

Second Step

No studies of *Second Step* that fall within the scope of the Children Classified as Having an Emotional Disturbance review protocol meet What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) evidence standards. The lack of studies meeting WWC evidence standards means that, at this time, the WWC is unable to draw any conclusions based on research about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of *Second Step* on children classified with an emotional disturbance (or children at risk for classification). Additional research is needed to determine the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of this intervention.

Program Description¹

Second Step is a classroom-based social skills program for students in preschool through junior high (ages 4–14 years), with a distinct curriculum for each grade. It is designed to reduce impulsive, high-risk, and aggressive behaviors and increase children's social competence and other protective factors. The program builds on cognitive behavioral intervention models integrated with social learning theory, empathy research, and social information-processing research. It is intended to teach children to identify and understand their own and others' emotions, choose positive goals, and successfully manage reactions when emotionally aroused.

Research²

The WWC identified 35 studies of *Second Step* published or released between 1989 and 2012 that focus on children classified with an emotional disturbance (or children at risk for classification).

One study is within the scope of the Children Classified as Having an Emotional Disturbance review protocol but does not meet WWC evidence standards because there was insufficient evidence that the intervention and comparison groups were equivalent at baseline.

Thirty-four studies are out of the scope of the Children Classified as Having an Emotional Disturbance review protocol because they have an ineligible study design.

- Twenty studies do not use a sample aligned with the protocol. Less than 50% of the students in these studies are at risk for emotional disturbance or classified as emotionally disturbed and/or the students in these studies are not within the specified age or grade range.
- Ten studies do not use a comparison group design or a single-case design.
- Four studies are secondary analyses of the effectiveness of an intervention, such as a meta-analysis or research literature review.

References

Study that does not meet WWC evidence standards

Frey, K., Nolen, S., Van Schoiack Edstrom, L., & Hirschstein, M. (2005). Effects of a school-based social-emotional competence program: Linking children's goals, attributions, and behavior. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 26*(2), 171–200. The study does not meet WWC evidence standards because the intervention and comparison groups are not found to be equivalent at baseline.

Studies that are ineligible for review using the Children Classified as Having an Emotional Disturbance Evidence Review Protocol

- Ableser, J. (2003). Elementary teachers' attitudes, perceptions and practices towards the implementation of a violence-prevention curriculum: Second Step. *Journal of School Violence, 2*(4), 81–100. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a comparison group design or a single-case design.
- Bogue, H. E. (2011). *Impact of a violence prevention curriculum on kindergarteners' behavior* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a sample aligned with the protocol—the sample includes less than 50% students at risk for emotional disturbance or classified as emotionally disturbed.
- Botzer, E. A. (2003). An evaluation of the effectiveness of the Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum for third-grade students. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 64*, 04A. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a sample aligned with the protocol—the sample includes less than 50% students at risk for emotional disturbance or classified as emotionally disturbed.
- Broadbear, B. C. (2001). Evaluation of the Second Step Curriculum for conflict resolution skills in preschool children from diverse parent households. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 61*, 11A. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a sample aligned with the protocol—the sample is not within the specified age or grade range.
- Brown, J. A., Jimerson, S. R., Dowdy, E., Gonzalez, V., & Stewart, K. (2012). Assessing the effects of school-wide Second Step implementation in a predominately English language learner, low SES, Latino sample. *Psychology in the Schools, 49*(9), 864–875. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a sample aligned with the protocol—the sample includes less than 50% students at risk for emotional disturbance or classified as emotionally disturbed.
- Cooke, M. B., Ford, J., Levine, J., Bourke, C., Newell, L., & Lapidus, G. (2007). The effects of city-wide implementation of Second Step on elementary school students' prosocial and aggressive behaviors. *The Journal of Primary Prevention, 28*(2), 93–115. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a comparison group design or a single-case design.
- Edwards, D., Hunt, M. H., Meyers, J., Grogg, K. R., & Jarrett, O. (2005). Acceptability and student outcomes of a violence prevention curriculum. *Journal of Primary Prevention, 26*(5), 401–418. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a comparison group design or a single-case design.
- Ellis, S. M. (2010). Supporting social concepts in the preschool play environment: Perspectives on teacher decision making. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 70*, 8A. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a sample aligned with the protocol—the sample is not within the specified age or grade range.
- Fitzgerald, P. D., & Van Schoiack Edstrom, L. (2006). Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum. In S. R. Jimerson & M. J. Furlong (Eds.), *The handbook of school violence and school safety: From research to practice* (pp. 383–394). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. The study is ineligible for review because it is a secondary analysis of the effectiveness of an intervention, such as a meta-analysis or research literature review.
- Fitzgerald, P. D., & Van Schoiack Edstrom, L. (2012). Social and emotional skills training with Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum. In S. R. Jimerson & M. J. Furlong (Eds.), *The handbook of school violence and school safety: From research to practice* (pp. 423–433). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. The study is ineligible for review because it is a secondary analysis of the effectiveness of an intervention, such as a meta-analysis or research literature review.

- Ford, K. A. (2007). Second Step: An evaluation of a universal prevention program. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 67, 12A. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a sample aligned with the protocol—the sample includes less than 50% students at risk for emotional disturbance or classified as emotionally disturbed.
- Frey, K., & Sylvester, L. (1997). *Research on the Second Step program: Do student behaviors and attitudes improve? What do teachers think about the program?* Seattle, WA: Committee for Children. The study is ineligible for review because it is a secondary analysis of the effectiveness of an intervention, such as a meta-analysis or research literature review.
- Frey, K. S., Hirschstein, M. K., & Guzzo, B. (2000). Second Step: Preventing aggression by promoting social competence. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 8(2), 102–112. The study is ineligible for review because it is a secondary analysis of the effectiveness of an intervention, such as a meta-analysis or research literature review.
- Green, A. V. S. (2008). The effects of early violence intervention on aggression and antisocial behavior among African American males. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 69, 5A. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a sample aligned with the protocol—the sample includes less than 50% students at risk for emotional disturbance or classified as emotionally disturbed.
- Grossman, D. C., Neckerman, H. J., Koepsell, T. D., Liu, P. Y., Asher, K. N., Bel, K... Rivara, F. P. (1997). Effectiveness of a violence prevention curriculum among children in elementary school: A randomized controlled trial. *JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association*, 277(20), 1605–1611. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a sample aligned with the protocol—the sample includes less than 50% students at risk for emotional disturbance or classified as emotionally disturbed.
- Gruber, E. A. (2007). Effects of social and emotional skills training on sixth grade students' knowledge of prosocial skills and their attitude toward violence. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 68, 11A. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a comparison group design or a single-case design.
- Harris, I. M. (1995, April). *Teachers' response to conflict in selected Milwaukee schools*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a sample aligned with the protocol—the sample includes less than 50% students at risk for emotional disturbance or classified as emotionally disturbed.
- Harris, I. M., & Callender, A. (1995). Comparative study of peace education approaches and their effectiveness. *NAMTA Journal*, 20(2), 133–144. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a sample aligned with the protocol—the sample includes less than 50% students at risk for emotional disturbance or classified as emotionally disturbed.
- Harris, P. A. (1998). Teaching conflict resolutions skills to children: A comparison between a curriculum based and a modified peer mediation program. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 59, 09A. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a sample aligned with the protocol—the sample includes less than 50% students at risk for emotional disturbance or classified as emotionally disturbed.
- Jack, D. (2009). Investigation of the effects of a violence prevention program in reducing kindergarten-aged children's self-reported aggressive behaviors. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 70, 05B. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a sample aligned with the protocol—the sample includes less than 50% students at risk for emotional disturbance or classified as emotionally disturbed.
- Jakob, J. R. (2006). An evaluation of Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum with kindergarten students. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 66, 05A. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a sample aligned with the protocol—the sample includes less than 50% students at risk for emotional disturbance or classified as emotionally disturbed.
- Lang, R. E. (2012). The impact of a social skills curriculum for special education students with emotional/behavioral disabilities at the elementary school level. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 72, 07A. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a comparison group design or a single-case design.

- Lillenstein, J. A. (2001). Efficacy of a social skills training curriculum with early elementary students in four parochial schools. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 62, 09A. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a sample aligned with the protocol—the sample includes less than 50% students at risk for emotional disturbance or classified as emotionally disturbed.
- McCabe, L. A. (2000). Violence prevention in early childhood: Implementing the Second Step Curriculum in child care and Head Start classrooms. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 60, 8B. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a sample aligned with the protocol—the sample is not within the specified age or grade range.
- McDonald, C. A. (2001). The relationship between Second Step Curriculum and student office referrals, attendance, and academic achievement. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 63, 04A. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a sample aligned with the protocol—the sample includes less than 50% students at risk for emotional disturbance or classified as emotionally disturbed.
- McMahon, S. D., Washburn, J., Felix, E. D., Yakin, J., & Childrey, G. (2000). Violence prevention: Program effects on urban preschool and kindergarten children. *Applied and Preventive Psychology*, 9(4), 271–281. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a comparison group design or a single-case design.
- Neace, W. P., & Munoz, M. A. (2012). Pushing the boundaries of education: Evaluating the impact of Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum with psychosocial and non-cognitive measures. *Child & Youth Services*, 33(1), 46–69. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a sample aligned with the protocol—the sample includes less than 50% students at risk for emotional disturbance or classified as emotionally disturbed.
- Nicolet, I. A. (2004). The Second Step Violence Prevention Program: Effectiveness of a brief social skills curriculum with elementary-age children. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 65, 07B. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a sample aligned with the protocol—the sample includes less than 50% students at risk for emotional disturbance or classified as emotionally disturbed.
- Sprague, J., Walker, H., Golly, A., White, K., Myers, D. R., & Shannon, T. (2001). Translating research into effective practice: The effects of a universal staff and student intervention on indicators of discipline and school safety. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 24(4), 495–511. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a sample aligned with the protocol—the sample includes less than 50% students at risk for emotional disturbance or classified as emotionally disturbed.
- Taub, J. (2002). Evaluation of the Second Step Violence Prevention Program at a rural elementary school. *School Psychology Review*, 31(2), 186–200. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a sample aligned with the protocol—the sample includes less than 50% students at risk for emotional disturbance or classified as emotionally disturbed.
- Tavano, J. (2005). Validating a school violence prevention program among elementary school students. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 67, 09A. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a comparison group design or a single-case design.
- Tynes-Jones, J. M. (2007). A social skills program in third grade classrooms. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 67, 9B. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a comparison group design or a single-case design.
- Wilke, K. L. (2004). Exploring potential relationships among student, school, and counselor variables and violence prevention program outcomes in a district-wide elementary comprehensive school counseling program. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 66, 06A. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a comparison group design or a single-case design.
- Wojtalewicz, M. P. (2005). Examination of Head Start children's social competence and social cognitions after participating in a universal violence prevention program. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 65, 12A. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use a comparison group design or a single-case design.

Endnotes

¹ The descriptive information for this program was obtained from a publicly available source: the website of the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (<http://nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=66>, downloaded November 2012). The WWC requests developers to review the program description sections for accuracy from their perspective. The program description was provided to the developer in July 2012; however, the WWC received no response. Further verification of the accuracy of the descriptive information for this program is beyond the scope of this review. The literature search reflects documents publicly available by December 2012.

² The studies in this report were reviewed using WWC Evidence Standards (version 2.1) as described in the Children Classified as Having an Emotional Disturbance review protocol (version 2.0). The evidence presented in this report is based on available research. Findings and conclusions may change as new research becomes available.

Recommended Citation

U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, What Works Clearinghouse. (2013, March). *Children Classified as Having an Emotional Disturbance intervention report: Second Step*. Retrieved from <http://whatworks.ed.gov>.

Glossary of Terms

Attrition	Attrition occurs when an outcome variable is not available for all participants initially assigned to the intervention and comparison groups. The WWC considers the total attrition rate and the difference in attrition rates across groups within a study.
Clustering adjustment	If intervention assignment is made at a cluster level and the analysis is conducted at the student level, the WWC will adjust the statistical significance to account for this mismatch, if necessary.
Confounding factor	A confounding factor is a component of a study that is completely aligned with one of the study conditions, making it impossible to separate how much of the observed effect was due to the intervention and how much was due to the factor.
Design	The design of a study is the method by which intervention and comparison groups were assigned.
Domain	A domain is a group of closely related outcomes.
Effect size	The effect size is a measure of the magnitude of an effect. The WWC uses a standardized measure to facilitate comparisons across studies and outcomes.
Eligibility	A study is eligible for review and inclusion in this report if it falls within the scope of the review protocol and uses either an experimental or matched comparison group design.
Equivalence	A demonstration that the analysis sample groups are similar on observed characteristics defined in the review area protocol.
Extent of evidence	An indication of how much evidence supports the findings. The criteria for the extent of evidence levels are given in the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook (version 2.1).
Improvement index	Along a percentile distribution of students, the improvement index represents the gain or loss of the average student due to the intervention. As the average student starts at the 50th percentile, the measure ranges from -50 to +50.
Multiple comparison adjustment	When a study includes multiple outcomes or comparison groups, the WWC will adjust the statistical significance to account for the multiple comparisons, if necessary.
Quasi-experimental design (QED)	A quasi-experimental design (QED) is a research design in which subjects are assigned to intervention and comparison groups through a process that is not random.
Randomized controlled trial (RCT)	A randomized controlled trial (RCT) is an experiment in which investigators randomly assign eligible participants into intervention and comparison groups.
Rating of effectiveness	The WWC rates the effects of an intervention in each domain based on the quality of the research design and the magnitude, statistical significance, and consistency in findings. The criteria for the ratings of effectiveness are given in the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook (version 2.1).
Single-case design	A research approach in which an outcome variable is measured repeatedly within and across different conditions that are defined by the presence or absence of an intervention.
Standard deviation	The standard deviation of a measure shows how much variation exists across observations in the sample. A low standard deviation indicates that the observations in the sample tend to be very close to the mean; a high standard deviation indicates that the observations in the sample tend to be spread out over a large range of values.
Statistical significance	Statistical significance is the probability that the difference between groups is a result of chance rather than a real difference between the groups. The WWC labels a finding statistically significant if the likelihood that the difference is due to chance is less than 5% ($p < 0.05$).
Substantively important	A substantively important finding is one that has an effect size of 0.25 or greater, regardless of statistical significance.

Please see the [WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook \(version 2.1\)](#) for additional details.