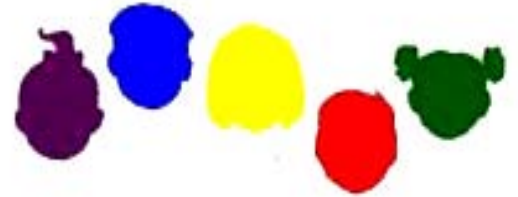


In Step! with First Step to Success



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Update from Hill Walker, Ph.D., Principal Investigator

The First Step (FS) program continues to be adopted and implemented across the U.S. and Canada. This early intervention program has

proven to be popular with educators and parents alike. First Step is regarded as a cost-effective intervention for students who struggle with the process of schooling. It's primary purpose is to help these students get off to the best possible start in their school careers and to achieve a successful schooling experience. Research shows that school success acts as a buffer against a large number of adolescent health risk behaviors including violent, delinquent acts, sexually transmitted diseases, heavy drinking, low achievement, and behavioral episodes in school. FS is one more example of the power of catching problems early on in their development.

FS was initially developed through a 4-year model development grant from the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs and was a cooperative effort of researchers from the U of O, ORI, OSLC and the Eugene School District 4J. The program was published by Sopris West, Inc. in 1997. We have continued to conduct research on the FS program since it was published and this work has been supported by a continuing series of federal and state grants.

Currently, we have two large center grants from the Institute of Education Sciences within the U.S. Department of Education. The first of these grants is 4 years in duration and was funded in the fall of 2004. The bulk of activities within this grant takes place in the Albuquerque Public School System and there is also a subcontract to Dr. Rob Horner of the U of O to conduct research on those students who prove to be unresponsive or less responsive to the First Step intervention. The primary focus of this work is on establishing the **efficacy** of First Step. Efficacy refers to the outcomes of an intervention which is conducted under idealized conditions (i.e. close supervision by developers, grant funded support, training of implementers, provision of technical assistance and so forth). So far, our results look

very promising regarding the efficacy of First Step.

We have a second, large center grant, in collaboration with Mary Wagner of SRI International that is five years in duration and was funded in March of 2006. This grant, in contrast to the efficacy study, is designed to assess the **effectiveness** of FS; that is, to measure the impact of the program under less than idealized conditions where it is implemented as part of the normal routines of schooling. The program's developers have only limited contact with implementers and the implementation sites within an effectiveness study. It is much more difficult to establish positive outcomes within an effectiveness study than in an efficacy study; however, when achieved, they are far more meaningful. As part of this effort, we are conducting large scale implementations of First Step in five sites across the country (San Jose and Los Angeles, CA; Chicago, Tampa, and Oregon). Students in these sites will be followed up over a two year period to see how well their gains are sustained.

We are excited about this research and believe that it will do much to establish the impact of First Step. Recently, we completed a five year study of adapting FS for effective use with Head Start children. This project was funded by the U.S. Agency for Children and Families. Also, we just submitted two grant applications to the National Institutes of Health. One is focused on evaluating the preschool version of First Step and the other is designed to evaluate an enhanced version of the HomeBase Component of First Step which teaches parents and caregivers how to develop school success skills in their children at home in collaboration with the child's school.

So far, First Step has been included in ten national reviews of recommended early interventions for addressing problems of conduct and aggressive behavior among K-3 level students. We are gratified at such a positive response to the program and what it offers to target children, teachers, parents and caregivers. We look forward to our continued work on First Step and that conducted by colleagues. ♥

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Behavior Coach Profile: Dwight Osborne

Dwight Osborne has been a Behavior Coach for two students this Fall and will work with two new students this Spring. Mr. Osborne, age 58, has worked at P.A.E.C. (Proviso Area Exceptional Children) in Maywood, IL, for 6 years. Previously he was a Deputy Chief in the Markham fire department and a paramedic.

"I was a skeptic at first", admits Mr. Osborne. "I did not think wearing a card around your neck and giving some rewards would change behavior, but I was wrong." Mr. Osborne's assignments as a Behavior Intervention Specialist typically had him working with some very challenging students at the Middle and High School level. "I've been called every name in the book by these students", comments Osborne. But he described working with first and second grade students (as part of the First Step program) as "absolutely wonderful."

He says, "I have never seen this kind of improvement in any behavior program before. But parents have to do their job too". The mother of one of his students said that her son "seemed like a whole different child". Osborne said that he has such faith in the First Step program now that "I'd put a big heavy traffic light around my neck if that's what the program required, because it works!" 🍷



Setting Up for Success: Additional Ideas for Parents

Develop consistent expectations and routines.

Children need predictability to help them make choices. Children feel more comfortable and safe if they know what to expect.

Give advance notice.

Transitions can be easier for children if they know a change will be coming ("In five minutes it will be time to start getting ready for bed.")

Model the positive behavior.

Children copy what adults do and say. Always model how you want your child to behave.

Re-arrange the environment.

Plan for success. Think of how things could be changed to make it more likely that your child will do the desired behavior. For example, put a clothes hamper in a place that your child is most likely to use it (their bedroom or bathroom vs. laundry room).

Remember to Use Humor.

Don't make a mountain out of a molehill! 🍷



A student enjoys pizza at a class pizza party paid for by coach Osborne.



Dwight Osborne with his 2nd Grade class.



Dwight listens to participating First Step student.

Parent Letter

The First Step program has really helped my family and me in a lot of ways. My son Albert started acting out in kindergarten and I couldn't figure out why. Was it the fact that I had started back in school and his schedule changed for 3 nights out of the week? Was it that his dad was away in a special program? Or, was it simply his school environment. I didn't know. However, Albert was always a very friendly and approachable little boy, and when his attitude became so bad and even violent at times, when provoked, I knew I needed professional help.

When we changed his school, we were invited into the First Step program. The teacher, along with other members of the school staff, felt it was needed and could help. I quickly agreed to participate, but had no idea of the huge impact it would have on my son's attitude and everyday influence. The school officials, my family members, and I noticed a positive change almost immediately. Albert was a lot more thoughtful about his actions, and appeared to be calmer when doing everyday tasks. He talked to me about the things that June, his behavioral counselor, had taught him, and how much he liked her. I met June on several occasions as well, and she always assured me that I had a smart and workable kid. Albert became a better student and more open to the school rules.

The First Step program gave me back the confidence I needed as well. I am now able to go to work, without worrying if I will get a call from the school, because of another incident. I thank the First Step program for this, and am grateful that my son and I were given the chance to better ourselves.

Brandy Warren

Albuquerque Schools Report Color-Coded Cards Produce Positive Behavior Changes

Adapted from Albuquerque Public Schools "School Matters" February 2007 newsletter

Linda Martin, who teaches third grade at Lowell Elementary School, is impressed with the speed and effectiveness of 'First Step to Success,' the Oregon Research Institute's behavior study now in place in 165 Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) elementary classrooms. "Wow — it's very powerful," Martin says. "This year I had the most difficult class of my career, but the beauty of this program is that it's effective and simple.

"The parent is often well aware of the difficulties with their child and I present the green card/red card project as something positive to help," Martin says. "Once in the program, they see a difference. That's an important component for keeping the parent involved — it's essential."

Deborah Duncan, APS Special Education coordinator and APS liaison to Oregon Research Institute, works with the institute to train the APS specialists who spend five days in the classroom with each teacher, modeling how the color-coded card worn around the teacher's neck functions as a visual signal for good or bad behavior. Says Duncan, "The really dynamic piece is the home-based component. The parents are trained by the coaches and get involved in positive behavior support. The beauty of this program is its simplicity. The changes in students are dramatic, and it doesn't just help the student, the whole classroom environment changes."

First Step is a coordinated research effort involving APS, the Oregon Research Institute (Hill Walker, Ph.D., Herb Severson, and Beth Graham) and Loretta Serna, University of New Mexico. ♥



Teacher Linda Martin finds using the First Step color-coded card with her students an effective way of reinforcing good behavior and discouraging bad behavior at Lowell Elementary

Teacher Profile: Denise Robbins

Denise Robbins, a third grade teacher at Roosevelt Elementary, in Broadview, IL, has been teaching at the school for six years. When asked about her initial reaction to the First Step program, she replied "I wondered what type of cultures and communities it had been used in before. On the training video we saw parents who responded right away. I wondered would the parents at our schools respond and participate as quickly."



Roosevelt Elementary third grade teacher Denise Robbins.

"But, it turned out to be all really positive," Robbins commented. "The First Step student would tell me how her mother would read to her, and she really liked that. She was so excited about the class rewards and really liked being the star." The P.E. teacher, Music teacher and another third grade teacher who had the student also used the First Step program and it worked really well, according to Ms. Robbins.

The only difficulty Denise experienced in running the First Step program was that when the Behavior Coach transitioned the program to the teacher's control on the sixth day, the student was a little let down because she had become so attached to the Coach. Otherwise, she felt the program was very successful and Ms. Robbins is now having other students in her class participate in the First Step program. ♥

Upcoming Events

First Step to Success Training
April 16-17 in Eugene, Oregon
To register, e-mail ejm@ori.org

Resources

First Step Hotline:
E-mail FirstStepHotline@ori.org with questions about the program and receive an answer within 24 hours. If an immediate response is needed, call 541-225-8695.

First Step to Success Resource Website:
www.firststeptosuccess.org

First Step to Success program materials:
Available from www.sopriswest.com.

First Step to Success National Effectiveness Study Website: <https://firststeptosuccess.sri.com>

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. My first grader, Seth, is on day 9 of the First Step program. He does a great job while playing the “Green/Red” card game. However, as soon as the game is over, he gets up out of his seat, bothers other children and doesn’t follow directions. Please advise.

A. It is difficult to know exactly what is going on with the limited information provided. Usually when young children misbehave they are trying to get a need met: (1) Attention and (2) Escape/Avoidance. An efficient way to get those needs met is through misbehavior. It is often difficult for a child to get attention when doing the right thing, while inappropriate behavior gets noticed right away. Assuming that he is redirected, warned, talked to etc. after the game is over, I recommend that you do the following:

1. Talk to Seth and tell him how well he does during the game and that you need his help the rest of the day by doing “Green Card behavior.”
2. Tell him “You never know when you’ll get a surprise if you follow directions even when you’re not “playing” the Green/Red card game.
3. Keep the computer beeper on the rest of the day to remind you to notice Seth at least every 10 minutes. When he is following directions, give him positive feedback; if not, give positive feedback to a child nearby who is doing the right thing.
4. Role-play “green card” behavior with him. Let him know that even though the game is over, he still needs to have ‘Green card” behavior.”
5. Use the words:” *That’s green card behavior*” with the entire class.
6. When Seth has had a good period, provide him with a “surprise.” Let him do something he enjoys such as: taking a note to the office, playing a few minutes on the computer, draw a picture, play with a special toy. Use these “surprises” intermittently for other students as well.
7. Minimize a lot of attention for minor inappropriate behaviors.
8. Pre-correct the entire class as follows: “As soon as I’ve asked you to go back to your desk, you need to take out your journal and pencil and work quietly until I call you to the next group.” “Who can tell me what you are going to do?” “Can you get up and walk around the room?” “Can you talk to others?” “Can you get up to get a drink?” “I’m going to watch for people making good choices.”
9. Take time to provide the entire class with positive feedback, as appropriate, about every 10 minutes.
10. Provide positive feedback to Seth by giving him a thumbs up, a wink, a pat on the shoulder, a smiley face on his paper, a stamp on his hand and/or a positive comment. ♥

Q. I am a First Step coach and have successfully implemented the program with several students. I am working with a 7-year old girl, Amy, who has made incredible changes as a result of the program. She is on day 14 and doing very well. I’ve been trying to meet with her mom to conduct homeBase with no success. Mom either cancels or doesn’t show up for appointments. I’ve suggested she come to the school or meeting near her work for coffee. I feel very frustrated.

A. Many coaches in the past 10 years have experienced similar problems. First of all, keep focusing on the success the child is having at school. Keep reinforcing the teacher for doing a great job. The most important goal is to help the child be as successful as possible in school in spite of having a non-participating parent. Next I would try the following:

1. See if you can conduct the homeBase meetings over the phone.
2. Send the weekly homeBase materials home with the child, bring them yourself, or mail them to the parent.
3. Give the parents the English or Spanish version of the homeBase tape for Parents (available from Elizabeth Mondulick , ejm@ori.org). Ask the parent to watch one segment a week.
4. Call or e-mail the parent at least once a week to ask how things are going.

If you still don’t get a response, try to find someone at the school (e.g., counselor, teaching assistant, parent volunteer, teacher) who is willing to spend a few minutes each day with the child doing the homeBase activities. ♥

TIPS to Help Busy Students be More Focused and Successful

*Courtesy of Judy Arthur
First Step Coordinator
Washington County, Oregon*

- Make a heavy Beanbag pillow to lie across their lap.
- When students are to work quietly, turn on soft music.
- Reduce visual stimulation in the classroom.
- Let students in the back of the classroom sit on their knees. Then make sure the “busy” student sits in the back!
- Give the student a prescribed amount of work to do and allow him or her to get up for some brief activity when it is completed (ex.: “When you finish your picture raise your hand so I can have you come show it to me”).