



## Academic Achievement and the *Second Step* Program

Schools today are being held accountable for their students' academic success via standardized tests. At the same time, they are expected to produce students with strong character who can build healthy relationships and steer clear of drugs and violence—a tall order. The good news is that schools can increase students' academic achievement while reducing violence, drug abuse, and other youth problems—by teaching social and emotional skills.

### CASEL Makes the Case: SEL Improves Academic Performance

Some educators worry that teaching our SEL programs will take time away from academics. The latest research can help put that fear to rest.

CASEL, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, recently published a meta-analysis that includes the findings of the largest, most scientifically rigorous review of research ever done on school-based intervention programs<sup>1</sup>. The findings are rich, but one result really stands out:

“...students receiving school-based SEL scored 11 percentile points higher on academic achievement tests than their peers who did not receive SEL.”

Those same students also attained higher grades while improving:

- Classroom behavior
- Feelings about themselves
- Handling of emotional problems
- Social and emotional skills

Teaching the *Second Step* program isn't only about changing behaviors—it's about helping your students reach their highest potential.

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Visit our Web site for the latest research on social and emotional learning, bullying, and violence prevention, and the connection with academic achievement.

### Twenty Years of Evidence

Social, emotional, and cognitive development are interdependent,<sup>2</sup> and twenty years of research have shown that children need social and emotional competence to succeed in school.<sup>3</sup>

Students who are socially and emotionally skilled score higher on standardized tests,<sup>4</sup> and social and emotional competence leads to greater academic competence over time.<sup>5</sup>

Among students with the same academic test scores in elementary school, those who develop better social and problem-solving skills by middle school attain higher test scores and grades in high school.<sup>6</sup>

A SAMHSA review of the impact of prevention programs on school success found that effective programs resulted in improved standardized test scores; higher GPAs; increased reading, math, and writing skills; improved graduation rates; and increased credits earned.<sup>7</sup>

### The *Second Step* Connection

What does all of the above have to do with Committee for Children? Research studies show that our evidence-based, award-winning *Second Step* program is effective at improving students' social and emotional knowledge and skills, prosocial attitudes, and behavior.<sup>8-13</sup> The *Second Step* program reduces problem and aggressive behaviors by building the social and emotional competence that is crucial for academic success.

## Social and Emotional Learning Improves School Climate

Social and emotional skills help students form the healthy relationships they need for school and life success.

Socially competent children and youth get along better with their teachers, who tend to like them and provide them with more support,<sup>14</sup> which improves their school performance.<sup>15</sup>

Students with a large social network and good relationships with peers and teachers are also more connected to school.<sup>16</sup> Students who feel connected to

school are more motivated to succeed academically, more engaged in class,<sup>17</sup> have higher test scores and grades, behave better in school, and are less likely to repeat a grade.<sup>18</sup>

School connectedness is also stronger for students in organized and well-managed classrooms where they feel supported and respected,<sup>19</sup> and classroom management is an easier task with children who are socially and emotionally competent.

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