



Effective Implementation Practices

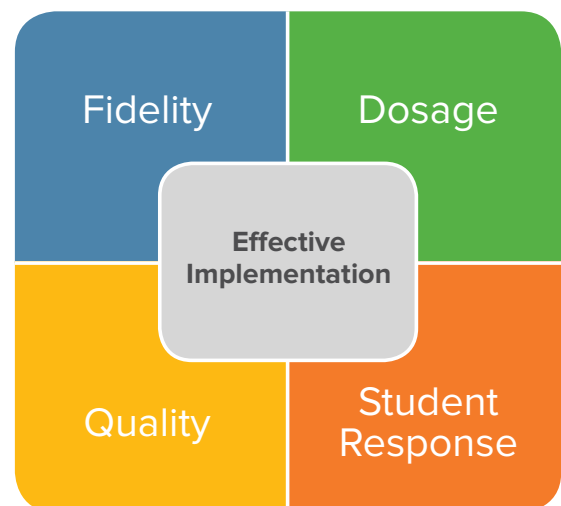
Principals and Teachers: Powerful Partners for Program Success

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:

1. **Fidelity:** The extent to which the program is taught as presented in the curriculum and support materials
2. **Dosage:** The quantity, intensity, and duration with which program components are taught
3. **Quality:** How well the program is taught
4. **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 recognise 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.

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 the program; ready-to-use morning announcements, school assembly scripts, and communications to staff and families; 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

Our universal, classroom-based *Second Step* program 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. The program includes short, easy-to-teach weekly lessons, engaging songs and games, and daily activities and take-home materials to reinforce learning in **Foundation** through **Year 6**.

The evidence-based program 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. The program aligns with many other school initiatives and standards, including Positive Behavior **For Learning** (PBL), Response to Intervention (RTI), Restorative Practices, and trauma-informed practices.



Kindergarten–Grade 5
Second Step program

To learn more about the *Second Step* Suite of programs, visit

www.positivepieces.com.au

To discuss how your school may benefit from the *Second Step* program, contact 1300 769 919

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