



Effective Implementation Practices

Principals and Teachers: Powerful Partners for Program Success

When a school's staff puts in the time and effort to implement a classroom-based social-emotional learning program, they want it to be successful. They want their

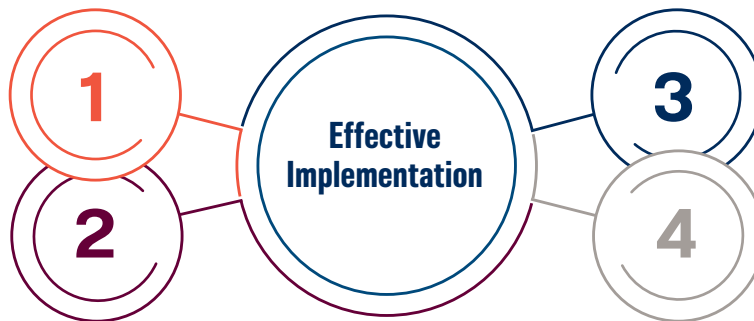
students to experience the positive outcomes the program promotes. As it turns out, how well a program is implemented has a considerable effect on program outcomes.¹ And the teachers and principals teaching and supporting the program have the greatest impact on implementation success.²⁻⁴

What Is Effective Implementation?

Effective implementation involves paying attention to four main factors:

FIDELITY
The extent to which the program is taught as presented in the curriculum and support materials

DOSAGE
The quantity, intensity, and duration with which program components are taught



QUALITY
How well the program is taught

STUDENT RESPONSE
The extent to which students are engaged and affected by the lessons and activities⁵



What Makes an Implementation Effective?

There are many elements that influence effective implementation, especially those related to the school/district, support systems, and the program itself.⁶ However, what truly tips the scales toward effective implementation is, in fact, a “who”: the teachers or counselors teaching the program in the classrooms.⁷⁻¹⁰ The people teaching and reinforcing the program skills ultimately determine to what extent and how well they are taught. They decide which program materials to use and how to use them. They are responsible for reinforcing and practicing skills beyond formal lesson time. They are important change agents in their students’ positive development.

But quality program implementation does not happen in a vacuum. Although a number of elements can influence the quality of teachers’ implementation, research consistently shows that the most important is principal leadership and support.¹¹⁻¹⁶ Teachers take their cues about school priorities from their principal. When teachers see principals devoting time and resources to program implementation, being vocal about the program’s importance, and holding them accountable for quality implementation, they are more likely to strive for excellence.¹⁷ So principal leadership plus quality teacher implementation adds up to effective implementation.

Helping Principals and Teachers Implement Successfully

There are a number of things that will help principals and teachers implement a program successfully. For teachers, there are four key characteristics associated with high-quality implementation:

1. They recognize the need for the program.
2. They believe the program will work.
3. They feel confident in their ability to teach the program.
4. They have the skills to teach the program well.¹⁸⁻²²

A combination of pre-implementation training and ongoing coaching and support can help teachers develop these characteristics and sustain quality implementation.²³

It’s important for principals to be aware of how critical their leadership and support are, and that actively monitoring and encouraging teachers’ program use helps improve overall implementation success.²⁴ When skilled and motivated teachers and supportive principals see the impact of the well-implemented program on their students, they’re more likely to sustain effective implementation over the long term. Working together, principals and teachers truly are powerful partners for program success.



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.



Concrete Support for Successful Principal Leadership

In recognition of the pivotal role principals play in the quality implementation of a social-emotional learning (SEL) program, Committee for Children offers the Second Step Principal Toolkit. This resource provides busy principals with easy, everyday ways to help the Second Step program make a difference in their schools.

Tools include scripted meeting agendas to introduce all staff to Second Step SEL; ready-to-use morning announcements, school assembly scripts, and communications to staff; and an office referral conversation guide to engage students in planning how to use Second Step skills to change behavior. The toolkit supports skill reinforcement in and out of the classroom, encourages positive behavior with a common schoolwide language, and strengthens efforts to create a safe, supportive environment for learning.



Second Step Principal Toolkit

Second Step: Skills for Social and Academic Success

Universal, classroom-based Second Step SEL is designed to teach children how to understand and manage their emotions, control their reactions, be aware of others' feelings, problem-solve, and make responsible decisions. It includes short, easy-to-teach weekly lessons, engaging songs and games, and daily activities and take-home materials to reinforce learning in Kindergarten through Grade 5.

Evidence-based Second Step SEL helps make it easy for teachers to integrate social-emotional learning into their classrooms, which decreases problem behaviors and increases whole-school success by promoting self-regulation, safety, and support. It aligns with many other school initiatives and standards, including Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Response to Intervention (RTI), the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Mindsets and Behaviors, academic standards, Restorative Practices, and trauma-informed practices.



**Kindergarten–Grade 5
Second Step SEL**



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