

# GUIDANCE NEWS



TMS Guidance Department Newsletter

October 2017

## Second Step Curriculum

### *What is Second Step?*

*Second Step* is a school-wide, research based comprehensive program that teaches life skills to students in grades 6 - 8. The goals of the *Second Step Middle* school program are to decrease aggression, bullying, and substance abuse and increase students' social skills and school success. The program meets its goals by teaching the following skills: Empathy and Communication, Bullying Prevention, Emotion Management, and Substance Abuse Prevention. Skill lessons are taught in class by guidance counselors, and teachers, twice a month.

In September, students were taught skills that contribute to successful group work. In October, students were taught how to distinguish between disrespectful and respectful disagreement. The lessons taught in October included communicating one's own perspective, as well as considering the perspective of others. In November, students will be taught problem-solving steps, using strategies of negotiation and compromise (win-win strategies). In December, students will be taught when and how to go to an adult for help, and when to encourage friends to seek help from an adult.

*Second Step* has a strong family component, and we encourage you to check it out! Materials such as videos and take-home materials, encourage discussion, thought, and communication between students, teachers, and families.

### *Create an account.*

If you have not done so already, please create your own *Second Step* account to follow along with our curriculum throughout the school year.

Go to [www.secondstep.org](http://www.secondstep.org). Create an account using the following activation codes depending on your student's grade level:

Grade 6: SSP6 H1WH MU55

Grade 7: SSP7 45GL WNL6

Grade 8: SSP8 58D5 XRGF

(Our school is listed under our old name "W.K. Doyle Middle School".) If you have children in multiple grade levels, you can add each kit (grade) to your account.

Once your account is created, click on the "Families" section where you will find some great resources to use at home with your student. This includes an overview of

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## Second Step Curriculum

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lessons, homework, benefits of the curriculum and several downloads including:

- Homework Reflective Writing Activities
- Family Letters
- Action Steps Chart
- Follow-up Activities for Families

We encourage you to ask questions about the skills your student is learning, such as:

- How do you show you are actively listening to someone?
- Why should you try to understand other people's perspective?
- What does it mean to have empathy, and how does it help you in school?
- What are the steps you use to negotiate and compromise?
- Why does it help to consider someone else's perspective when you negotiate and compromise?

## Talking to Children About Current Events

It is difficult to turn on the TV, or use social media, without hearing or reading upsetting news stories, ranging from natural disasters, terrorism, threats of nuclear bombs, to politics in the NFL. Disasters, such as the recent hurricanes and earthquake, may leave children with long-lasting effects, and when children experience traumatic events, watch news stories, or overhear others discussing current events, they may feel scared, confused, or anxious. Some children react right away. Others do not. But, as adults we do not always know when a child needs help coping.

It is a common reaction to want to shield your kids from scary news, but most teenagers will have already been exposed to the story without you even knowing. Kids of all ages may have difficulty fully understanding these current events and may benefit from talking these issues through with an understanding adult.

Here are some tips from the American Psychological Association (APA), Common Sense Media, and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association (SAMSA) on how to approach these difficult conversations:

- **Be aware of your own reactions.** Your kids will look to you and observe how you are handling the situation. By staying calm and rational, this will help your kids to remain calm and rational, as well.
- **Find a quiet moment.** Dinner table? Riding in the car? This should be the time and place that your child can have your undivided attention.
- **Check in with your kids.** Kids may have already heard about an event from another source, so it is important to ask what they have already heard and to listen.
- **Be aware of temperaments and maturity levels.** These factors should influence what your kids are allowed to view/listen to, and your explanations.
- **Be honest.** Tell your kids the facts about the news, without including unnecessary graphic details, and at a level that is developmentally appropriate. Sometimes, "I don't know," will be an appropriate answer. Ex. "Why did the bad people do this?" "I don't know" fits.

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## Attendance: Absences Add Up

### Attendance is Crucial!!

Encouraging regular school attendance is one of the most powerful ways you can prepare your child for success—both in school and in life. When you make school attendance a priority, you help your child get better grades, develop healthy life habits, avoid dangerous behavior and have a better chance of graduating from high school.

When students are absent for fewer days, their grades and reading skills often improve, they feel more connected to their school community, develop important social skills and friendships, and are significantly more likely to graduate from high school. But when kids are absent for an average of just two days of school per month—even when the absences are excused—it can have a negative impact. These absences can affect kids as early as Kindergarten.

As a parent, you can prepare your child for a lifetime of success by making regular school attendance a priority. Talk with your child and identify the reasons for their absences or avoidance of school. If needed, please contact our school supports to help your child be successful!!

### Absences Add Up!!!

2 Absent Days Per Month x 6  
Hours Per Day x 9 Months of  
School = 108 Hours of School

\*As cited from [www.absencesaddup.org](http://www.absencesaddup.org)

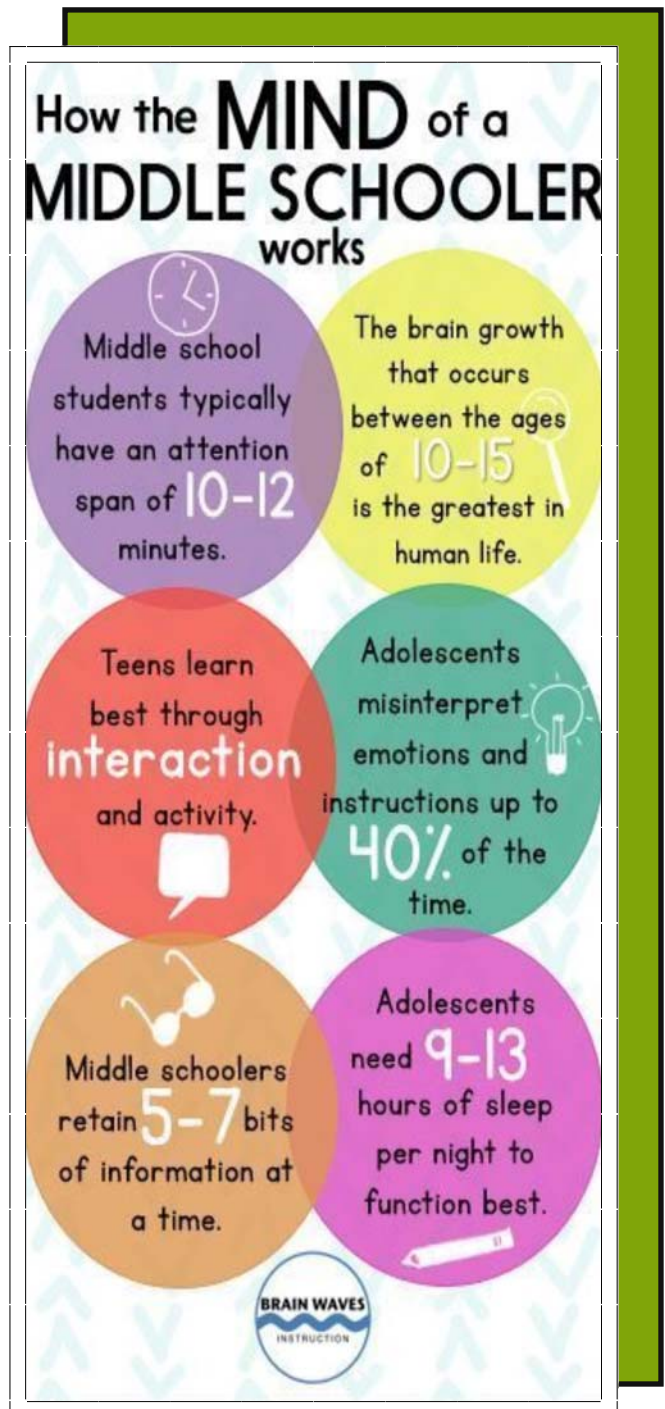


# Reducing Aggression in Adolescents

If you have a child in middle school, you have certainly dealt with an aggressive adolescent. Whether it's verbal or physical, middle school students frequently lash out, leaving you, the parent, wondering: What is going on in my child's brain right now and how do I make this stop?

Here are some suggestions to help reduce adolescent aggression.

- Make sure your child is getting enough, and proper, sleep. You middle schooler should be getting at least 9 hours of sleep. And take away that cell phone at night! Many kids keep their phones near them all night, interrupting their sleep.
- KEEP CALM! As hard as it is, yelling doesn't help the situation.
- Look for a pattern. If it always happens when you tell your child to do homework, maybe they need more support. Or maybe having a snack while they do homework helps. Find out what about that period of time bothers them and how you can work around it, as a team.
- Teach self-calming techniques. Aromatherapy - I use lavender or vanilla hand lotion - can be great! Dim the lights. Turn off all the noise - or listen to calming music.
- Teach your child empathy. Help them learn to see the situation from another point of view.
- Teach your child to analyze the situation before reacting. Many times, they misinterpreted something and are reacting to their understanding of expectations or situations, not the actual expectations or situations.
- EXERCISE!! Get your child out and running or biking or even playing with the dog. Exercise increases serotonin, which is believed to improve moods.
- Give your child space! Middle school students are told what to do all day; sometimes they need a mental break. Help them take one in an appropriate manner.



# Talking to Children About Current Events

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- **Share your feelings.** Your children will see that you are human, and that even though you may be upset, you can pull yourself together and continue on. If you feel *angry, refrain from losing control (screaming, punching walls, etc.), so that your children do not become even more scared. Being a role model applies to emotions as well.*
- **Help children express their emotions.** This can be done through conversation, writing, drawing, and singing. Most children *want to talk about a trauma, so let them. Accept their feelings and tell them it is okay to feel sad, upset, or stressed. Pay attention and be a good listener.*
- **Teachable moment.** If human violence or error caused an event, it is important to be careful not to blame a cultural, racial, or ethnic group, or persons with psychiatric disabilities. This may be a good opportunity to talk with children about discrimination and diversity. Let children know that they (a group of people) are not to blame when bad things happen.
- **Reassure safety.** Tell them that they are loved and that you will do what you can to keep them safe. Also, tell your kids that you are available to talk about this topic in the future.
- **Take action.** Depending on the event, kids may be able to take action and help those affected to help make a positive impact (e.g., write letters/postcards, give donations, have fundraisers). This may help children understand that sometimes good can come out of a trauma.

For more detailed information on talking with your kids about difficult news, please visit these resources:

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/talking-to-children.aspx>

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/blog/explaining-the-news-to-our-kids#>

<http://store.samhsa.gov/>

If your child is having difficulty coping with an event, please reach out to the Troy Middle School Guidance Department for support, information, and referrals to community providers.

TCSD

## Troy Middle School Guidance Department

### School Counselors

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## Troy Middle School

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We're on the Web! [www.troycsd.org](http://www.troycsd.org)

