Second Step Elementary

Review: January 2019

Note on provider involvement: This provider has agreed to EIF's terms of reference, and the assessment has been conducted and published with the full cooperation of the programme provider.

Second Step Elementary is a classroom-based programme designed to improve school success and student behaviour. It is a universal programme for children between the ages of 6 and 11, and is delivered in primary schools.

Second Step is based on cognitive behaviour therapy and the content units are aligned with socio-emotional core competencies identified by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL).

Teachers begin each unit with a unit card that presents information specific to that unit. Lessons in nursery and up to grade 3 are presented on large photo cards and in grades 4 and 5 are based on video vignettes.

Evidence rating: **2**

Cost rating: **1**

EIF Programme Assessment

Second Step Elementary has **preliminary evidence** of improving a child outcome, but we cannot be confident that the programme caused the improvement.

What does the evidence rating mean?

Level 2 indicates that the programme has evidence of improving a child outcome from a study involving at least 20 participants, representing 60% of the sample, using validated instruments.

This programme does not receive a rating of 3 as its best evidence is not from a rigorously conducted RCT or QED evaluation.

Cost rating

A rating of 1 indicates that a programme has a low cost to set up and deliver, compared with other interventions reviewed by EIF. This is equivalent to an estimated unit cost of less than £100.

Cost rating: **1**

Child outcomes

According to the best available evidence for this programme's impact, it can achieve the following positive outcomes for children:

Preventing crime, violence and antisocial behaviour

Increased prosocial behaviour in social settings (cafeteria/playground)

Based on study 1

Decreased antisocial behaviour

Based on study 2

Key programme characteristics

Who is it for?

The best available evidence for this programme relates to the following age-groups:

- Primary school

How is it delivered?

The best available evidence for this programme relates to implementation through these delivery models:

- Group

Where is it delivered?

The best available evidence for this programme relates to its implementation in these settings:

- Primary school

The programme may also be delivered in these settings:

- Children's centre or early-years setting
- Primary school

How is it targeted?

The best available evidence for this programme relates to its implementation as:

- Universal

Please note that different editions of the Second Step Elementary programme have been available over the course of the programme's development. The fourth edition is the most up-to-date and currently available version, and is described here. However, the evidence assessed by EIF investigates implementations of both the original edition (Grossman et al. 1997) and the second edition (Frey et al. 2005). The fourth edition is similar to the other versions with respect to length/frequency, mode of delivery and content, although it features an additional unit on 'skills for learning'.

Where has it been implemented?

Australia, Brazil, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Japan, Norway, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States

UK provision

This programme has been implemented in the UK.

UK evaluation

This programme's best evidence does not include evaluation conducted in the UK.

Spotlight sets

EIF includes this programme in the following Spotlight sets:

- school based social emotional learning

About the programme

What happens during delivery?

How is it delivered?

- Second Step Elementary is delivered in 22–25 sessions, which are each 5–40 minutes long. Each session is delivered by one teacher to groups in school classes.

What happens during the intervention?

- Each unit begins with a unit card that presents information specific to that unit. Lessons in nursery and up to grade 3 are presented on large photo cards and in grades 4 and 5 are based on video vignettes.
- Vignettes are used as basis for discussion and role plays.
- Teachers, and characters in videotapes, model key skills.
- Students practice skills and teachers reinforce the performance of practised skills.

What are the implementation requirements?

Who can deliver it?

- The practitioner who delivers this programme is a classroom teacher with QCF-6 level qualifications.

What are the training requirements?

- The program comes with an online Staff-Training Toolkit to help train teachers to implement the program with fidelity. The toolkit can be used by anyone overseeing programme implementation and was designed to be adapted to best suit users' own settings. The toolkit, which is customisable for any individual or group of teachers, includes the following components:
    - A kick-off meeting agenda guided by a PowerPoint: Staff receive an overview of the programme and prepare to deliver the first unit.

    - Four check-in meeting agendas: These meetings are held after each of the first four units is delivered. Staff reflect on successes and challenges with implementation and prepare to deliver the next unit. These check-in meetings provide valuable opportunities for timely feedback and coaching throughout program implementation.

    - A wrap-up meeting agenda: Staff reflect on successes and plan for next year's implementation.

How are the practitioners supervised?

- Supervision of practitioners is not required.

What are the systems for maintaining fidelity?

Programme fidelity is maintained through the following processes:

- Training manual
- Face-to-face training
- Fidelity monitoring.

Is there a licensing requirement?

Yes, there is a licence required to run this programme.

How does it work? (Theory of Change)

How does it work?

- The programme teaches skills that strengthen students' ability to learn, have empathy, manage emotions and solve problems.

- In the short term, children will have improved social-emotional competence and increased self-regulation.

- In the long term, children will have increased school success, reduced aggression, and improved peer relations.

Intended outcomes

Enhancing school achievement & employment Preventing crime, violence and antisocial behaviour

Contact details

Committee for Children info@cfchildren.org

http://www.cfchildren.org/ http://www.secondstep.org/

About the evidence

Second Step's most rigorous evidence comes an RCT and a QED which were conducted in the United States.

These studies identified statistically significant positive impact on a number of child outcomes.

A programme receives the same rating as its most robust studies, which in this case are the Grossman et al., 1997 and Frey et al., 2005 studies, and so the programme receives a level 2 rating overall.

Study 1

Citation: Grossman et al., 1997

Design: RCT

Country: United States

Sample: 12 schools (790 students), with children between 7 and 8 years old, where schools have a low level of need.

Timing: Post-test; 6-month follow-up

Child outcomes:

- Increased prosocial behaviour in social settings (cafeteria/playground)

Other outcomes:

- None measured

Study rating: 2

Grossman, D. C., Neckerman, H. J., Koepsell, T. D., Liu, P., Asher, K., Beland, K., Frey, & K., Rivara, F. (1997). Effectiveness of a Violence Prevention Curriculum Among Children in Elementary School. A Randomized Controlled Trial. *JAMA,* 277(20), 1605-1611.

Available at https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/9168290

Study design and sample

The first study is an RCT. This study involved random assignment of schools to a Second Step treatment group (1st edition) and a business-as-usual control group.

This study was conducted in the US, with a sample of children aged 8 on average. Children in this group were, on average, of middle SES (mean [SD] on a scale from 8 to 66: 38.0 [11.7] in intervention, 36.9 [12.6] in control group) and white ethnicity (78.5% in intervention, 80.1% in control group).

Measures

Social competence and antisocial behaviour were measured using the School Social Behaviour Scales (teacher report). Behavioural problems were measured using the Achenbach Teacher Report Form (teacher report) and the Achenbach Child Behaviour Checklist (parent report). Positive and negative adjustment was measured using the Parent-Child Rating Scales (parent report). Neutral/prosocial behaviour, physical negative behaviour, and verbal negative behaviour were measured using the Social Interaction Observation System (expert observation of behaviour).

Findings

This study identified a statistically significant positive impact on one child outcome. This includes increased neutral/prosocial behaviour in the playground and cafeteria.

The conclusions that can be drawn from this study are limited by methodological issues pertaining to unequivalent groups and statistical models not controlling for baseline differences between the groups, hence why a higher rating is not achieved.

Study 2

Citation:	Frey et al., 2005
Design:	QED
Country:	United States
Sample:	15 elementary schools (1253 students), with children between 7 and 11 years old, where schools have a low level of need.
Timing:	Interim measurements during programme delivery; Post-test

Child outcomes:

- Decreased antisocial behaviour

Other outcomes:

- None measured

Study rating: 2

Frey, K. S., Nolen, S. B., Van Schoiack Edstrom, L., & Hirschstein, M. K. (2005). Effects of a school-based social-emotional competence program: Linking children's goals, attributions, and behaviour. *Applied Developmental Psychology,* 26, 171-200.
Available at
https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/8345/5879297ba40ab5689a4a7b3d185cfe289690.pdf

Study design and sample

The second study is a QED. In this study, 11 out of 15 schools were randomly assigned to a Second Step intervention (2nd edition) and a business-as-usual control group. Four schools were assigned to the control group. Intervention and control group schools received programme materials, teacher training, and substitute teachers during training, but only intervention schools received these benefits for classrooms that were included in the study. Thus, control schools received the same benefits, but for classrooms that were not included in the study.

This study was conducted in the USA, with a sample of children aged between 7 and 11. The majority of students were European-American (52–89%) with Asian-American (18%) and African American (12%) ethnicities comprising the next largest ethnic groups.

Measures

Social competence and antisocial behaviour were measured using the School Social Behavior Scale (parent report). Hypothesised reactions to and intended behaviour towards provocations were measured using a questionnaire developed for this study (child self-report). Satisfaction with negotiation outcomes and reasoning for this satisfaction were measured using questions developed for this study (child self-report). Negotiation strategies were measured using a coding system based on De Vries et al. (1991; expert observation of behaviour). Need for adult intervention in negotiation were measured using a coding system developed for this study (expert observation of behaviour).

Findings

This study identified a statistically significant positive impact on one child outcome. This includes decreased antisocial behaviour in the intervention group.

The conclusions that can be drawn from this study are limited by methodological issues pertaining to inequivalent groups at baseline, the treatment condition not being modelled at the level of assignment, measures not being blind to condition, and a lack of equivalence of the groups after attrition has taken place, hence why a higher rating is not achieved.

Other studies

The following studies were identified for this programme but did not count towards the programme's overall evidence rating. A programme receives the same rating as its most robust study or studies.

Edwards, D., Hunt, M. H., Meyers, J., Grogg, K. R., & Jarrett, O. (2005). Acceptability and Student Outcomes of a Violence Prevention Curriculum. The Journal of Primary Prevention, 26(5), 401-418 - **This reference refers to a qualitative study, conducted in the USA.**

Holsen, I., Smith, B. H., & Frey, K. S. (2008). Outcomes of the Social Competence Program Second Step in Norwegian Elementary Schools. School Psychology International, 29(1), 71-88 - **This reference refers to a quasi-experimental design, conducted in Norway.**

Taub, J. (2001). Evaluation of the Second Step Violence Prevention Program at a Rural Elementary School. School Psychology Review, 31(2), 186-200 - **This reference refers to a quasi-experimental design, conducted in the USA.**

Low, S., Smolkowski, K., Cook, C., & Desfosses, D. (2019). Two-year impact of a universal social-emotional learning curriculum: Group differences from developmentally sensitive trends over time. Developmental Psychology, 55(2), 415-433 - **This reference refers to a randomised control trial, conducted in the USA.**

Guidebook

The EIF Guidebook provides information about early intervention programmes that have at least preliminary evidence of achieving positive outcomes for children. It provides information based on EIF's assessment of the strength of evidence for a programme's effectiveness, and on detail about programmes shared with us by those who design, run and deliver them.

The Guidebook serves an important starting point for commissioners to find out more about effective early interventions, and for programme providers to find out more about what good evidence of impact looks like and how it can be captured. As just one of our key resources for commissioners and practitioners, the Guidebook is an essential part of EIF's work to support the development of and investment in effective early intervention programmes.

Our assessment of the evidence for a programme's effectiveness can inform and support certain parts of a commissioning decision, but it is not a substitute for professional judgment. Evidence about what has worked in the past offers no guarantee that an approach will work in all circumstances. Crucially, the Guidebook is not a market comparison website: ratings and other information should not be interpreted as a specific recommendation, kite mark or endorsement for any programme.

How to read the Guidebook

EIF evidence standards

About the EIF Guidebook

EIF

The Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) is an independent charity and a member of the What Works network. We support the use of effective early intervention for children, young people and their families: identifying signals of risk, and responding with effective interventions to improve outcomes, reduce hardship and save the public money in the long term.

We work by generating evidence and knowledge of what works in our field, putting this information in the hands of commissioners, practitioners and policymakers, and supporting the adoption of the evidence in local areas and relevant sectors.

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