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Second Step¹: A Violence Prevention Curriculum

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Teaching prosocial skills in an effective way actually creates more teachable time. So it does not take time away from—I truly believe it contributes time, and the time it creates is actually much more effective teachable time because the students are in a much better place.

—Patti Peplow (Head Counselor, Mesa Public Schools, personal communication, May 2004)

Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum is a school-based program developed to reduce and prevent aggressive behavior. Three separate age-appropriate curricula are available for preschool through middle school classrooms (preschool/kindergarten level, elementary level, and middle school/junior high level). The curricula are designed to be teacher-friendly and convenient for classroom use. Their primary purpose is to decrease children's aggressive behaviors by helping children develop habits of prosocial behavior and thought. The curricula employ evidence-based strategies that are built on a broad and solid foundation of research. Each of the three curricula have been evaluated and found to reduce aggression and increase social competence (see section on Evidence of Effectiveness).

IMPORTANCE

Research confirms that school and the family are the two most important social and emotional learning environments for children (for a review, see Weissberg, Caplan, & Harwood, 1991). As one of the most important socioemotional learning environments in children's lives, schools have a key impact on their well-being. Prevention programs can help schools comprehensively promote the social and emotional skills that contribute to children's success. At the same time, they can reduce the risk factors that lead to long-term antisocial behavior. Socioemotional prevention programs are most effective when they both reduce risk factors and increase protective factors (Pollard, Hawkins, & Arthur, 1999). To this end, the goals of the *Second Step* curricula are to increase social skills and in doing so, reduce aggression.

¹Second Step is a registered trademark of Committee for Children.

Social skills and aggression have implications for a wide range of developmental outcomes, including effects on peer relations (Coie, Dodge, & Coppotelli, 1982) and school success (e.g., Izard et al., 2001; Wentzel & Wigfield, 1998). In the long run, persistent aggression and social skills deficits are also predictive of substance abuse (for a review, see Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller, 1992), long-term persistent antisocial behavior (for a review, see Moffitt, 1993), and lack of success in the workplace (Spencer & Spencer, 1993).

When children are aggressive and low in social competence, it is clearly harmful to their peer relations. It has long been known that aggressiveness is characteristic of a large proportion of the children who are rejected by their peers (e.g., Coie et al., 1982). However, to understand children's risk for rejection, it is also necessary to consider prosocial skills. In their meta-analysis of social skills studies, Newcomb, Bukowski, and Pattee (1993) confirmed that children could be aggressive without being rejected if they were also high in prosocial skills. Those who were rejected by their peers were characterized as being not only aggressive but also low in prosocial skills—these two characteristics together account for the majority of rejection of children by their peers. Conversely, children who were especially well accepted by their peers were characterized by strong prosocial skills (Newcomb et al., 1993).

Children's social relations, in turn, are related to success in school. Researchers have found that academic performance is higher when children perceive their relationships with people at school to be supportive (for a review, see Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). Students' empathy skills have been found to be related to supportive social behaviors in school (Litvack-Miller, McDougall, & Romney, 1997). Teaching empathy skills to children may improve school climate, giving students a second, indirect benefit from the program. Social skills may contribute to academic success in other ways as well. For example, social skills should contribute to children being able to communicate their needs and get help from teachers and peers. In fact, it may be that poor social skills ultimately have quite serious academic consequences, because early peer rejection predicts later dropping out of school (for a review, see Parker & Asher, 1987).

Research evidence supports the assumption that social skills contribute to academic achievement. Empathy skills of children in kindergarten (Izard et al., 2001) and in 8- to 9-year-old girls (Feshbach & Feshbach, 1987) have predicted later teacher ratings and achievement scores, respectively. Malecki and Elliott (2002) found that social skills of third- and fourth-grade students predicted their scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. In a series of three studies of sixth- and seventh-grade students, Wentzel and her colleagues (Wentzel, 1991, 1993; Wentzel, Weinberger, Ford, & Feldman, 1990) consistently found that social skills were related to children's grades and achievement test scores. In summary, emerging evidence indicates that social skills are related to academic achievement for children from preschool through middle school.

In addition to the impact on their peer relations and academic success, children who are aggressive can be at risk for other serious problems. Excessive and persistent aggressiveness and antisocial behaviors in children put them at risk for long-term antisocial behavior patterns. These risks include substance abuse (for a review, see Hawkins et al., 1992) and criminal behavior (for a review, see Moffitt, 1993). An important distinction to note here is that very early aggression, by itself, is not a strong risk factor. It is when children persist in their aggressiveness throughout childhood that they are at greater risk for poor outcomes in the long run. The *Second Step* curricula are designed as an early intervention and prevention program to reduce aggression, a principal risk factor for long-term antisocial behavior. Because risk factors cannot always be controlled, it is also important to introduce factors that can protect children against long-term harm. Social competence training is an important protective factor (Hawkins et al., 1992).

It is important that these core social and emotional competencies be taught to children in their schools. The social and emotional skills that children learn in school can promote healthy development or cause harm. They can affect not only children's individual development, but

also their impact on others. Therefore, it is critical that educators take advantage of the rich opportunities inherent in school settings to teach positive social and emotional skills, rather than leaving to chance the nature of the skills that children learn during the school day. Teaching such competencies forms the foundation of prevention efforts aimed at reducing aggression and is important to the healthy development of all children.

CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATION

Conceptually, the *Second Step* curricula are based on two traditions from developmental research. The first is what is known about the normal development of children's prosocial skills (e.g., Fabes, Eisenberg, Hanish, & Spinrad, 2001). The second is cognitive-behavioral research about the skills that contribute to prosocial behavioral habits (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000). The teaching strategies employed in the *Second Step* curricula draw from cognitive-behavioral theory, including behavioral methods and modeling. The program development model entailed teachers and researchers working together to create the *Second Step* curricula. By this method, the curricula were founded on strong evidence of effective strategies. At the same time, implementation is supported by the convenience and relevance of the curricula for classroom use and by ongoing implementation support services.

The social and emotional skills taught in the *Second Step* curricula fall into three broad categories—empathy, problem solving, and emotion management. Empathy skills are key factors in the development of social behavior (e.g., Hastings, Zahn-Waxler, Robinson, Usher, & Bridges, 2000) and acceptance by the peer group (Fabes et al., 2001). Empathy is also integral to children's competence at several other social and emotional skills (for a review, see Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000). For these reasons, in the *Second Step* curricula empathy skills are taught first, to provide a foundation on which the problem-solving and emotion management skills are built.

In subsequent units, children are taught that when they encounter a social conflict, it is useful first to manage their emotions and then to engage in specific, effective problem-solving steps. These strategies are designed to steer children away from the patterns of thinking that characterize aggressive children toward those that characterize children who are nonaggressive and accepted by their peers (Crick & Dodge, 1994).

The problem-solving steps and other social skills taught in the *Second Step* curricula are informed by the cognitive-behavioral tradition. This perspective addresses behaviors, thoughts, and emotions and the interplay amongst them. It focuses on the behavioral triad of the antecedents that cue the behavior, the behavioral responses, and the consequences that result from the behavior. The antecedents, behaviors, and consequences can be emotions, cognitions, or behaviors. For example, in the context of feeling guilty (antecedent), a person may be in the habit of thinking certain kinds of thoughts, such as, "It's really more his fault than mine," (response), and feeling better as a result (consequence). With this reinforcing consequence—feeling better—the person is likely to continue or increase the habit of attributing fault to other people.

The focus of *Second Step* lessons is to foster the skills and habits of constructive thinking that promote prosocial behaviors. This builds a foundation for social interactions that increases the likelihood that children will behave prosocially and decreases the likelihood that children will respond with aggression (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Dodge & Frame, 1982). Additionally, the *Second Step* lessons teach emotion-management strategies and specific behaviors to increase children's repertoire of prosocial behaviors.

Crick and Dodge's (1994) model of social interactions is a useful conceptual framework for the cognitive-behavioral skills addressed by the *Second Step* curricula. Crick and Dodge suggest that children cycle through several steps in social interactions: They (a) encode cues

from the people and setting in the interaction, (b) interpret the meaning of the cues, (c) clarify what their goals are in the interaction, (d) examine potential responses from their repertoire, (e) evaluate and select a response, and finally (f) enact a response. Performance of these steps is informed and affected by children's base of knowledge and experience. The *Second Step* curricula teach children prosocial habits for each of these cognitive steps. For example, they teach children to (a) attend to cues about emotions (encode), (b) consider several interpretations of interactions, (c) set goals to avoid causing harm, (d) generate several possible responses, (e) evaluate the consequences of possible responses, and (f) practice prosocial responses.

Lemerise and Arsenio (2000) extended Crick and Dodge's (1994) model to include the influence of emotions at each of their steps. For example, it has long been recognized that strong emotions can interfere with one's ability to respond effectively (for a review, see Campos & Barrett, 1984). In the *Second Step* lessons, children are taught strategies for calming down, and also taught to use upset emotions as cues to develop constructive methods to solve the situation. These emotion-management skills depend on empathy skills.

The skills taught in *Second Step* curricula are interdependent in a variety of ways. Throughout the lessons taught in the *Second Step* curricula, each skill is learned and then incorporated into subsequent lessons. In this way, the complex interactions of emotions, behaviors, and cognitions are addressed. Overall, children learn and practice the behavioral skills and social cognitions that are characteristic of children who succeed in their social interactions.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The *Second Step* curriculum is a commercially available, school-based program for students in preschool through middle school. Designed to teach key social competencies, the program's aims are to decrease children's risk for destructive behavior and increase their potential for success at school (Wentzel & Wigfield, 1998) and in relationships with others (Weissberg & Greenberg, 1997). Since its inception in 1986, the *Second Step* program (Committee for Children, 2002) has been used widely in the United States and Canada and adapted in multiple languages.² Long-term application within the classroom has further contributed to refinement of the program and implementation guidelines.

Classroom Lessons

Second Step classroom lessons are developmentally sequenced, building on concepts and skills across grade levels. In general, lessons are taught by classroom teachers, school counselors, or school psychologists who have received program training. The program's developers recommend that classroom teachers take the lead in lesson presentation due to their familiarity with students, ability to adjust lessons accordingly, and capacity for facilitating maintenance and generalization of students' skills (Committee for Children, 2002).

Materials and Format

Curricula for preschool and elementary students consist of 22 to 28 lessons, depending on the grade level. Lessons vary in length from 20 minutes at the preschool level to 45 minutes in Grades 4 and 5. In each lesson, a photograph, written story, puppet, or other prompt depicts a

²*Second Step* curricula have been translated into Danish, Finnish, German, Greenlandic, Icelandic, Japanese, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Slovakian, Spanish, and Swedish.

social dilemma from which a presentation of the key concepts and objectives extends. Lesson scripts for teachers are provided describing the vignette and outlining lesson activities (e.g., discussion and skill practice). Video clips dramatize and support some of the lessons. The middle school/junior high school curriculum consists of three levels, allowing a comprehensive, multiyear implementation of the program. The lesson format involves group discussion, classroom activities, homework, and use of videos.

Depending on grade level, curriculum materials may include other tools, such as puppets, classroom posters, reproducible homework sheets, and family overview videos. Detailed implementation guides for educators include recommendations for adapting lessons for various populations (e.g., students with disabilities or in multiage or non-school settings). The program's publisher provides gratis technical support to assist program implementation.

Content

Across grade levels, *Second Step* lessons are organized in three skill sets. The first skill set focuses on empathy to provide the affective base for subsequent lessons. This includes: (a) identifying feelings through facial expressions, body language, and situational cues; (b) understanding others' perspectives; and (c) giving emotional support to others. Lesson topics range from recognizing feelings to complex concepts (e.g., fairness).

The problem-solving lessons teach a step-by-step strategy for solving social problems that includes, for example, identifying the problem and evaluating solutions. Students apply the social problem-solving steps to hypothetical situations and to examples from their own lives.

In the emotion-management lessons, students learn to recognize anger cues and "triggers" and to use stress-reduction techniques (e.g., counting backward) to manage or prevent angry feelings. Emotion-management and problem-solving steps are also applied to specific stress-inducing situations typical for students (e.g., bullying or social exclusion).

Instructional and Transfer-of-Learning Strategies

Second Step lessons rely on a range of teaching strategies that facilitate student learning, promote a supportive classroom climate, and encourage the generalization of skills.

Discussion

Group discussion is integral to *Second Step* lessons. The curricula offer several supports to help make discussions engaging and instructive, such as tips to encourage participation and scripted, open-ended questions.

Behavioral Skill Training

Skill training is the second major component of *Second Step* lessons. With teacher guidance, students first generate skill steps for responding to a given social dilemma or situation, such as conversation-making. Next, the teacher models the skill steps and leads students in evaluating his or her performance. Students then have several opportunities to practice the specific behavioral skills with coaching and feedback.

Modeling

Perhaps the most powerful teaching strategy employed in the *Second Step* program, modeling reaches far beyond the confines of lesson instruction. Observing adults' *Second Step* skills "in action" affords students information about effective approaches and demonstrates the values and norms of school staff, setting the stage for prosocial student norms.

Cueing, Coaching, and Reinforcement

School life involves countless opportunities for students to test and refine their skills. Likewise, teachers are presented regularly with “teachable moments” to cue students to use their newly learned skills and coach them in their performance. The curricula offer several specific suggestions for this critical transfer-of-learning step.

Group Problem Solving and Decision Making

Students’ participation in solving “real” problems encourages transfer of learning through an active role in situations of intrinsic interest.

Staff Training

The program developers offer *Second Step* training. This entails a 1-day session for teachers and a half-day session for paraprofessional staff. Alternatively, 3-day “training for trainers” sessions are available in which participants learn to conduct staff training for their school or district.

Administrator’s Guide

An administrator’s guide accompanies curriculum kits for preschool through Grade 5. The guide assists principals or program coordinators in designing a school environment that optimally supports program implementation and integrates social and emotional learning with academic goals.

Family Guide

The family guide is a supplementary module for leading six sessions for caregivers. Participants are introduced to *Second Step* skills and learn how to foster their children’s development and use of the skills.

Assessment Tools

An array of assessment tools is available for schools’ use in evaluating the *Second Step* program. The process evaluation tools assess features of a school’s implementation of the program, such as support for students’ transfer of learning and staff and student satisfaction. Outcome tools evaluate students’ social and emotional knowledge (preschool through Grade 5), and attitudes linked to aggression and socially competent behavior (Grades 6–8). More information about *Second Step* assessment tools can be found on the Committee for Children website at www.cfchildren.org.

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

Studies performed by multiple research teams demonstrate effectiveness of the *Second Step* curricula with students from a variety of age groups, socioeconomic and racial backgrounds, and geographical regions and settings (i.e., rural, suburban, and urban). Across this research, the *Second Step* curriculum has been linked to student changes in social and

emotional knowledge and skills, prosocial attitudes, and behavior, utilizing varied research designs.

The most compelling evidence of program effects comes from a randomized experimental study with second- and third-grade students (Grossman et al., 1997). Nearly 800 children participated from six matched pairs of schools. Behavioral observations of a randomly selected subsample ($n = 588$) revealed decreased physical (but not verbal) aggression for *Second Step* students following implementation, whereas comparison students showed increases in physical aggression. *Second Step* students also demonstrated increases in positive social behavior compared to controls. Across baseline to the 6-month follow-up, coders blind to condition observed mean reductions in physical aggression for program students and not for controls. Parent and teacher ratings did not reflect the changes.

Another experimental study examined 1,253 second- through fifth-grade students from 15 schools with partial random assignment (Frey, Nolen, Edstrom, & Hirschstein, in press). In this study, teachers' implementation was closely monitored and supported by program consultants. After the first year of the program (but not the second year), *Second Step* students were rated as being more socially competent and less antisocial by their teachers than those who did not receive the program. Moreover, the greatest reductions in antisocial behavior were made by *Second Step* students who started out at baseline with the highest ratings of antisocial behavior. Following 2 years of the program, *Second Step* students also were more likely to indicate prosocial goals and reasoning. Unbiased observations revealed that *Second Step* curriculum participants were less aggressive, more cooperative (for girls only), and required less adult intervention in contrived conflict situations with peers.

In an experimental study of the German translation of the *Second Step* curriculum (*Faustlos*), Schick and Cierpka (2003) used a randomized control group design with 325 primary students. Students receiving *Faustlos* were rated by parents as significantly less anxious, depressed, and socially withdrawn, relative to controls. Gender differences in additional treatment effects were noted, with parents indicating more positive intervention benefits for girls than boys. Teacher and student reports did not evince significant group effects, with the exception that *Faustlos* students indicated less anxiety than controls.

Quasi-experimental studies offer additional support. Compared to those in comparison classrooms, *Second Step* students in elementary and middle school show reduced acceptance of physical and relational aggression (Van Schoiack-Edstrom, Frey, & Beland, 2002), more confidence in (Van Schoiack-Edstrom et al., 2002) and increased knowledge of social and emotional skills (Orpinas, Parcel, McAlister, & Frankowski, 1995), and greater social competence and less antisocial behavior as rated by their teachers (Taub, 2002). In a study with a pre-post design and no controls, urban preadolescents indicated increased self-reported empathy, socioemotional knowledge, and teacher-rated prosocial behavior (McMahon & Washburn, 2003). Aggression measures did not show consistent changes pretest to posttest. Interestingly, however, after controlling for pretest ratings, reductions in self-reported aggression were predicted by increases in self-reported empathy. Another study with a similar pre- and posttest only design found observed reductions in aggressive and disruptive behavior in low-income preschool and kindergarten children (McMahon, Washburn, Felix, Yakin, & Childrey, 2000).

In summary, those studies with the most rigorous designs, such as those with the largest sample sizes and behavioral measures by unbiased observers, are also the ones that provide the strongest support for the effectiveness of the *Second Step* program. These studies have shown reductions in aggression and increases in positive skills following use of the *Second Step* curricula. Student measures of goals and attitudes also show promising sensitivity to change. Behavioral ratings by teachers, parents, and students have yielded less consistent results.

It may be that parents and teachers are not sensitive enough to changes in aggression, or are not privy to important settings in which behavioral changes have occurred. It appears that unbiased observational measures may be preferable.

BEST PRACTICES IMPLEMENTATION

To attain expected benefits, the *Second Step* curricula should be implemented with as much fidelity as possible. In our own evaluation research of the *Second Step* program, we have found several aspects of implementation that affect the degree to which children gain from the curricula. These include program dosage (number of lessons taught), the quality of instruction of the lessons, and the degree to which teachers supported their students in generalizing the *Second Step* prosocial skills to real situations. We have found links between the social competence and antisocial behavior of elementary-aged students and the number of *Second Step* lessons taught (Hirschstein, Van Schoiack, & Beretvas, 2000). Moreover, quality of lesson instruction appears to be associated with less endorsement of aggression, and greater empathy and sense of classroom community (Hirschstein, Van Schoiack-Edstrom, Nolen, & Frey, 2001). In addition to explicit instruction in socioemotional skills, we found that teacher support of students' skill practice and generalization was related to more prosocial reasoning and teacher-rated socially competent behavior (Hirschstein et al., 2000; Hirschstein et al., 2001). These preliminary findings offer early evidence of critical implementation ingredients of the *Second Step* program: complete lesson sequencing that addresses the core competencies, effective lesson instruction by teachers who model the skills, and frequent generalization support of students' skills.

The *Second Step* curricula have the potential to significantly influence students' social and emotional competence and reduce their risk of aggressive behavior and other negative outcomes. However, implementation research like this carries important implications for practice. In order to achieve effective and lasting outcomes in their students, schools using the *Second Step* curriculum must commit to and be supported in thorough and high-quality implementation.

The principles of behavior change provide further guidance for optimal implementation. Children learn skills best and employ them most consistently if the skills are taught and reinforced in a consistent manner, by a wide variety of people, and across a wide variety of settings. Hence, the best implementation procedure is to adopt the *Second Step* curriculum across the whole school. All staff should be trained to support students' use of the *Second Step* skills with consistency throughout the varied settings that children encounter in their school days.

To promote social competence that is lasting, it is important not only to implement social competence curricula across school settings and school personnel, but to implement them across time. School-based socioemotional prevention programs should take place across several years. In a review of home and school prevention programs, Weissberg et al. (1991) concluded that brief classroom-based programs can be expected to produce short-term but not lasting effects. They recommended that programs designed to promote social competence should be implemented across multiple years in order to produce long-term preventive effects. Children are expected to become more competent the longer they are exposed to the program. Additionally, in order to succeed at navigating social interactions as they get older, children need social skills that are more subtle and complex (e.g., Fabes et al., 2001). Multiyear programming is needed to address these changing developmental needs.

Best practices in implementation include excellent training for all school personnel, complete and high-quality lesson implementation, whole-school adoption of the curricula, and

TABLE 25.1

Implications for Practice: Steps Toward Successfully Implementing the *Second Step* Curriculum

<i>Level</i>	<i>Program Conditions and Activities</i>
Pre-implementation	
School	Develop a comprehensive plan for meeting your school's academic, social, and emotional goals Involve key stakeholders when choosing the program Clearly articulate how the program meets your school's goals Form a steering team and designate a program coordinator Provide strong leadership for the program (principal and steering team) Allocate time and resources with a realistic time line Plan for program evaluation as an essential program activity
Classroom	Involve teachers in planning, particularly classroom lesson implementation Encourage teachers and other implementers to join steering team
Implementation delivery	
School	Provide <i>Second Step</i> training for all staff Foster family involvement via curriculum parent letters and family module Make the program visible throughout the school Provide ongoing support for staff (e.g., consultation, exchange of ideas) Maintain practical and social support for the program (particularly by principal) Facilitate student use of skills (e.g., cueing, coaching) across settings and throughout the school day Collect implementation and outcome data
Classroom	Train teachers in classroom curricula Teach classroom lessons in entirety, with fidelity Model the program concepts and skills (e.g., respect, empathy) Support students' skill development (e.g., cueing, coaching) outside of lessons Integrate program concepts throughout the classroom curriculum
Student	Promote individual student skills (e.g., prompting or problem solving) Provide additional services as necessary (e.g., individual counseling)
Post-implementation	
School	Summarize process and outcome data Use evaluation data to inform planning (e.g., by steering team) Share successes with staff, students, and families Plan for next year's school implementation, including training and support needs
Classroom	Reflect on implementation successes and obstacles Plan classroom implementation for the following year
Student	Consider the need for more intensive services for individual students

Note. The word "teachers" is used to refer to all implementers of the classroom lessons.

sustained *Second Step* lessons across several grade levels. Strong administrative leadership is pivotal to good implementation (Greenberg, Domitrovich, Graczyk, & Zins, 2001; Weissberg & O'Brien, 2004). Other important factors include ongoing evaluation of process and outcomes, integration of the curriculum into the school structure and larger curriculum, and a program coordinator and/or steering team that can help sustain program efforts (see Table 25.1).

To facilitate clients in maximizing the quality of their implementation, the *Second Step* curricula have been developed on the principle of promoting educator comfort with and classroom relevance of the curricula. To achieve the dual goals of program effectiveness and ease of use

in the classroom, *Second Step* program development is carried out by teams that include both teachers and researchers. Furthermore, ongoing program implementation support is available free of charge by telephone.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As a universal prevention program, the *Second Step* curricula do not include the kinds of intensive treatment components that might be needed for a few children. On the other hand, the *Second Step* curricula can be important building blocks of a comprehensive prevention strategy that addresses multiple systems and targeted populations (e.g., Sugai, Sprague, & Lewis, this volume). The curricula provide a foundation of basic skills that are beneficial to all children, and provide schoolwide behavioral expectations. These may be necessary components of multicomponent programs that are designed to address the needs of targeted populations. Frey et al. (2005) found that gains from the program were greater among the more antisocial students. This suggests that the program may be a beneficial component of a selected intervention in which students with antisocial behavior patterns are targeted. One approach that we have seen work effectively in practice is to teach *Second Step* lessons to targeted students first within a pull-out group setting and then again in the classroom. This provides students a “double dose” and affords them an opportunity to be “experts” in the material. Research is needed to examine fully how the curricula can be used most effectively with targeted populations.

A related question involves the use of *Second Step* curricula in specially tailored, multi-component, comprehensive programs. They can be used as a basic foundation of social skills, with additional components added that are chosen to meet specific local needs. For example, *Steps to Respect*³: *A Bullying Prevention Program*, distributed by the same developers as the *Second Step* curricula (see chapter 26, this volume), was designed to be compatible with *Second Step* curricula.

Second Step curricula have also been included in multicomponent prevention efforts by independent researchers. Sprague and his colleagues (2001) included *Second Step* curricula as one component of a multifaceted approach to promote positive social behavior and improve school safety. Relative to six comparison schools at year’s end, intervention schools demonstrated greater overall reductions in discipline referrals and indicated higher staff satisfaction with discipline procedures. Further research is needed about the best way to incorporate *Second Step* curricula into these kinds of multicomponent programs.

Other studies with rigorous experimental designs are also needed, especially studies that examine the differential impacts of the curricula on different groups of children, the causal mechanisms of changes and how program implementation contributes to them, and what the effects are of multiyear implementation. Additionally, attention to a broader range of outcome measures is needed. Researchers have yet to assess the effects of the curricula on whole-school outcomes such as school climate, and on classroom-level outcomes such as classroom management. There is also a strong need for researchers to identify and/or develop effective outcome measures that are feasible for educators to use, and to identify the most effective ways to support implementation.

The *Second Step* curricula are teacher-friendly programs designed to improve children’s social competence. They were developed on a foundation of rigorous research. Evaluation studies provide evidence of the effectiveness of *Second Step* curricula in reducing aggression

³*Steps to Respect* is a registered trademark of Committee for Children.

and increasing social competence. However, more research is needed to add depth to our understanding of social competence training and the *Second Step* curricula specifically.

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