

The *Second Step* early learning program teaches children ages 3 to 5 core social-emotional and self-regulation skills. Skills for Learning, Empathy, Emotion Management, Problem Solving and Friendship Skills, and Transitioning to Kindergarten. Each weekly theme features short, five- to seven-minute activities that incorporate a variety of learning strategies:

- Puppet scripts, featuring two child puppets included in the kit
- Stories and discussions based on large color photos of typical early childhood scenarios
- Skill practices in small groups
- Songs that reinforce program skills and concepts, with a CD and lyric sheets included in the kit
- Brain Builder games that develop children’s ability to pay attention, remember directions, and control their behavior
- Visual aids, including a set of 20 feelings photos, three colorful posters, and four Listening Rules cards
- Home Link activities that families can do with children at home to reinforce skills

Head Start Performance Standard			Second Step Social-Emotional Skills for Early Learning
1304.21 (a) Education and Early Child Development: “Child development and education approach for all children”	1304.21 (a) (1) “In order to help children gain the skills and confidence necessary to be prepared to succeed in their present environment and with later responsibilities in school and life, grantee and delegate agencies’ approach to child development and education must...”	1304.21 (a) (1) (iii) “Provide an environment of acceptance that supports and respects gender, culture, language, ethnicity, and family composition”	Diverse children and adults are depicted in the photos and stories presented in the lessons. Program emphasizes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening to others • Identifying and understanding others’ feelings • Beginning to take others’ perspectives • Being kind to others • Fair ways to play • Inviting others to play
	1304.21 (a) (3) “Grantee and delegate agencies must support social and emotional development by...”	1304.21 (a) (3) (i) “Encouraging development that enhances each child’s strengths by: (A) Building trust (B) Fostering independence (C) Encouraging self-control by setting clear, consistent limits and having realistic expectations (D) Encouraging respect for the feelings and rights of others (E) Supporting and respecting the home language, culture, and family composition of each child in ways that support the child’s health and well-being”	The program encourages teachers to develop close bonds with children. It emphasizes the importance of teachers’ empathic responses to children. Group discussions build trust and safety.
			The Problem-Solving Unit helps children learn to solve their own problems in safe ways by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calming down their strong feelings when needed • Using their own words to describe their problems • Thinking of safe ideas for solving their own problems
			The program teaches children several self-control techniques, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using executive-function skills developed through playing specially designed Brain Builder games • Following Listening Rules: eyes watching, ears listening, voice quiet, body calm • Using an “attent-o-scope” to shut out distractions and help focus their attention • Using self-talk to help them stay in control • Using Calming-Down Steps, including belly breathing, to calm strong feelings
			The Empathy Unit emphasizes respect for others’ feelings and rights by helping children learn to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify others’ feelings • Begin to take others’ perspectives • Listen to others to show they care • Say or do something kind for someone else
			Diverse children and adults are depicted in the photos and stories presented in the lessons.

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<p><i>(continued)</i></p> <p>1304.21 (a) Education and Early Child Development: “Child development and education approach for all children”</p>	<p>1304.21 (a) (4) “Grantee and delegate agencies must provide for the development of each child’s cognitive and language skills by...”</p>	<p>1304.21 (a) (4) (i) “Supporting each child’s learning using various strategies, including experimentation, inquiry, observation, play, and exploration</p>	<p>The program supports the learning needs of each child by using the following varied learning strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puppet play and Story and Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Responding to questions - Paying attention to visual and situational cues - Interpreting stories - Listening to others • Skill practice in small groups, integrated into daily activities or at group time. • Songs that reinforce skills • Brain Builder games • Teachable moments and daily opportunities for practicing skills • Additional activities that connect program concepts to other curriculum areas • Home Links for practicing skills at home
		<p>1304.21 (a) (4) (ii) Ensuring opportunities for creative self-expression through activities such as art, music, movement, and dialogue</p>	<p>The program provides opportunities for self-expression through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating ideas during Story and Discussion • Songs • Skill-practice scenarios • Curriculum Connection Activities that link program concepts to other curriculum areas, including art, movement, and music
		<p>1304.21 (a) (4) (iii) Promoting interaction and language use among children and between children and adults</p>	<p>Story and Discussion promotes dialogue between teacher and children and among children.</p> <p>Home Links promote discussion between children and adult family members.</p>
		<p>1304.21 (a) (4) (iv) Supporting emerging literacy and numeracy development through materials and activities according to the developmental level of each child”</p>	<p>The puppet script, Story and Discussion, and skill-practice activities promote oral language and vocabulary development. Literacy and numeracy activities are included in the skill practices where appropriate.</p> <p>Each unit includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum Connection Activities that focus on literacy and/or numeracy • Suggestions for specific books that reinforce that unit’s objectives
<p>1304.21 (c) Education and Early Child Development: “Child development and education approach for preschoolers”</p>	<p>1304.21 (c) (1) “Grantee and delegate agencies, in collaboration with the parents, must implement a curriculum that...”</p>	<p>1304.21 (c) (1) (i) “Supports each child’s individual pattern of development and learning</p>	<p>The program encourages teachers to support each child in the development of program skills. It outlines a process for individually coaching children to use program skills.</p>
		<p>1304.21 (c) (1) (ii) Provides for the development of cognitive skills by encouraging each child to organize his or her experiences, to understand concepts, and to develop age-appropriate literacy, numeracy, reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making skills, which form a foundation for school readiness and later school success</p>	<p>The Skills for Learning Unit focuses on building skills that help children learn and prepare for future schooling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening • Focusing attention • Using self-talk • Asking for help <p>The Emotion-Management Unit supports development of cognitive skills by building vocabulary and helping children manage themselves in a learning environment.</p> <p>The Problem-Solving Unit teaches children how to solve problems by beginning to use a simple problem-solving process. This process helps children develop their own decision-making abilities.</p> <p>Curriculum Connection Activities focus on literacy, numeracy, and other curriculum areas.</p>
		<p>1304.21 (c) (1) (iv) Ensures that the program environment helps children develop emotional security and facility in social relationships”</p>	<p>The program develops social-emotional and self-regulation skills. It teaches these through Brain Builder games to develop executive function skills and its five units:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Skill for Learning 2. Empathy 3. Emotion Management 4. Friendship Skills and Problem Solving 5. Transitioning to Kindergarten

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<p><i>(continued)</i></p> <p>1304.21 (c) Education and Early Child Development: “Child development and education approach for preschoolers”</p>	<p>1304.21 (c) (1) “Grantee and delegate agencies, in collaboration with the parents, must implement a curriculum that...”</p>	<p>1304.21 (c) (1) (v) “Enhances each child’s understanding of self as an individual and as a member of a group</p>	<p>The program fosters participation in group discussions with encouragement to express thoughts and feelings. Skill practices provide the opportunity for children to develop their own skills while working with others.</p>
		<p>1304.21 (c) (1) (vi) Provides each child with opportunities for success to help develop feelings of competence, self-esteem, and positive attitudes toward learning</p>	<p>The following strategies promote feelings of competence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story and Discussion, through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Open-ended questions - Encouragement to express opinions • Skill Practice, through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunities for individuals to practice and refine skills - Scaffolding skill acquisition so that all children experience success
		<p>1304.21 (c) (1) (vii) Provides individual and small-group experiences, both indoors and outdoors”</p>	<p>Many skill practices and Curriculum Connection Activities provide the opportunity for children to work with partners or small groups.</p>
<p>1304.40 (e) Family Partnerships: “Parent involvement in child development and education”</p>	<p>1304.40 (e) (3) “Grantee and delegate agencies must provide opportunities for parents to enhance their parenting skills, knowledge, and understanding of the educational and developmental needs and activities of their children and to share concerns about their children with program staff”</p>		<p>Home Links familiarize the adult family members with what children are learning in the program and provide the opportunity for the adults and children to practice lesson skills together.</p> <p>Four family letters provide information about the program and tips for developing programs skills at home, along with a code for gaining access to online resources. These are available in Spanish.</p> <p>Committee for Children hosts an online community for families and caregivers to get information, share, and collaborate with others.</p>
	<p>1304.40 (e) (4) “Grantee and delegate agencies must provide, either directly or through referrals to other local agencies, opportunities for children and families to participate in family literacy services by...”</p>	<p>1304.40 (e) (4) (i) “Increasing family access to materials, services, and activities essential to family literacy development”</p>	<p>Home Links provide the opportunity for families and children to build literacy skills as they talk about program photos and stories.</p> <p>A letter for families about the importance of talking about books and asking questions related to core literacy and program skills is included.</p> <p>All four family letters offer a code for gaining access to online resources, such as lists of books that reinforce program concepts.</p>
<p>1304.40 (h) Family Partnerships: “Parent involvement in transition activities”</p>	<p>1304.40 (h) (1) “Grantee and delegate agencies must assist parents in becoming their children’s advocate as they transition both into Early Head Start or Head Start from the home or other child care setting, and from Head Start to elementary school, a Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act preschool program, or a child care setting”</p>		<p>The program now includes a unit to help children prepare for the transition to kindergarten. Home Links that accompany this unit provide information and activities for families and caregivers that will help them prepare their children for the transition.</p>
<p>1304.52 (i) Human Resources Management: “Training and development”</p>	<p>1304.52 (i) (3) “At a minimum, this system must include ongoing opportunities for staff to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to implement the content of the Head Start Program Performance Standards”</p>		<p>An online Teaching Guide provides an orientation to all aspects of the program and includes a wide range of video models of the program in action. An accompanying Facilitators’ Toolkit outlines a step-by-step process for providing on-site professional development in how to implement the program.</p>