

Social Emotional Learning Status Survey **Preschool-Grade 5**

October 2009

Introduction

Needham has become a leader nationwide in social and emotional learning, having developed a K-12 continuum of skills to support social and emotional skill development. The advancement of social and emotional learning (SEL) has been one of three district-wide goals for eight years. Needham's program emphasizes skill development in:

- self-management and self-awareness,
- decision-making, and
- social/interpersonal skills.

At the Preschool and Elementary levels, two evidence-based programs have been adopted for use in classrooms: Responsive Classroom (RC) and Second Step (2nd Step). Responsive Classroom is an approach to elementary teaching:

- that emphasizes social, emotional and academic growth in a strong and safe school community, and
- is based on the premise that children learn best when they have both academic and social/emotional skills.

Research has shown that schools that implement the Responsive Classroom approach consistently experience:

- higher teaching quality,
- increased student engagement,
- academic gains, and
- fewer discipline problems.

Second Step is an interactive social/emotional learning curriculum through which students learn and practice vital social skills, such as cooperation, problem solving, empathy, emotion management and impulse control. Second Step teaching kits include photo-lesson cards, key discussion questions, student role-plays, and video clips.

The Survey

In June 2009, 113 preschool and elementary school classroom teachers from Broadmeadow, Hillside, Eliot, Newman and Mitchell completed a survey regarding SEL practices in their classrooms. This number of respondents represents 88% of the 129 teachers in the preschool-grade 5 classrooms. The survey contained 86 questions, representing both multiple choice and short answer. The purpose of the survey was to gain information about:

- professional development needs,
- teacher utilization of Responsive Classroom and 2nd Step programs in their classrooms,
- teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of Responsive Classroom and 2nd Step programs, and
- teacher observation of student demonstration of social-emotional skills.

The survey results provide answers to the following questions.

- Has the current Professional Development model prepared teachers for implementation of Responsive Classroom and 2nd Step programs?
- What are teachers' preferences for professional development to enhance social emotional learning instruction?
- What components of Responsive Classroom and 2nd Step are teachers using? What components do they report as effective?
- What observable (or reportable) student behaviors do teachers observe in their classrooms in relation to social emotional skill instruction?

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Table 1
Number/% of Teachers Who Have
Completed Professional Development Programs**

I have taken:	YES	%	NO	%
Responsive Classroom I	94	87	14	13
Responsive Classroom II	31	29	76	71
Responsive Classroom Follow-up Workshop	38	36	69	64
Other SEL workshops	29	28	75	72
Teaching SEL through Second Step and Literature	13	13	90	87

The district has adopted the practice of urging new preschool and elementary teaching staff to enroll in and complete a summer Responsive Classroom I prior to the first year of teaching, if possible. This appears to have been a successful initiative. Over the last few years, there have been fewer offerings of general SEL and 2nd Step courses and a focus on the Responsive Classroom trainings. In the meantime, there has been substantial turnover in teaching staff that has resulted in fewer teachers having completed multiple SEL courses. Teachers indicated in their survey answers that time is the factor that precludes their engaging in more SEL professional development. Teachers indicated that the actual time the course is offered (weekends vs. evenings vs. summer, for instance) and the concern that there is not adequate time in the school day to implement SEL programs impacts their willingness to enroll in advanced RC training (RC II), and 2nd Step training.

**Table 2
Teachers Response to Other Professional Development Models**

I would like to have a:	Yes	No
Mentor to improve my RC practices	17 %	88%
Collegial learning group on RC	49	55
Mentor to improve my use of Second Step	16	89
Collegial learning group on Second Step	43	61

In an attempt to fit the Professional Development offerings to the teachers' preferences, the survey asked whether teachers would like to engage in collaborative learning groups with their peers or in a mentoring relationship with another teacher. Teachers indicated their preference for collegial learning groups to extend their learning.

IMPLEMENTATION/EFFECTIVENESS OF SEL PRACTICES

RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM

The survey asked teachers what components of Responsive Classroom they are using and whether they think those components are effective.

**Table 3
Percentage of Teachers Indicating Frequency of Use of Practice**

RC Practice	Don't Know practice	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Almost Always
Morning Meeting	6 %	3 %	2 %	6 %	83 %
Hopes and Dreams	6	5	4	3	82
Creating Rules	4	1	1	9	85
Take a Break	4	8	21	17	50
Academic Choice	8	23	29	17	22

These components are five of the foundational “constructs” of the Responsive Classroom method. The percentage of teachers who indicated “Don’t Know” and “Rarely” for these components represents between 5% (Creating Rules) and 31% (Academic Choice) of teachers. On the other end of the frequency of implementation, a full 85-94% of teachers are “Frequently or Almost Always” implementing Morning Meeting, Hopes and Dreams and Creating Rules.

Table 4
Percentages of Teachers Indicating Effectiveness of Practice

RC Practice	Don’t Know practice	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Effective or Very Effective
Morning Meeting	7 %	5 %	3 %	85 %
Hopes and Dreams	10	4	23	73
Creating Rules	7	3	8	82
Take a Break	6	3	21	70
Academic Choice	12	5	32	51

When looking at teachers’ perceptions of effectiveness of these practices, there appears to be a correlation between those practices reported in use and those practices viewed as effective. Morning Meeting, Hopes and Dreams and Creating Rules are used most frequently and also are rated Effective by at least 73% of teachers. Academic Choice, which is frequently used by 39% of teachers, was rated effective by 51% of the teachers. It appears that when the components are implemented, teachers rate them as effective.

Another set of questions looked at teachers’ perceptions of the consistency in the use of rules and logical consequences, a foundational practice in Responsive Classroom instruction, in various non-general education periods. The following table reflects the responses received to this query. These responses are grouped into “not consistent/somewhat consistent” and “frequently consistent/always consistent”. Percentages do not total 100% due to some teachers not responding to this question.

Table 5
Percentage of Teachers Indicating Usage of RC Practices Outside General Education

Please rate the consistency of use of rules and logical consequences in non-general education periods.	Not consistent/somewhat consistent	Frequently consistent/always consistent
Transitions to and from the Classroom	26.5 %	69.6 %
Dining Room	53.7	38
Recess	50	43.5
Specials	50	42

Teachers often accompany their classrooms in hallway transitions and therefore it is logical that the most consistent use of rules and logical consequences would occur at those times. The teachers’ perceptions of the use of these constructs in the other settings are notably less than the 69.6% rating in the transitions. Various training and professional development opportunities have been offered to support staff that are teaching and managing students during recess and lunch. However, turnover in these positions and the nature of the activities in those settings may be impacting the consistency, as perceived by the teachers. Further investigation of specialist teachers’ use of Rules and Logical Consequences would lend insight into their need for professional development and their perceptions of the effectiveness of the practices associated with Responsive Classroom.

SECOND STEP

Second Step is a program that provides direct instruction in social and emotional skills. Students learn and practice social emotional skills, such as empathy, emotion management, problem solving, and cooperation. In Needham Public Schools every classroom, preschool-grade 5, has access to a 2nd Step kit. The Second Step program is designed to be teacher-friendly and easy to implement. Each lesson involves a large picture card for the children to focus on. The back of the card includes a clear, step-by-step lesson plan for the teacher to follow. Despite the ease with which the 20-30 minute lessons can be conducted, a foundational training in social/emotional skill development can be helpful in adding depth to the lesson execution.

Table 6
Percentage of Classrooms in which 2nd Step Occurs Weekly and
Teacher Perceptions of Its Effectiveness

Weekly 2nd Step lesson Conducted	Percent	Think 2nd Step is Effective	Percent
Not answered	3 %	No Answer	2 %
Don't know this practice	15	Don't Know this Practice	27
Rarely	27	Not Effective	8
Occasionally	16	Somewhat Effective	25
Frequently/Almost Always	39	Effective/Very Effective	38

Forty-two percent of teachers reported that Second Step is rarely or never used as a weekly lesson in their classrooms. 55% report that weekly lessons are occurring occasionally to almost always. (In response to another question in the survey, 52% of teachers who indicated that 2nd Step is taught in their classroom, responded that the lesson is conducted by someone other than the teacher, most frequently the guidance counselor.) As far as effectiveness, 63% of responding teachers, and a full 89% of those teachers who “knew the practice” rate 2nd Step as Somewhat to Very Effective.

The 2nd Step program kit provides instructional tools to infuse the content into literature and classroom routines. There are also kit materials that can be shared with families.

Table 7
Frequency of Use of 2nd Step Kit Materials

Use 2nd Step Posters	Rarely/Don't know practice: 58%	Occasionally/Frequently/Always: 38%
Use literature connections	Rarely/Don't know practice: 51%	Occasionally/Frequently/Always: 48 %
Send materials home	Rarely/Don't know practice: 56 %	Occasionally/Frequently/Always: 42 %

While 55% of classrooms are providing 2nd Step instruction (Table 6) regularly, 38-48% (Table 7) of teachers report using the supplementary materials.

Table 8
Preparation Time Required for 2nd Step

How much PREP time?	# of teachers	% of teachers
Not answered	44	40 %
No prep time	14	13
Up to 15 minutes	39	35
15-30 minutes	11	10
30 minutes or more	2	2

The amount of time needed for preparation by teachers who are delivering the lessons (reported to be 66 teachers in the item above) ranged from 0-30 minutes or more. Most teachers are spending up to 15 minutes in preparation for a 30-minute lesson.

RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM AND SECOND STEP FOR STUDENTS WITH AUTISM

One group of students who particularly benefit from direct instruction in social and emotional skills is the group identified with Pervasive Developmental Disorder, more commonly known as Autism or Asperger’s Syndrome. These students do not usually learn social skills incidentally so that structured lessons, pre-teaching and follow-up are helpful for some of these students. Additionally, the use of the visuals provided by the Responsive Classroom and Second Step programs makes these programs more accessible and successful for these students. Approximately 60 teachers responded “No Opportunity” to those questions regarding teaching students with Autism and/or Asperger’s Syndrome. The percentage of teachers (54%) who indicated that they are teaching students with Autism or Asperger’s Syndrome, indicates that half of our classroom teachers have had experience with or were currently teaching students with these disabilities at the time of the survey. The data reflects only those teachers who indicated they are teaching or have taught students with Autism or Asperger’s Syndrome.

Table 9
Teachers Use of RC and 2nd Step with Students with Autism or Asperger’s Syndrome

QUESTIONS	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently/ Almost Always
I deliberately use RC and 2 nd Step to meet student needs	17 %	13 %	70 %
I deliberately pre-teach lessons	34	42	23
I provide follow-up instruction	22	34	44
Another teacher/staff (special educator, teaching assistant, counselor, speech therapist) provides the pre-teaching or re-teaching my students need for Responsive Classroom and/or 2 nd Step lessons	5	26	69

The teachers’ responses reflect their understanding of RC and 2nd Step as important instructional methods for meeting the needs of this sub-group of students. The data also indicates that teachers report that other specialists are providing extra instruction in social skills’ areas, since 69% report this to be true frequently or almost always. Because of the structure of the question regarding “follow-up instruction”, it is unclear to what extent the teachers believe the Responsive Classroom structures, which provide opportunities for follow-up instruction throughout the day, satisfy the students’ needs for instruction, precluding the need for focused, individualized “follow-up” instruction. 95% of the teachers indicate that other staff members are sharing in the social skills’ instruction for the students with Autism and Asperger’s Syndrome. This is important in terms of generalization of skills from the classroom and primary teacher to other settings and adults and students.

In a question meant to probe interest in further training to meet the social skill needs of students with Autism, 56% of teachers expressed interest in a 1-2 day course on the topic of “adapting Responsive Classroom and Second Step for students with Autism” and 24% indicated

an interest in collaborating on a project to extend the use of Responsive Classroom and Second Step with students with Autism.

TEACHER OBSERVATIONS OF STUDENT SOCIAL BEHAVIORS

A portion of the survey asked teachers to rate how frequently certain student behaviors occurred in their classrooms during the previous month. A series of questions related to observable behaviors elicited the following scores, reported by grade and the overall K-5 rating. Preschool ratings were excluded from this analysis due to the limited number of respondents at that grade level.

The scores are based on a four-point scale (1 = Rarely Occurs, 2 = Occasionally Occurs, 3 = Frequently Occurs, and 4 = Almost Always Occurs). The higher the score, the higher the teacher perceived occurrence of the behavior.

The following scale may be used for interpreting scores:

Below 1.49	Rarely occurs
1.50 - 2.49	Occasionally occurs
2.50 - 3.49	Frequently occurs
3.50 and above	Almost Always occurs

Table 10
Frequency of Protective Behaviors Observed by Teachers
Of Their Own Classroom Students

During the last month, students in my classroom:	K	1	2	3	4	5	K-5
Cooperated well	2.7	3	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.2
Treated each other respectfully	3.4	3.1	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.2
Reached out to include others who were left out	3	2.7	2.6	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.7
Used specific strategies to calm themselves down	2.3	2.9	2.3	2.5	2.7	2.5	2.5
Solved their own conflicts without fighting (as needed)	2.7	2.9	2.7	3.2	3.0	2.7	2.8
Resisted peer pressure	2.4	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.6	2.5
Demonstrated careful choice-making, weighing options	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.7	2.9	2.8	2.7
Demonstrated understanding of other points of view	2.1	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.4	2.8	2.5

Table 11
Frequency of Teasing, Bullying and Protective Behaviors
Observed by Teachers of Their Own Classroom Students

During the last month, the following behavior was observed or reported to me:	K	1	2	3	4	5	K-5
Teasing, name-calling or exclusion	1.8	1.9	1.9	1.7	2.2	2.1	1.9
Bullying (the in-person kind)	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.7	1.5
Electronic bullying	1.1	1.0	.9	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Students stood up for themselves when teased or bullied (as needed)	2.4	2.5	2.1	2.4	2.4	2.1	2.3
Children supported peers who were being teased or bullied (as needed)	2.2	2.4	2.2	2.1	2.3	1.9	2.2

The data summarized in Tables 10 and 11 provides information about teachers' observations and perceptions of student behaviors. The frequency of observed protective behaviors indicates that teachers are noticing increased "cooperation" and "understanding the other's point of view" as students move through elementary school. Beginning in Grade 3, all observed behaviors are rated as at least "frequently or almost always occurring". Prior to grade 3, several behaviors ("demonstrating self-calming strategies" and in Kindergarten, "demonstrating

understanding of the other's point of view"), were rated as "occasionally occurring". These results would be expected from a developmental point of view.

In terms of teasing, bullying or electronic bullying, teachers consistently report rarely or occasionally observing or receiving reports of these behaviors. While there is an increase in observed teasing, name-calling or exclusion over the course of the elementary grades, the other behaviors are not reported with significant increases as student age. Teachers reported student "supportive" behaviors as "occasionally occurring" in response to teasing or bullying (overall 2.2 and 2.3 ratings.)

Recommendations:

This Elementary Social Emotional Learning Status Survey is the first of its kind to be administered in Needham. The goal for the administration was to answer the following questions:

- ❑ Has the current Professional Development model prepared teachers for implementation of Responsive Classroom and Second Step programs?
- ❑ What are teachers' preferences for professional development to address social emotional learning instruction?
- ❑ What components of Responsive Classroom and 2nd Step are teachers using? What components do they report as effective?
- ❑ What observable (or reportable) student behaviors do teachers observe in their classrooms in relation to social emotional skill instruction?

From the survey results, the district may want to consider the following:

Providing Training for All Teachers

The survey indicates a strong correlation between training, use of practices and perceived effectiveness, which suggests that the district look at training as a key next step.

- ❑ 13% of classroom teachers have not yet participated in Responsive Classroom professional development.
- ❑ 72-83% have not yet participated in either 2nd Step or other SEL training.
- ❑ The district should look for ways to expand the numbers of teachers who receive both the Responsive Classroom and Second Step trainings.

Identifying Preferred Professional Development Options

In thinking about when and how to offer professional development, survey results indicate that time is the greatest obstacle to both participating in professional development offerings and using RC and Second Step. Administrators and teachers need to plan together to determine professional development models.

- ❑ Trainings may need to be offered at multiple times to capture the schedules of different teachers (e.g. summer, Saturdays, after school).
- ❑ Teachers are interested in participating in professional learning groups to improve their SEL practices. Professional learning groups might benefit from teacher leaders receiving some training prior to the initiation of the groups.
- ❑ Principals and teachers should work together to establish expectations for implementation of RC and 2nd Step in the elementary schools.
- ❑ Classroom teachers want to expand their social emotional instructional strategies to reach students with Autism or Asperger's Syndrome. Opportunities should be provided for teachers to develop enrichment and support activities for classroom and specialist use with students with Autism and Asperger's Syndrome.

Developing Data Tools to Assess Student Behaviors

This survey offered an initial glimpse into the perception of classroom teachers around student behaviors. Since student skills that improve over time are the desired outcome, the district may want to expand the methods of gathering data about observable student behaviors, especially since the district has adopted a standards-based report card that includes standards for social/emotional learning.

- ❑ The district should redesign the Second Step trainings or design new training modules to include training in assessing student behavior, in order to support the standard's based progress report.
- ❑ The district should consider developing common assessment instruments and then providing teacher training on those assessments of social and emotional skills.

Investigating SEL Training and Implementation by Other Professional Staff

This survey was administered to classroom teachers only. Further investigation of the level of training and implementation of SEL programs by other professional and paraprofessional staff should include:

- ❑ Further exploration of specialist teacher, special educator, recess and lunchroom teacher use of Responsive Classroom strategies would provide more information about how to target professional development and support to ensure consistency across settings within the school.
- ❑ Interview elementary principals regarding their perceptions of SEL skill development in their buildings.

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