior. The early indicators-deficient skills in empathy, impulse control, social problem solving, anger management and assertiveness – have been consistently correlated with adolescent and adult antisocial behavior. (Dodge, Pettit, McClaskey, and Brown, 1986; Feshbach, 1984; Kendall & Braswell, 1985; Mehrabain, 1997; Novaco, 1987; Spivack & Cianci, 1987)

U.S. Department of Education rates "Second Step" Top-of-the-Class for preventing school Violence.

The U.S. Department of Education's 2001 Expert Panel on Safe Disciplined, and Drug-Free Schools gave a national non-profit's violence prevention program its top "Exemplary" rating for program quality and educational effectiveness.

(See www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS/programs.html)

For more information on Second Step contact RURAL at 623-2400
or go to [http://www.cf children.org](http://www.cfchildren.org)