



Best Practices for Effective Implementation

When school staff puts in the time and effort to implement a classroom-based social-emotional learning (SEL) program, that staff wants their students to experience the positive outcomes the program promotes. How well a program is implemented has a considerable effect on program outcomes,¹ and those teaching and supporting the program have the most direct impact on implementation success.² This means that while every school and district purchases the same Second Step® Elementary or Second Step® Middle School program, what students actually receive can vary widely depending on their implementation practices. This document provides effective implementation recommendations for lesson instructors and leaders in supporting positive program outcomes.

Why Do Lesson Instructor Implementation Practices Matter?

Many elements influence effective implementation,¹ with one of the most direct elements being the lesson instructors teaching the program in the classroom.^{2,3} They decide which program materials to use and how to use them. They are responsible for reinforcing and practicing skills beyond formal lesson time. And so they have an enormous impact on the quality of program implementation and ultimately on the effectiveness of the program for students.

For lesson instructors, we recommend the following effective implementation practices aimed at supporting positive program outcomes.

USER	ACTIVITIES	
Lesson Instructor	Prep	By completing program training and watching the Quick Start Guide video for each unit
		By reviewing the grade-specific unit plan before teaching each unit
		In advance for each lesson by looking over the Prep & Extend (for Elementary only), lesson presentation, lesson plan, and student handout(s) (if applicable)
	Teach	All the components of each lesson <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Elementary: Brain Builders, Getting Started, Practice, and Check • For Middle School section titles vary by lesson, but typically: Warm-Up, Video, Define, Discuss, Activity, and Wrap-Up
		All the lessons in order, one lesson per week
	Use	The lesson plan with the script for each lesson
		Student handouts for all applicable lessons
		Daily practice activities (Elementary) or advisory activities (Middle School) to reinforce learning outside of lessons
Performance task rubric for all performance task lessons		

Why Do Leader Implementation Practices Matter?

Although a number of elements can influence the quality of implementation, research consistently shows that principal leadership and support is vital to implementation success.^{1,2,4} To support quality implementation, leaders should devote time and resources to program implementation, be vocal about the program's importance, and emphasize shared accountability.⁵ It's important for leaders to be aware of how critical their leadership and support are and that actively monitoring and encouraging lesson instructors' program use helps improve overall implementation success.²

For leaders, we recommend the following effective implementation practices aimed at supporting positive program outcomes.

USER	ACTIVITIES	
Leader	Prep	By reviewing Implementation Snapshot and Program Evaluation Guide
		By reviewing SEL Leadership Team Roster and assigning roles
		By assigning dates for tasks and following the Implementation Checklist for Leaders
		By completing the Pacing Guide and distributing it to staff
	Deliver	All-Staff Program Kick-Off presentation to orient all staff
	Use	Staff meeting supports, such as the Mid-Year Check-In and End-of-Year Check-In presentations, to provide teachers with time and space to reflect on their practice
Lesson Observation Rubric to monitor and support high-quality lesson implementation		
District Leader	Prep	By setting a date for and customizing the District Principal Launch presentation
		By reviewing, customizing, and delivering District Principal Launch presentation to engage and orient all principals
	Use	Implementation Snapshot to inform your district implementation plan and to support and coach principals
		Program Evaluation Guide to inform your district evaluation plan

References

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