



CASE STUDY

Boston Public Schools, Rafael Hernández K-8 School

Second Step Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) is a key component in the district's framework for meeting the behavioral health needs of all students.



Situation

Boston Public Schools (BPS) includes 125 schools with an enrollment of approximately 57,000 PreK-Grade 12 students. As of 2017, the district is five years into implementing a proprietary Comprehensive Behavioral Health Model (CBHM) using Second Step® SEL as a key component. The model currently supports about 50% of the district's schools and is designed to help schools meet the behavioral health needs of all students.

One of these schools is the Rafael Hernández K-8 School, a dual-language Title 1 school (the first of its kind in Boston) teaching in English and Spanish regardless of students' language backgrounds. The Hernández School was not included in the first year of the Second Step implementation as part of the CBHM support, it did receive some program materials, and the school's principal provided material support for teachers, including planning and professional development for implementation and evaluation.

Approach

Teachers at the Hernández School piloted Second Step SEL in a few classrooms. Initially skeptical, after working with the program, teachers found it intuitive and relevant, making it an integral part of their daily planning. Teachers reported that the program is:

Engaging. Teachers and students loved the videos and shared materials across grades.

Flexible. Some teachers used the lessons as scripted, while some tailored them to what was going on in their classroom. Teachers reported positive results for both approaches.

Relevant and Real. The program seamlessly addressed issues in their building and their community.

Simple and Effective. The ease-of-use and immediate impact meant the curriculum was soon actively used in each of the participating classrooms.

The Hernández School was accepted into the CBHM model the following year, putting Second Step SEL in every classroom. Second Step materials are available in English



and Spanish, allowing greater student accessibility and the ability to reinforce skill development at home. The school was able to focus on creating best-in-class practices to support SEL, maximizing potential from Second Step.

The school's administrative staff have structured professional development into three main foci, with Second Step SEL at the core of the social-emotional support focus. This approach to professional development has created opportunities and provided support for teachers to share best practices for Second Step, promoting implementation fidelity and allowing thoughtful intervention planning for each classroom.

Outcomes

Boston's CBHM schools are outperforming those that aren't supported by the model. They have reductions in suspensions, better test scores, and more positive behavior. Additionally, students in CBHM schools are showing tremendous effect sizes for improvements in both internalizing and externalizing behaviors as measured by the Behavior Intervention Monitoring Assessment System (BIMAS).

The Hernández School uses restorative justice as a schoolwide Tier 1 and Tier 2 intervention, and Second Step SEL is used as schoolwide Tier 1 SEL intervention as intended by CBHM. They've found the programs to be complementary and easy to use together.

“Our teachers love that Second Step materials are accessible and easy to implement. And we all love that it feels community-wide, not isolated to the classroom.”

Ana Tavares, Principal
The Hernández School

Teachers at the Hernández School have been empowered to promote social-emotional development schoolwide and have a greater sense of self-efficacy for classroom management.

An examination of the data suggests that students and teachers are better able to communicate in part because of the common language the program creates. Students have developed a set of social and coping skills that are used and reinforced daily schoolwide, and the program allows them to build on these skills year over year.

SOURCES:

Interview: Andria Amador, Assistant Director of Behavioral Health Services, 2/2/2017

Interview: Anna Banerjee, EdS, NCSP, Bilingual School Psychologist, 2/16/2017

Interview: Ana Tavares, Principal, Rafael Hernández School, 2/16/2017

Contact

Research-based Second Step SEL is a universal, classroom-based curriculum for Preschool through Grade 8 that teaches students the skills they need to be safe, succeed in school, and get along well with others.

Learn about more educators' experiences with Second Step SEL at SecondStep.org/success or call Committee for Children at 800-634-4449, ext. 1.

Who We Are

Though we're best known for our innovative SEL-centric programs for schools, Committee for Children is involved in all kinds of initiatives to improve the lives of children. Founded as a nonprofit in 1979 to help victims of child sexual abuse, we continue to advocate for policies and legislation to protect kids and provide equal opportunities for all. From our headquarters in Seattle, Washington, we partner with researchers, publishers, and nonprofits around the world. Our programs reach students in over 70 countries, and we work to make sure all children have a chance to thrive.