An Exploration of the Experience of Implementing
the Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum
in One Primary General Learning Disabilities Class

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Submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education
Faculty of Education, Brock University
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©July 2001
Abstract

Violence has always been a part of the human experience, and therefore, a popular topic for research. It is a controversial issue, mostly because the possible sources of violent behaviour are so varied, encompassing both biological and environmental factors. However, very little disagreement is found regarding the severity of this societal problem.

Most researchers agree that the number and intensity of aggressive acts among adults and children is growing. Not surprisingly, many educational policies, programs, and curricula have been developed to address this concern. The research favours programs which address the root causes of violence and seek to prevent rather than provide consequences for the undesirable behaviour. But what makes a violence prevention program effective? How should educators choose among the many curricula on the market?

After reviewing the literature surrounding violence prevention programs and their effectiveness, The Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum surfaced as unique in many ways. It was designed to address the root causes of violence in an active, student-centred way. Empathy training, anger management, interpersonal cognitive problem solving, and behavioural social skills form the basis of this program. Published in 1992, the program has been the topic of limited research, almost entirely carried out using quantitative methodologies.
The purpose of this study was to understand what happens when the Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum is implemented with a group of students and teachers. I was not seeking a statistical correlation between the frequency of violence and program delivery, as in most prior research. Rather, I wished to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of the program through the eyes of the participants.

The Second Step Program was taught to a small, primary level, general learning disabilities class by a teacher and student teacher. Data were gathered using interviews with the teachers, personal observations, staff reports, and my own journal. Common themes across the four types of data collection emerged during the study, and these themes were isolated and explored for meaning.

Findings indicate that the program does not offer a "quick fix" to this serious problem. However, several important discoveries were made. The teachers felt that the program was effective despite a lack of concrete evidence to support this claim. They used the Second Step strategies outside their actual instructional time and felt it made them better educators and disciplinarians. The students did not display a marked change in their behaviour during or after the program implementation, but they were better able to speak about their actions, the source of their aggression, and the alternatives which were available. Although they were not yet transferring their knowledge into positive action, a
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heightened awareness was evident. Finally, staff reports and my own journal led me to a deeper understanding of how perception frames reality. The perception that the program was working led everyone to feel more empowered when a violent incident occurred, and efforts were made to address the cause rather than merely to offer consequences. A general feeling that we were addressing the problem in a productive way was prevalent among the staff and students involved. The findings from this investigation have many implications for research and practice. Further study into the realm of violence prevention is greatly needed, using a balance of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Such a serious problem can only be effectively addressed with a greater understanding of its complexities. This study also demonstrates the overall positive impact of the Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum and, therefore, supports its continued use in our schools.
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to a number of people who have contributed greatly to my thesis.

A special thanks goes to the participants in this study. Their willingness to share, learn and teach was greatly appreciated.

I would also like to thank Dr. Susan Drake, my thesis advisor. Her guidance through the “uncharted waters” of qualitative research was invaluable. Susan’s unending patience, flexibility and professionalism will not soon be forgotten.

My thanks are also extended to the members of my thesis committee, Dr. Sharon Abbey and Dr. Susan Sydor, for their encouragement, advice, and support throughout the development of my thesis. It has been a pleasure working with such a diverse group of intelligent, committed women.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for the emotional support, patience and love shown during the creation of this document. A special thanks goes to Jeff for seeing me through to the bitter end. Although this has been a personal journey, largely completed in isolation in front of the computer, I have never felt alone.

Thank you all.
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CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM

Introduction & Background

If anyone had asked me years ago what topic I might choose to investigate in a Masters of Education Program, I’m pretty sure I would have chosen something pertaining to my own experiences as an elementary or secondary student: literature based language programs, gifted education classes, or involvement in extra-curricular activities as they relate to academic achievement or satisfaction with school. Such topics, rooted in my own limited, middle-class upbringing, would have brought great personal satisfaction – many years ago.

At the time I began my research, I was a teacher and vice principal in an inner-city school, and as a result of this experience my world view has changed dramatically. Academic study took a back seat to providing basic needs, such as food, clothing, and safety for my students. My school had the distinction of being “Number One” in my Board of Education in terms of at-risk students (those with learning difficulties, financial need, social, and emotional problems, etc.). Many of our students were “street kids,” who looked after themselves and set their own rules. One needed only to read their journals to discover the reality of life in the neighbourhood, where verbal and physical violence is the norm. The idea of backing down from a confrontation is viewed as an embarrassment, a sign of weakness and an invitation for further violence. A nine-year-old student once told
me, “If you chicken out once, then they come after you again. If you stay and fight, even if you lose, at least they’ll think twice about messing with you the next time.”

At the time, I was responsible for 300 of these children, each with unique desires, needs, and abilities. I witnessed countless acts of violence which were senseless and, it seemed to me, preventable. I found myself asking “Why?” and eventually “How can I stop this?”

In addition to these classroom and school-based experiences, the media was increasingly bombarding me with images of violence among youth and children. High profile violent incidents involving youth, both on and off school property, flooded newspapers and television, such as the Jonesboro boys (aged 11 and 13) who killed four students and a teacher, injuring ten others, at Westside Middle School in 1998 (Moritz, 2000). In Williamsport, Pennsylvania, a 13-year-old girl shot a classmate during lunch at her Catholic school in 2001 (Associated Press, 2001). Certainly, the incident at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, in 1998, springs to mind as one of the most sweeping and devastating examples of this trend. One teacher and 12 students were shot and killed by two other students, who then shot themselves in the school library (Marini et al., 2000; Roher & Wormwell, 2000). Such senseless acts of violence involving young people graced the pages of the daily news with increasing fury as if it were an everyday reality.
I, along with the rest of our society, sat and wondered why and how did my students, and children in general, become victimizers and bullies? As a teacher and administrator, I worried about my own students and struggled to provide a sense of security and safety within the classroom and on the playground. I wanted to ensure that 6 hours of each weekday would be peaceful. Reactivity, vigilance, and constant surveillance were somewhat effective, but I kept feeling like I was merely keeping a lid on a pot of boiling water. Eventually, it would boil over and there would be nothing I could do to stop it. This made me wonder if there was a way to "cool the waters" before they boiled out of control. Could I make a genuine difference in the way these students deal with conflict situations? Could I teach them to manage violent emotions and situations in such a way that it would overflow into the other 18 hours of the day?

Inspired by this idea, I looked for teaching resources to help my students. I was also prompted into action by other staff who came to me seeking advice and guidance in dealing with aggressive behaviour among their students. I wanted to suggest and implement a more pro-active strategy rather than merely reacting to situations as they occurred. I observed and worked with a number of behaviour modification programs, self-esteem curricula, and other instructional resources. None seemed to make the dramatic impression I was seeking.
It was at that time that I began my search for a program that was created specifically for violence prevention. There were many available on the market, each with their own specific gimmick, sales pitch, and promises for immediate and dramatic change. After working with a few of them and seeing first-hand the similarities, differences, strengths, and weaknesses, my questioning began to shift from one of mere program effectiveness to that of wanting to understand the experience. What really happens with teachers and students when such a program is used? Is there a change? Do the waters cool?

Thus, I chose to study the implementation of violence prevention curriculum, to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of teachers and students involved. I wanted to know more about the reality of violence among students and ways in which the prevention curriculum available on the market could be improved. Also, I hoped that some of my nagging questions, as listed above, might be answered along the way.

**Problem Situation**

Based upon my reading, three main assumptions are presented in the violence literature. First, there is the assumption that we live in a violent society. Second, society assumes that there is violence in schools; and thirdly, there are curriculum documents and programs that are available to assist educators in dealing with this problem.
If the assumptions are correct, one is left wondering what really happens when these curricula are used in schools. There is very little research to indicate what the experience of educators, students, and the school community is when using such a program.

Thus, the problem issue is that of violence among elementary school children with particular interest placed upon the many “prevention curricula” available for educator use. To further focus my research, one particular program, the Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum, was researched, critiqued, and used in a primary general learning disabilities class (Appendix A). I was the vice principal as well as the researcher at this time. I believed that the nature of this class, at-risk students in the primary grades, would make an interesting and relevant sample group. There were frequent incidents of violence among these students and the research I had done regarding the effectiveness of violence prevention curriculum indicated that attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour could more easily be changed when dealing with younger primary students.

**Purpose of this Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the implementation of the Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum when it was used with a primary general learning disabilities class. This was accomplished through a qualitative methodology, using observations, interviews, journals, and behaviour reports. It is
hoped that a detailed examination of the experience of the teachers and students will lead to a better understanding of what really happens when violence prevention curriculum is implemented in a classroom.

**Research Question**

The question which drove this research is the following: “What happens when we use the Second Step program with children and teachers?” In asking this question it was hoped that further illumination of the overall experience would be achieved. Specifically, it was hoped that a sense of program effectiveness, staff satisfaction and other unique and new areas for future research would come to the surface.

In addition, I hoped to learn more about the specific changes which may occur among students and teachers participating in a violence prevention program. Are attitudes and beliefs affected? If so, in what way? Are specific teacher behaviours altered, and in what ways? Is the school culture affected by the implementation of such a program? As an administrator and a teacher, these issues are also of importance.

**Rationale**

There are several reasons for study in the area of violence prevention.

First, there is my own personal motivation, as an administrator and teacher, to understand this phenomenon. I am seeking illumination and a greater
understanding of violence among children, and therefore, study in this area would be highly valuable from a personal standpoint.

Second, research points to an increasing level of violence in our society, or at the very least, an increasing concern. The literature points to several theories of causality such as biological factors (e.g., gender, neurological factors, and genetics) and environmental factors (e.g., media, parenting, and play deprivation), but also advocates for prevention strategies (Day, Golench, MacDougall & Beals-Gonzalez, 1995; Sherrow, 1996). The education system has often been given the task of implementing prevention programs, but a clear directive has not been provided. Without being given a standard curriculum or a mandatory program, educators are left with many questions. What works? How does it work? What else happens?

Third, although many programs exist, the Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum is relatively new and has received some positive reviews, which will be detailed in coming chapters. Its foundation in educational research and developmental psychology and its focus on skill development make it unique among violence-prevention programs. The potential for positive results with this program, along with the need for further study, make it suitable for use in my research.
Finally, the study of violence and violence prevention has largely been conducted using quantitative methodologies and, therefore, has been searching for one truth or a measurable cause and effect relationship (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). Although this is a valid and important method of study, it seems that the desire to understand the phenomenon of violence is growing. A qualitative or interpretive model would provide a better sense of understanding and meaning (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

**Significance**

As the literature review will indicate, the area of violence among children and youth and the concept of prevention curriculum is an important area of study. Although a good deal of research has been conducted to learn more about this issue, there are gaps in the literature. First, the area of violence prevention curriculum implementation has not been extensively researched. Instead, the focus has often been upon the nature or roots of violence and violent offenders. Also, there is little qualitative data pertaining to violence prevention and thus a limited understanding of what really happens when a teacher uses such a program in his/her classroom. A deeper understanding of the implementation process will provide personal and professional satisfaction and also add a new and unique way of looking at the issue of violence and prevention.
First, there are many personal reasons for conducting research in the area of violence prevention. As an educator, a school administrator, and a member of society, I have great personal interest in this topic. In particular, as an administrator, I am aware that principals are charged with the duty to protect students in their care and provide a safe learning environment. Anything I can learn to help me fulfil this duty is of personal value and important to others in the role.

From a broader perspective, it would seem that the general population will be interested in what such a study might reveal as well. I base this upon my perception of the increased quantity and frequency of media coverage of violent incidents among our youth. Other educators, parents, and community members may find the experiences of the participants using the Second Step program to be valuable.

Finally, it is certainly hoped that this research will influence current educational practice. Perhaps it will encourage further examination of both the disturbing trend of violence in schools and the use of prevention curriculum, not limited to the Second Step program.

Reviewing this Study

The following is a synopsis of this thesis.
In chapter 1, I have provided an introduction to my thesis and its evolution. A rationale for further study is also established.

Chapter 2 presents a literature review which focuses on answering some of the questions I have asked above, along with a few others. Armed with a statistical and research-based foundation, a clearer picture of violence among children is achieved, and the need for prevention education is highlighted. The Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum (Committee for Children, 1992) is also described in detail. A summary of the program and the relevant research findings are presented.

After establishing a basis and need for violence prevention research and the reasons for using Second Step, the specific methodology for this thesis is described in chapter 3. Both data collection and data analysis are addressed.

In chapter 4, the findings from the investigation are revealed. These findings are categorized under six main themes, using evidence from the data collected through interviews, observations, staff observations, and my journal. Common threads among the four types of data collection are highlighted in the search for meaning.

Finally, chapter 5 presents the conclusions and implications of this study. This section discusses the importance of the study’s findings and
recommendations for practice and further research. It is followed by a reference and appendix listing.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In order to effectively study a phenomenon like violence, an examination of previous research is both worthwhile and necessary. This was a daunting task, as the topic of violence has been extensively studied and has proven to be highly complex in nature. As Sherrow (1996) states in her book *Violence and the Media*, violence has been a significant part of the human experience: ancient cave and tomb drawings of people fighting, Greek and Roman tales of carnage and cruelty, and Biblical texts of murder, revenge, and war.

The research base must be limited and focused to effectively provide a background and rationale for this study. Therefore, I have attempted to organize the Literature Review by examining violence issues which answer the following questions as they pertain to children and/or the school system:

1. What is violence?
2. What are the root causes?
3. What is the Profile?
4. What about bullying?
5. Is violence a serious problem?
6. What is being done to prevent or eliminate violence in schools?

7. What are the characteristics of an effective violence prevention program?

By systematically verifying that a problem with violence exists, establishing some of the many possible causes and prevention strategies, a better understanding of the phenomenon of violence will be achieved. Following the examination of the questions listed above, a review of the Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum will be presented (Committee for Children, 1992).

What is Violence?

Violence is defined in Webster’s Dictionary as “Physical force or activity used to cause harm, damage, or abuse” (1988). Similarly, Sherrow (1996) defines violence as “physical force meant to harm or kill another person or damage or destroy property” (p. 9). It would seem that this simple question has an equally simple answer.

However, the definition of violence continues to be debated among researchers because of the “shifting nature” of the phenomenon (Ryan, Mathews & Banner, 1994). Violence has been characterized by such actions as bullying, home-invasion, inter-racial group conflict, weapons use, domestic abuse, and verbal abuse. Roher and Wormwell (2000) define it as much more than incidents involving physical contact or an assault. Rather, they believe that violence
...
includes any act which results in the victimization of a person, irrespective of physical contact. Their list of examples of school-related violence includes:

1. abusive language
2. taunting
3. intimidation
4. disruptive or aggressive behaviour in class
5. assaults
6. carrying and use of weapons
7. possession of illicit drugs
8. robbery
9. extortion
10. vandalism damaging school property
11. emotional and verbal abuse
12. harassment

This spectrum of behaviours provides a broader definition of violence to include emotional and psychological harm. Applied to schools, it recognizes anything that jeopardizes the safe climate for an effective learning and working environment (Roher, 1997).

After studying the various definitions of violence, one is left wondering if this span of explanations, ranging from simple to all-encompassing, could all be
To summarize, it is essential to understand the context within which the given data was collected. This understanding will help in interpreting the results accurately. It is crucial to consider the limitations and potential biases in the data. Furthermore, it is important to critically evaluate the conclusions drawn from the analysis. The implications of the findings should be discussed in the broader context of existing knowledge and future research directions.

In conclusion, the study provides valuable insights that can be further explored through additional research. The results have significant implications for future studies and practical applications. However, it is important to keep in mind that the findings are based on the specific dataset and may not be generalized to other contexts without further validation.

Overall, the study contributes to the understanding of the topic and highlights areas for future investigation. The authors are to be congratulated for a well-executed study that provides a valuable contribution to the field.

References:


Further reading could include:

correct. Could the possession of illicit drugs truly be considered an example of school-related violence? Would the parents in my school community accept the label of violence on acts such as name-calling or taunting among children? Also, how does the victim factor into these definitions? Has the pursuit of isolating the characteristics of the victimizer left the victim out of the picture?

But the question that struck me as most prominent and frightening was simply, why? What would cause children to resort to actions such as assault, robbery, vandalism, and extortion? What factors within the child or within his/her environment could lead to such socially unacceptable behaviour? Thus, I turned my focus to the root cause(s) of violence and, hopefully, a better understanding of this issue.

**What are the Root Causes?**

There does not appear to be one single answer to the complex question of the cause of violence. The roots of violent behaviour explored in current research are numerous and varied (Day, Golench, MacDougall, & Beals-Gonzalez, 1995; Sherrow, 1996). The many possible causes can be categorized under two broad themes: nurture, cultural, or environmental factors; and nature or biological factors.

**Nurturing Factors**
The nurture side of the argument is well-documented. The way children are raised, their experiences, and environmental factors, as described below, have been found to influence the level of violent and aggressive behaviour they will exhibit.

Family and parenting situations have been linked with violence. The parent-child relationship has been intensely studied by Sroufe (1988), who found that children with secure attachments had inner confidence, efficacy, and self-worth, whereas, those with insecure attachments were more likely to develop behaviour and social problems such as aggression. Linfoot, Martin, and Stephenson (1999) and Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (1986) found that harsh and inconsistent discipline by parents are good predictors of aggression in children.

The breakdown of the family, domestic violence, and neglect are also described as possible causes of violent behaviour in children (Bender & Leone, 1996; Sutton et al., 1999). Specifically, child abuse was found to be one of the most crucial predictors of lethal youth violence. Garbarino (1999), in examining phenomenon such as the horrific Columbine killings, found that child abuse prevention and the “detoxification” of the social environment are necessary strategies to ensure such tragedies do not continue to make headline news. In
short, a safe and nurturing home and social environment were felt to be the keys to violence prevention.

Perhaps one of the most hotly debated possible nurturing causes of violence is the media. Violence in television, movies, music, and even computer games is often touted as one of the main reasons that violence is on the rise (Sherrow, 1996). The American Psychological Association conducted a series of three major studies in 1972, 1982, and 1992 which led to the “irrefutable conclusion that viewing television increases violence” (APA, 1993, p. 33). This contention is supported by countless researchers (Cameron & Wigmore, 1996; Campbell, 1993; Langone, 1984). The wording may vary, but the message is generally the same. It is summed up well in the book Violence: Opposing Viewpoints in which the authors describe the influence of media on youth (Bender & Leone, 1996). The key phrases and ideas are: “overstimulation,” “callous attitude toward violence,” “desensitization,” and “destruction of values.”

Concern about media violence prompted the Canadian group the Action Group on Violence on Television to sponsor a new gadget known as the V-Chip. It is being developed to help parents censor the television programs their children watch (Cablecaster, 1997; Friesen, 1997). When operational, a small icon will appear in the top left corner of the television screen, alerting the viewer of the rating of the program which follows, thus allowing parents to effectively “lock
ficial and set us all in the crossroads of a belief in the possibility that the world could be a
more just place. 

The idea of a world without poverty, disease, or suffering has been a

pervasive and inspiring ambition for humanity across cultures and ages. This dream,

however, has often been fragmented into individual, sometimes selfish, actions rather than

collective, collaborative, and transformative efforts. The sustainable development

goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, for instance, aim to address these

challenges by promoting sustainable development, ending poverty, and protecting

the planet. These goals reflect a recognition that achieving prosperity, equity, and
c

sustainability requires a holistic approach that considers economic, social, and

environmental dimensions. 

The concept of the "common good" is central to this

framework, emphasizing the need for collective action and shared responsibility.

In a world where global challenges such as climate change, inequality, and

conflict are interconnected, it is clear that individual action alone is insufficient.

Collaboration at the national and international levels is essential for

advancing the SDGs. 

The SDGs include goals like eradicating poverty, promoting health, ensuring

access to education and clean water, and addressing climate change. These

objectives are not only ambitious but also interconnected, illustrating the

need for a comprehensive approach to development. 

For instance, the goal of reducing poverty (SDG 1) is

dependent on achieving quality education (SDG 4), ensuring access to

healthcare (SDG 3), and securing sustainable energy (SDG 7). 

Similarly, combating climate change (SDG 13) requires

actions that enhance ocean health (SDG 14), protect forests (SDG 15), and

promote sustainable agriculture (SDG 2). 

The SDGs set ambitious targets to achieve by 2030, challenging us to think

outside the box and to consider innovative solutions. 

In conclusion, the ideal of a world without poverty, disease, or suffering

remains a powerful aspiration. While the path towards realizing this dream may be

difficult, it is clear that collective action and a commitment to the SDGs can

help us move closer to this vision. 

As we work towards a more just, equitable, and sustainable world, it is

important to remember that these efforts are not only about reducing

inequality but also about creating a planet where all beings can thrive.

The SDGs offer a roadmap for achieving these goals, reminding us of the

interconnectedness of our world and the necessity of working together to

achieve a better future for all.
out" violent programming. Critics claim this is a form of unlawful censorship; however, initial responses from parents and other community groups have been favourable.

One of the most disturbing possible causes of violence is our school system. Epp and Watkinson (1996) describe the policies and practices associated with standardization, exclusion, and punishment which may foster a climate of violence. She asserts that procedures implemented by well-meaning school personnel produce unintentional negative consequences. She cites the example of a Grade 7 boy who committed suicide after having been suspended. Epp and Watkinson describe this phenomenon as "systemic violence" and believes that the education system's attempts to standardize the treatment of students actually creates power struggles among children who are inherently different and unique. She asserts that they require non-standardized attention: fair, compassionate, and motivated by meeting the individual needs of the child, not a desire to maintain a standard of care and behaviour. It should be noted that efforts to locate similar research or other authors who support this notion were unsuccessful. One is led to believe that either the idea is so new that few people have "caught on" or it is simply not a shared opinion or accurate theory.

Nan Stein argued a similar theory in her speech to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, when she stated that a school culture has been
created that gives permission for sexual violence to proceed (Hall, 1997). Stein presented statistics which showed 80% of girls and 50% of boys experience some form of sexual harassment between kindergarten and Grade 12. Because adults do not always intervene, the school ground has become the training ground for sexual and domestic abuse. I find the idea that the school system, my employer and my passion, could possibly be fostering a climate of violence very uncomfortable.

Other environmental factors such as a play deprivation and thus a lack of communication and socialization, have been linked to the number of violent crimes a child commits (Frost & Jacobs, 1995). Similarly, subsidized housing, lack of parental supervision, and economic deprivation can be connected to behaviour problems (Offord et al., 1992; Werner, 1985).

Based upon professional reading of educational journals and my own experience, the research pointing to “nurture” root causes for violence ring true. Students who demonstrate violence in the classroom and schoolyard often have an affinity for violent movies, video games, and stories. Similarly, the overly aggressive child often seems to have a violent or seemingly uncaring family situation. As for the school system as an environmental root cause for violence, I wonder if this could be better analysed as a recognition of the great challenges faced by educators working with hostile, aggressive children and the difficulties experienced in changing the behaviour.
From this point of inquiry, further questions begin to surface. If media is a cause, is censorship the simple answer, or have the desires of children simply changed? If the family is a cause, could that not also point to a possible genetic and thus "nature" link? Does the apple fall far from the tree? If children who prefer violent video games and television programs are more violent with peers, could this preference actually point to a genetic difference? If the school system is struggling to manage, educate and nurture aggressive children, did they make them that way, or were they born that way? Thus, the next topic must be an examination of the 'nature' side of the argument.

**Nature**

Proponents of the "nature" argument, find a good deal of support in the literature. In a review of genetic research, Bender and Leone (1996) found a correlation between heredity and violence; however, they are quick to point out that environmental factors tend to influence whether a predisposition to violence will translate into acts of violence. Lytton (1990) supports this assertion with research findings which show a great preponderance of criminals among sons whose biological parents were also criminals. As stated earlier, this could also be considered an environmental or nature side of the argument.

Gender also plays a part in this debate. Are boys more violent than girls? Or is the reverse actually true?
On the “boy” side of the argument, it is reported that males have a greater propensity for violence and aggression than girls (Carlo, Raffaelli, Laible & Meyer, 1999; Day et al., 1995; Garbarino, 1999). An example of this can be found in a study carried out in 1999 by Gropper and Froschl. They studied the teasing and bullying behaviours of primary students in a diverse group of school environments. It was found that boys initiated three times as many violent incidents as girls. This gender difference has been attributed to, among other things, higher levels of testosterone and the presence of the Y chromosome (Crowell, 1987). Interestingly, this gender-specific biological cause appears to hold even in the face of arguments that sex-specific socialization could be a factor (Eme, 1979).

However, a recent influx of brutally violent crimes committed by females has led to a reexamination of the gender issue. Violent crime by Canadian girls is up 300% in a decade (DeCloet, 1997). Girls are also the fastest growing group of violent offenders in the country as they constitute approximately 25% of the arrests in their age group, compared to adult women who are arrested for only 10% of adult crime (Roher & Wormwell, 2000). The cause of this increase is unknown.

Pearson (1999) reported in the National Post about the “underground aggression” demonstrated by girls in school settings. She found that girls
..., leading to increased costs and inefficiencies in the manufacturing process. This "bottleneck" in the production line is a significant barrier to achieving the high volume of production required for sustained growth. In order to overcome this challenge, companies are exploring various solutions, including investing in new technologies and processes. One promising approach is the implementation of Lean Manufacturing principles, which focus on eliminating waste and improving efficiency throughout the production process. This strategy not only reduces costs but also enhances product quality, leading to increased customer satisfaction and market share. In conclusion, addressing production bottlenecks is crucial for the long-term success of any company aiming to achieve substantial growth. By adopting innovative solutions and continuous improvement methods, companies can effectively navigate these challenges and realize their full potential.

[Further discussion on the importance of continuous improvement, industry trends, and case studies could be included here.]
generally compete with wits instead of weapons because physical violence is neither acceptably feminine or efficient. Their method of attack is more indirect in nature and functions through social networks. They slander reputations, disrupt relationships, bully, toss insults, and form cliques. Pearson also asserts that this form of aggression is just as injurious to kids as kicks and shoves, the behaviours more commonly seen in boys. Also, the kind of aggression that in which girls usually engage, such as teasing or forming exclusive cliques, rarely meets with formal consequence in schools (e.g., suspension, detention), which makes it difficult for them to learn to be accountable for harming others. Pearson writes that girls do not hear phrases like “fight fair,” “pull your punches,” or “stand your ground,” what aggression scholars call “the regulative rules of anger,” which teach boys how to keep their conflicts brief and to the point.

Interestingly, Broude (1999) found little evidence to support the notion that either boys or girls are more at risk in terms of becoming an aggressor or initiator of violent behaviour. Findings indicated that neither sex was more emotionally or behaviourally at risk, and it was a mistake to label girls or boys as fragile when discussing trends.

Based upon the broader definition of violence stated earlier, it would appear that boys and girls generally engage in different types of violent behaviour: Boys seem to prefer physical or more overt forms of violence, and girls the verbal
or more covert forms. My experience in the classroom echoes these findings. Although there are always exceptions, the girls seemed to have the power of a social network that could make or break a person. The boys had the power of physical strength or a reputation for being a “dangerous” person.

Other biological factors which may relate to violence include neurological abnormalities such as schizophrenia or hyperactivity. Such abnormalities can give rise to verbal difficulties later in life, which in turn can lead to aggression, antisocial behaviour, and conduct disorder (Moffitt, 1993). It makes sense that a child who is unable to communicate effectively would find it difficult to resolve conflict and, therefore, resort to violence to solve problems. Prenatal factors, such as exposure to toxic agents, such as drugs and alcohol, or lack of proper nutrition have also been linked to an increase in impulsivity and, therefore, aggression (Reese-Potter, 1992). This is a fascinating and expansive area of study, however, out of the scope of this research project.

In general, the genetic, prenatal, gender, and other nature causational factors are fascinating and relatively unexplored. I found myself often wondering about the connection between nature and nurture. This is a type of “Catch 22” situation – Which came first, the chicken or the egg? Does a violent disposition lead to a violent environment, or does the violent environment produce a violent disposition? The answer is likely a bit of both. Certainly, few would argue with
the notion that a violent atmosphere breeds violent actions. Likewise, a violent person can greatly influence an otherwise peaceful environment.

In summary, researchers agree that violence is a problem and that the possible causes of violent behaviour are numerous, complex, and inconclusive. A variety of biological and/or environmental factors play a part in determining the level of violence a child exhibits. Johnson and Reed summarized the causal factors in their 1996 study which found violent youth generally lack communication skills, lack understanding of others' perspectives and cultures, feel the need for power and control, showed evidence of family dysfunction, and/or exhibited the influence of media and video games.

This information invites a new question. If we cannot identify the specific cause or causes of violent behaviour, can we identify characteristics of a possible violent offender? How does one know which students could be at risk for committing extreme acts of violence? An examination of the profile of a violent offender follows.

**What is the Profile?**

As a result of these and other research findings, a profile of a typical student victimizer has been developed (Roher & Wormwell, 2000). This list of characteristics was distributed by the National School Safety Centre in the United
States in response to the Columbine shootings. The characteristics include behaviours such as:

1. name-calling, cursing, or abusive language
2. making violent threats when angry
3. bringing a weapon to school
4. serious disciplinary problems
5. drug, alcohol or substance abuse or dependency
6. cruelty to animals
7. abuse or neglect in the home
8. bullying or intimidating peers or younger children
9. blaming others for difficulties or problems
10. preferring television shows, reading material, movies, or music expressing violent themes and abuse
11. writing about anger, frustration, and the dark side of life in school papers
12. involvement in gangs or anti-social groups on the fringe of peer acceptance
13. depression or mood swings
14. threatening or attempting suicide
15. engaging in tantrums or uncontrollable angry outbursts

Such a list is useful in identifying students who may feel alienated and need support, even though they may not be capable of such extreme violence.
This list helps professionals and parents identify extreme violent offenders, but what about those “minor offenders”? What about the students who have been dismissed as just being a bully? Is this a small issue or an early warning of bigger things to come? An examination of the phenomenon of bullying follows.

**What about Bullying?**

In the last decade, much educational research has begun to focus upon the concept of bullying. Bullying is a form of peer aggression that is social in nature and found extensively, although not exclusively, in schools (Boyle, 1996). Farrington (1993) states that in order to prevent and reduce youth violence, we must focus upon the early signs of antisocial behaviour. He goes on to say that bullying may be one of these early behaviours that contribute to the development of a pattern of antisocial behaviours in later years. This aggression may persist into adulthood in the form of criminality, child abuse, marital violence, and sexual harassment (Olweus, 1991). As well, there is the potential for long-lasting negative psychological consequences for victims and aggressors alike (Marini, Spear & Bombay, 1999; Olweus, 1993).

Bullying is defined as the assertion of power through aggression, but the forms of aggression change with age from playground bullying to sexual harassment, gang attacks, date violence, and workplace harassment (Pepler & Craig, 1997). Bullies acquire power over a victim in several ways: physical size
and strength, status within a group, knowing the victim's weaknesses, or by recruiting support from peers (Olweus, 1991). A cycle develops in which the bully becomes increasingly dominant over the victim, and the victim becomes increasingly distressed and fearful.

Debra Pepler, a noted researcher in the area of bullying and teasing, conducted a study with several colleagues in 1997 in which a questionnaire was used to survey 4743 Canadian children in Grades 1 to 8 about the prevalence of bullying at their schools. She found that 6% of the students admitted to bullying others "more than once or twice" in the past 6 weeks and 15% of the children reported being victimized at the same rate (Pepler et al., 1997). Similar research conducted elsewhere in Canada revealed similar results (Bentley & Li, 1995) and data from other parts of Europe were also consistent (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Olweus, 1991). Video camera and wireless microphone observations of students in classrooms and on playgrounds confirm that bullying occurs once every 7 minutes on the playground and once every 25 minutes in class (Craig & Pepler, 1997). More recently, Marini, Spear and Bombay (1999) confirmed that on average, approximately 20% of a school's population is involved in bullying, either as a bully, a victim, or both.

The profile of a bully is not surprising and includes the following characteristics:
1. Boys are generally more physically aggressive, whereas girls bully indirectly (i.e., gossiping and excluding; Craig & Pepler, 1997).

2. Eleven and 12-year-old students report bullying more frequently than students younger and older than themselves (Pepler et al., 1997).

3. Bullies tend to be hyperactive, disruptive, impulsive, and overactive (Olweus, 1987).

4. They are generally aggressive toward peers and are easily provoked to anger (Stephenson & Smith, 1989).

5. Boys who bully are usually physically stronger than their peers (Olweus, 1987); however, the girl bullies tend to be physically weaker (Roland, 1989).

6. They generally lack empathy for their victims and show little or no remorse for their negative actions (Olweus, 1987).

Interestingly, much of this information was garnered through research on boys who bully and far less about girls.

The victims of bullies also have been studied also. There is not a single victim type; however, the following characteristics were found to be present before bullying occurs or develop as a result of bullying:

1. Boys and girls are equally likely to report being victimized (Charach et al., 1995).
2. Children in lower grades are more likely to be victims of older bullies, whereas older students are more likely to be victims of same age bullies (Olweus, 1993).

3. Some victimized children tended to be anxious and withdrawn (Pepler et al, 1997).

4. Victims report lower self-esteem (Besag, 1989), depression (Craig, 1997), and anxiety (Slee, 1995).

Ironically, research has not supported the popular “nerd” stereotype – the idea that victims have unusual physical traits (Olweus, 1991). Victims cannot be easily identified because they are wearing thick glasses, odd clothing, or pocket protectors.

The literature reveals many possible reasons for the prevalence of bullying in Canadian schools. One factor that has been isolated is the influence of peers. It was found that 85% of bullying episodes occur in the context of a peer group (Atlas & Pepler, 1997). It was observed that peers very rarely intervened in the situation; however, they did frequently act as the spectator by watching passively, cheering, or joining in. Their positive attention toward the bully serves to maintain the bully’s power within the peer group (Craig & Pepler, 1997).

Family also plays a role in the development of bullying behaviour. Bullies were found to come from homes that were neglectful or hostile (Olweus, 1993).
and in which sibling interaction was a training ground for bullying (Patterson, 1986). Further, it was found that many parents inadvertently support bullying by accepting it as a normal part of growing up and leaving children to solve their own problems, and thus victims often learn to keep their problems a secret (Olweus, 1991). However, it was found that children more often confide in their parents, rather than teachers, and thus parents play an important role as advocates in ensuring their child’s safety.

The very nature of schools has also been found to have an impact upon bullying behaviour. Bullying was found to be significantly reduced when the principal was committed to addressing the problem through such strategies as consistent and formative consequences, open-door policies for victims, and working with teachers to improve classroom management strategies (Charach et al., 1995). Supportive relationships and shared decision making among school staff and students were also related to less bullying behaviour (Olweus, 1987). Organizations that emphasized academic success over children’s individuality also tend to have more bullying (Tattum, 1982). Finally, good playground supervision, in which teachers are aware of the problems and intervene consistently, has been strongly linked to a decrease in bullying (Craig & Pepler, 1997).

The label “bully” may encompass more behaviours than the usual definition for a violent offender in the school system. Research, however, reveals
interesting similarities and connections that help to reveal the nature of such anti-social behaviour. Interestingly, all of the bullying literature concludes with the need for interventions involving the bullies, victims, peers, school staff, parents, and broader community (Marini et al., 2000).

So, is bullying simply one of those things that is a part of school life? Is it the same today as it was in days gone by? I remember the bully in my elementary school and managing to steer clear of his aggression. When he teased me, my parents responded by teaching me that “sticks and stones would break my bones but names would never hurt me.” They did not intervene or call a meeting at the school. Is bullying just a part of every child’s school experience, or has it developed into something much worse over the years? Is violence a growing concern, or have we simply put it under a magnifying glass? Have we taken an ordinary problem and made it appear larger? The following section will deal with the question of severity and prevalence of violent behaviour among children.

Is Violence a Serious Problem?

In the same way that experts cannot agree upon a single cause of violent behaviour, they also cannot seem to agree upon its severity. There are those who believe that it is increasing and those who believe that it is not.

The view that violence is our fastest growing and most compelling public health problem is shared by a significant number of researchers, as well as society
in general (Langone, 1984; Sherrow, 1996; Walker, Goodwin & Warren, 1992).

Violence among youth has been found to be increasing at an alarming rate (Reasoner, 1994). In fact, in a report designed to present the nature and extent of weapons use by youth in Canadian schools, researchers found an increase in weapons seizures in recent years, as well as a decreased feeling of safety in schools (Walker, 1994).

Violence in schools appears to be on the rise, as well. Roher (1993) studied 881 schools between 1987 and 1990 and discovered a 150% increase in major incidents such as biting, kicking, punching, and the use of weapons. He also found a 50% increase in minor incidents such as verbal abuse. Similarly, although not as dramatically, a study of 177 elementary and 173 secondary separate schools between 1990 and 1992 revealed a 6.1% and 20.5% increase in verbal assaults respectively, and a 3.2% and 2.4% increase in physical assaults respectively (OECTA, 1992).

In the face of this research, there are still those who believe that violence is not increasing, nor is the problem as serious as we are led to believe. Bender and Leone (1996) present the argument that the threat of violent crime is exaggerated by the media. We, as citizens, have been bombarded by negative images on the news and in print, leading us to believe that the rate of violent crime is rising.
Bender and Leone point out that bad news "sells" and is popular reading and viewing material.

In support of such an idea, Rodgers (1993) noted that students in the Niagara Region felt that violence was a "non issue." Similarly, a recent analysis found the number of youths charged with Criminal Code offences has dropped from 120,663 in 1995 to 99,746 in 1999 (Roher & Wormwell, 2000). Other provinces such as Nova Scotia, British Columbia, and Newfoundland, have reported a low incidence of youth crime and school violence (Child and Youth Committee, 1994; Fitzpatrick, 1994; Robb, 1993). This may be due to the decreased sensitivity to violence and "callousness" described earlier. In her study entitled "Boys Will Be Boys," Broude (1999) found no evidence to support an increase in violence or a "behavioural epidemic" despite the assertion put forth by popular culture and many American psychologists.

Although some may dispute the hard evidence which supports an actual increase in the severity and prevalence of youth violence, there is definitely a growing sense of urgency to address this complex social issue. Bala (1994) states, "Although one can ask how much of this increase is due to heightened sensitivity to violence and an increase in reporting rates, it is apparent that the public and professionals are increasingly concerned about youth violence" (p. 1).
In my experience, most teachers with over a decade of experience will likely tell you the same thing—things were not this bad many years ago. Kids showed more respect, they knew how to play with one another peacefully, and they were less aggressive. Public perception is that violence is on the rise, despite critics who disagree. Certainly, this may be a reflection of deepening concern rather than rising statistics; however, the issue remains the same. Violence is a problem among children, and children congregate in schools.

Once we acknowledge a problem's existence and seek to find causes, we take the next step—the solution. But is there a solution to violence in schools? Is the school system working toward a cure for the illness of violence? The following is an examination of the efforts schools are making to prevent or eliminate violence in schools.

What is Being Done to Prevent or Eliminate Violence in Schools?

Some researchers argue that the education system mirrors the dynamics of society (Hoffman, 1996). Therefore, societal concern over violence is also the concern of educators. It is not surprising that a variety of policies, programs, and curricula have been developed to address this concern.

At the provincial government level, a document entitled Violence-Free Schools Policy was created under the direction of Dave Cook, the Minister of Education and Training in 1994. It outlines the policies and procedures which
must be followed in Ontario schools when dealing with violence, as well as highlighting the duties of administration, staff, students, and the community. The report focuses on the aftermath of violence: reporting procedures, home involvement, suspension, etc. One short section is devoted to prevention curriculum and strongly advocates its use. However, the suggestions are too vague to be implemented effectively without further guidance.

This led me into a search for programs which are in use to decrease the level of violence exhibited in schools. The types of strategies can be categorized under two broad headings: punitive measures and prevention curriculum. The former deals with punishments or consequences after the violence occurs, which proponents hope will deter further acts of violence. The latter addresses programs and curricula which attempt to deal with the causes of violent behaviour and provide specific strategy instruction and learning experiences which are hoped to prevent violent acts.

A code of conduct, which governs student behaviour and outlines consequences for misbehaviour, is a frequently used strategy to establish values and a positive climate. Aleem and Moles (1993) describe the necessity for behaviour codes to be seen as a reasonable consequence for the victimizer, a sufficient retribution for the victim, an effective deterrent for further transgressions and setting a good example for students. Although it is largely
considered to be punitive in nature, a conduct code also sets achievable goals, communicates clear rules and procedures, fosters a positive school climate, and is implemented in a fair and consistent manner. Not surprisingly, such a code of behaviour actually acts as major step toward the prevention of school violence (Duke & Canady, 1991; Gaustad, 1991; Williams, 1993).

One of the most popular punitive strategies in the last few years, is the Zero Tolerance Policy (Litke, 1996; Ryan et al., 1994; Stetzner, 1999). Zero Tolerance Policies refer to the idea that violence is not tolerated and is punished with automatic suspensions or expulsions. Both Litke and Ryan reported great success in the test schools that used this get-tough approach, citing decreased incidents of fighting and bullying. Also, the number of expulsions and suspensions decreased in time as well. It would appear that the threat or fear of a serious repercussion curbed violent behaviour. The authors caution readers to include other prevention curriculum to balance the program and to resist the temptation to punish without thoughtfully considering alternatives such as mediation.

School-based violence prevention programs are numerous, and discussing them in detail would be a mammoth task. However, Day, Golench, MacDougall and Beals-Gonzalez did just that in their 1995 national survey of policies and programs used in Canadian schools. The results indicate a great diversity in programs, interventions, and policies. Curriculum-based programs generally deal
with a wide variety of issues related to school-based violence, such as self-esteem, bullying, conflict resolution, etc., and are designed to reach a large number of children. An example of such a program is ASAP, A School-Based Anti-Violence Program, which presents teacher-friendly resources for teaching children to deal effectively with violence at home, wife assault, sex role stereotyping, dating violence, and media violence (Sudermann, Jaffe & Hastings, 1993).


However, in both of these cases and most other studies of prevention programs, evaluation is limited and generally short term. Quantitative measures of success were used to reveal a decrease in violent incidents, and long-term effectiveness was not addressed.

Mediation, or the “Peacemaker” program, is also receiving a great deal of attention lately. Teaching students to solve their own problems through conflict resolution strategies has been found to be effective in reducing violent behaviour (Briggs, 1996; Lantieri & Patti, 1996; Meyer & Northup, 1997). This program can be implemented within a classroom or on the playground, but generally involves trained older students or peers acting as mediators between other students in
conflict. Critics argue that this approach could put students in danger if they intervene in an extremely explosive confrontation (Walker, 1994).

It would appear that there is no perfect program on the market, each has its own unique shortcomings and strengths. This is not surprising, as the root causes are undetermined and numerous. Interestingly, there is a great deal of skepticism about the effectiveness of prevention strategies in general. Bender and Leone (1996) describe the debate among educational researchers and cite the lack of research regarding long-term changes in violent behaviour. They also argue that punishment is equally ineffective, using the prison system and the number of repeat offenders as evidence. Trump (1999) asserts that violence prevention curricula and conflict resolution strategies are insufficient security measures. He found that school security assessments were the only way to reduce risk and liability and improve public relations with the school community.

In the face of this evidence, namely short term success of several policies and programs and skepticism regarding effectiveness, it leads one to wonder if a perfect program truly exists. The next section deals with the criteria for an effective program.

**What are the Characteristics of an Effective Violence Prevention Program?**

Violence Prevention Programs are many and varied. Day et al. (1995) summarize the research recommendations with the following advice:
1. Keep board policies internally consistent.

2. Ensure that policies are congruent with programs implemented in schools.

3. Policies should be comprehensive and multifaceted to address the various aspects of violence.

4. Encourage a community focus and community involvement.

5. Provide supplemental programs which are supportive and corrective for disruptive, aggressive, and violent students.

6. Address the root causes of violence.

Assuming that the first four points are in place, the last two become the challenge of the classroom teacher.

Researchers all seem to agree upon one thing: Although it may not always be possible to determine, the root cause of the violence should be addressed and not just the symptoms (Day et al., 1995; Studer, 1996; Walker et al., 1992). But how is this accomplished through a supportive and corrective program? Feshbach and Feshbach (1969), Kendall and Braswell (1985), Novaco (1975), and Spivak and Cianci (1987) suggest that violent behaviour can be attributed to a child's specific skill deficits. Specifically, these are a lack of: empathy, impulse control, problem-solving skills, anger management, and assertiveness. If these skills can be taught, it would seem that violent behaviour could be significantly reduced and pro-social behaviour could be increased.
The Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum has been designed to address these specific skill deficits (Committee for Children, 1992). Could this program make a significant impact upon violent behaviour? The following is a detailed program description along with research findings which specifically pertain to the Second Step program.

Second Step Review

Introduction

The Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum is a social skills curriculum which teaches children to change the attitudes and behaviours which contribute to violence (Committee for Children, 1992). It is reviewed and re-released each year with relevant and timely updates, such as newer research findings, expanded teacher information pages, parent information, newer photos to reflect current fashion, etc. It should be noted that the copy I used was borrowed from the board office, and due to financial restraints, only an older copy of the program was available. I viewed the use of this less-than-current document as an additional dose of reality in my study. In these times of funding cuts and budget restraint, few schools are able to buy their own current copy of such a program. The use of free media resource kits is encouraged, and thus, the findings would more closely mirror those of a typical teacher working with the most easily accessible resource.
The authors describe the program's basis in decades of research, including developmental psychology, and it was pilot tested extensively prior to publication. The curriculum is designed to reduce impulsive and aggressive behaviour in children, while increasing social competence. Empathy training, anger management, interpersonal cognitive problem solving, and behavioural social skill training form the basis of the program. In essence, the curriculum is designed to be the second step in primary prevention. The first step is to avoid becoming a victim, and the second step is to avoid becoming a victimizer.

The program is based on research in developmental psychology and a proven need for prevention curriculum. Although there is a great deal of inconsistency in the literature pertaining to causation of violent behaviour, there is a great deal of consistency pertaining to the correlation of violent behaviour and other factors (Committee for Children, 1992). Aggressive and violent behaviour has been correlated with a lack of decision-making skills, anger management, assertiveness, empathy, and impulse control and to social isolation.

The authors also cite research which shows that aggressive children have often missed a key developmental step or have been delayed in their reasoning process. Thus, verbal mediation, or talking out loud while problem solving, is essential in developing the tools of independent thinking. The Second Step
curriculum has been designed to specifically address these deficiencies, and to teach the skills necessary to decrease violent behaviour.

Behavioural Social Skills Training and Interpersonal Cognitive Problem Solving techniques are used to address anger management skills. The problem-solving approach is used to guide children in resolving interpersonal problems after anger has been reduced. Finally, skills to use with specific types of provocations, such as pushing, criticism, and teasing are taught.

The goals of the curriculum are:

1. To increase children's ability to identify others' feelings, take others' perspectives, and respond empathetically to others.

2. To decrease impulsive and aggressive behaviour in children through learning and practising a self-instructional, problem-solving strategy, combined with behavioural social skills.

3. To decrease feelings of anger and encourage social problem solving in children through the recognition of anger warning signs and triggers and the use of anger-reduction techniques (Committee for Children, 1992).

The curriculum consists of four modules: Preschool, Grades 1 to 3, Grades 4 to 5, and Middle School/Junior High. For the purposes of this particular study, the primary components, Grades 1 to 3, will be described.

Program Description
The curriculum is designed to be integrated into the health and safety or social studies programs for Grades 1 to 3. It is divided into three units: Empathy Training, Impulse Control, and Anger Management. Second Step is primarily used by classroom teachers, but has been used also by counsellors and therapists. It is suggested that units and lessons be used in sequence, as skills build upon those taught in previous lessons.

The first unit, Empathy Training, deals with three main skills:

1. the ability to determine the emotional state of another person,
2. the ability to assume the perspective and role of another person, and
3. the ability to respond emotionally to another.

Students in Grades 1 to 5 learn about empathy at a developmentally appropriate level. For example, first and second graders may learn that others may have thoughts and perspectives different from their own, whereas, fourth and fifth graders are able to understand that no person's perspective is absolutely right.

The second unit, Impulse Control, is grounded in the problem-solving method with a twist. Children are encouraged to verbalize the process out loud, allowing them the opportunity to slow down, resist the temptation to react impulsively, and create a good solution. With time, the process switches from overt (external) to covert (internal) speech. The problem solving method used consists of five stages:
Step 1  identify the problem (using psychological and situational cues)

Step 2  brainstorm solutions

Step 3  evaluate the solutions (based on safety, effects on others, fairness, and workability)

Step 4  choose and use a solution

Step 5  evaluate the solution, choose an alternate if necessary

Unit 3 deals with anger management techniques:

1. recognizing triggers with arouse angry feelings,

2. watching for warning signs which signal the level of anger,

3. making self-instructional statements like “I can handle this”,

4. using reducers like deep breathing, and

5. reflecting on their performance in a provocation situation.

Anger management is also paired with assertiveness, enabling students to use eye contact, erect body posture, a firm voice, and clear messages when communicating with others.

A scope and sequence is included which identifies lessons which are developmentally appropriate for each grade level. Implementation guidelines are also provided; however, flexibility is encouraged. For example, depending upon the class, a teacher may wish to spend 40 minutes a day for a period of several
weeks, or two 40-minute blocks per week spread out over several months. This is a whole-class approach; however, the open-ended nature of the tasks and activities allows for individual differences among students. Role-play situations are framed around activities or situations of the child's choosing. For example, the teacher instructs the students to think of or imagine a time when they argued with a sibling or friend, leaving the student to consider a situation that is relevant to his/her life and make the appropriate application.

Lessons

The entire curriculum is self contained, although supplementary materials are suggested if desired. Each lesson is printed on the back of an 11 by 17-inch laminated photo card. Concepts, Objectives, Notes to the Teacher, a Story with Discussion, and a Role Play or Activity are included.

The photographs depict children in everyday conflict situations. The students look at the photograph and try to guess what might be happening. The teacher reads the story on the back and through questioning and further discussion, the children gain an understanding of the situation. For example, the picture may be one of two children, one holding a ball and the other turned the other way, frowning. The children presented in these photos honour gender, race, and class diversity. Students use empathy skills while learning to interpret body
language. The story may describe an argument between the two children over the ball.

The teacher then models the skill which is being taught. Using another student or adult, the teacher shows how the conflict could be resolved. In the example above, the skill used to solve the problem is an "I Message." The teacher would thoroughly teach and show the use of an I Message, such as, "I feel sad when you won’t let me play with your ball. I wish you’d include me in your game."

Following the modelling, the students role play similar situations in which the skill of the day can be used. Primary students are provided with scenarios, while Junior students are encouraged to develop their own. The teacher circulates and provides reinforcement. Finally, several role plays can be performed to ensure understanding and provide closure.

The teacher can choose from additional activities printed on the card which help to "Transfer the Training." The teacher is also instructed to continue using the skill throughout the year in appropriate situations and to praise those students who also use it effectively.

The kits also contain laminated posters which list the steps or directions for using various social skills. The Teachers Guide includes detailed instructions,
teaching suggestions, references, a scope and sequence, take-home letters, homework, and additional activities.

Scope and Sequence

In an effort to most concisely present the topics and skills covered in the Second Step Program, a table has been created for quick reference (Appendix B).

Research Findings

The Second Step Program is still relatively new but is gaining wide acceptance as an effective Violence Prevention Curriculum (Committee for Children, 1992). Several studies have been undertaken to determine the feasibility of the program.

Moore and Beland (1992) used the program with pre-school and kindergarten students and found students’ knowledge and skills on violence prevention increased significantly for the treatment group, relative to the comparison sample. Specifically, significant differences were observed on interview items pertaining to predicting consequences, anger management, and brainstorming solutions to interpersonal problems. Teachers reported feeling comfortable with the lessons and felt the students were involved in the curriculum. However, interpretation of this study was hampered by the small sample size, a lack of indicators for students’ behaviour, and focus on short-term results.
Similarly, Grossman (1997) studied 12 schools, which were paired with schools having similar socio-economic and ethnic makeup. The second and third graders in the six randomly assigned test schools received Second Step training. Trained coders, blind to school assignment, observed each child, in and out of the classroom, for 45-60 minutes before the intervention, 2 weeks after completion and 6 months later. Observations indicated that physical aggression decreased for those in the test group; however, those in the control experienced an increased level. Six months later, the test group continued to show reduced aggression, and friendly, pro-social behaviour increased. The exact opposite was found in the control classrooms. The authors concluded that the Second Step curriculum leads to moderate decreases in aggression and an increase in pro-social behaviour.

Roher (1997) also reported successful use of the program in Vancouver schools. Research findings indicated enhanced social and emotional health, as well as increased physical safety. Similarly, Mehas, Boling, Sobieniak, Sprague, Burke and Hagan (1998) found the Second Step program was found to successfully assist in the creation of a “safe haven” at an Oregon Middle School.

In response to the 1997 shooting death of their school principal by a student, the Bethel, Alaska, community initiated the Second Step program (Sherman, 1999). Interestingly, the program was effectively modified to fit Yupik Eskimo culture and language. Researchers found the school and community
enthusiastically and effectively embraced the program and reported success and satisfaction with the violence prevention strategies.

In contrast, Orpinas (1993) evaluated the Second Step program as a part of her doctoral thesis using Grade 6 classes in Houston, Texas. There was a reduced level of aggression in two of the six classes and an increase in violence reduction knowledge and skills. However, teachers identified a number of difficulties with the program. They felt the lessons were too time consuming, too infrequent, and often too complex. They said students became bored with the role playing and that violence prevention should have begun at a much younger age.

Madak and Bravi (1992) found the program to be completely ineffective. Their study, using the K to 6 modules in western Canada, took place over a 6-month period. Behaviour incident reports and teacher surveys indicated a 20.4% increase in behavioural incidents after the program. Teachers rated the program as either “average” or “very good;” however, they felt it had little or no effect on student behaviour. Some teachers felt they were better able to manage student misbehaviour. The study is limited, however, due to a lack of comparison groups and small sample size.

**Summary and Conclusions**

Based upon the documented research and my own examination of the program, Second Step is a comprehensive, flexible, teacher-friendly program that
appears to meet with some documented success. The self-contained design, coupled with detailed instructions, makes planning and instruction easy. Integration ideas and alternate activities allow for easy modification to meet the needs of diverse groups of students. Also, training sessions, sponsored by the publishers of the program, are held annually for teachers wishing to gain a better understanding of the philosophy and methods described in the curriculum.

The curriculum is multi-ethnic, due to the nature of the photographs (diversity of races) and situations and places presented. It fosters anti-racist attitudes and behaviours by encouraging understanding and the celebration of differences.

Another strength of the program is the continuity from kindergarten to high school. By using the same three strands at each level, true skill development can occur. Introduction, practice, and subsequent review are essential to ensure automation occurs.

The focus on student participation, particularly as role-play participants, is engaging and empowering. The active-learning emphasis, along with strategic skill development, allows students with a wide variety of learning styles to be successful.

Often classroom resources are designed without considering relevant psychological and sociological findings. An excellent example would be the new
Provincial Curriculum which claims to be “rigorous and challenging” but actually presents concepts and skills at an age when students are not ready to understand them. Not so with Second Step. The authors describe the decades of research, including developmental psychology, which were used as a basis for the program. Although data was not provided, it is stated that pilot testing was conducted prior to publication. This lends a great deal of strength to the program, as well as a heightened sense of credibility.

If people were to base their opinion on research findings alone, it would appear to be a toss-up; the program could be excellent, or ineffective. However, very little empirical or qualitative evidence is available pertaining to the Second Step program, and most of those studies contain large limitations. Further research is definitely warranted which addresses effectiveness.

There are also several weaknesses within the program, which must be noted. The Second Step program requires a significant level of teacher expertise to effectively implement the program. He/she must be able to guide the students in the use of the identified skills during drama activities but also in everyday applications. This consistency and the ability to weave together the elements of the program into real-life situations requires a good deal of skill. The publishers recognized this as a potential problem and have regional training sessions, which occur throughout the school year in locations throughout the United States,
Quebec, and Ontario. However, I have met many teachers who have used the Second Step program but none who have ever gone for training.

This leads to the next possible weakness of the program, which is the problem with all programs that are self-contained and extremely easy to use. A teacher may see a program like Second Step as completely laid out for them and thus requiring no modification, personalization, or personal reflection. The result can often be a "canned feeling" that lacks the necessary emotional connection to make an impact upon the students. Teachers may use the program as that time in their day when planning, preparation, assessment, and evaluation are not necessary. Therefore, the program lacks the power and perceived importance of other lessons in subjects such as science or math.

Finally, another weakness of the program is also the repetitive nature of the lessons. The role-play format is extremely effective in the short run, but over an extended period of time, students may become bored with the same follow-up to each lesson. As a teacher working with the program, I tried to vary the culminating activity each time with a different and unique twist, such as the inclusion of a surprise character, to keep the students actively engaged and interested. Thus, I can imagine that a teacher who simply followed the given instructions might become bogged down in the routine and repetition.
In conclusion, the Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum has many strengths which make it a worthwhile classroom resource. It is flexible, comprehensive, and student centred. The weaknesses identified are worthy of mention, but similar to those of other pre-packaged resources. Although research findings are mixed, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that the program has potential and merits further use and study.

Having used the program with my own class in years gone by, I see the many advantages but also the limitations. I recognize that any program can be only as effective as the instructor and method of presentation. This caused me to wonder how other teachers have fared with teaching this curriculum. Also, I wondered about the nature of the program as it is a whole-class, structured, lesson-by-lesson model. Is this the best way to teach violence prevention strategies? What could be improved within the program to make it even better?

Faced with these concerns and questions and now more knowledgeable about the issue of violence, I became motivated to delve deeper into the program and make it the focus for my research. I wanted to gain a better understanding of the reality of violence among students while participating in the Second Step Program.
Chapter Summary

In this chapter the relevant research findings were reviewed as they pertain to violence among youth. It was a bit of a "Pandora's Box" experience to wade through the plethora of literature surrounding this topic. In an effort to answer one question, many more cropped up to take its place. To effectively condense and focus the information, violence prevention became the core issue. It was hoped that a practical, usable solution to this difficult problem could be isolated.

In searching for a gap in the literature or something new to study, it became apparent that many of the violence prevention programs being used in schools have not been studied at all, or if they have, it has occurred using a quantitative approach in an effort to determine statistical effectiveness. Furthermore, rarely, has the focus been to look at the experience and see what is happening during the program implementation from a broader perspective. The voices of the participants have not been heard. Qualitative research in this field is difficult to find and yet would be extremely valuable in helping to examine the effectiveness issue, but also other questions surrounding causation, teacher perceptions, student perceptions, severity, etc. It would be a deeper way of knowing.

Thus, the focus of this research project was to implement the Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum and record and analyse the experience using a qualitative approach. The question which drove this research is the following:
What happens when we use the Second Step Program with children and teachers? In asking this question it was hoped that further illumination of the overall experience would be achieved. Specifically, it was hoped that a sense of program effectiveness, staff satisfaction, and other unique and new areas for future research would come to the surface.

Although Second Step has been studied in the past, this study looked at in an entirely new way, using a qualitative approach, and sought to delve deeper into the issue of violence among students. In chapter 3, the specific methodology will be presented.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Overview

In this chapter, a description of the nature of qualitative methodologies as it pertains to the research question will be presented. The specific research design will be described in detail, along with a description of the nature of the participants, data collection and data analysis techniques. Finally, assumptions, limitations, trustworthiness and the problem statement will be presented.

Methodology and the Qualitative Approach

As stated in chapter 1, the purpose of this study is to explore the implementation of the Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum. It is hoped that a deeper understanding of the following question: What happens when we use the Second Step program with one primary class of children and their teachers? will be achieved.

A qualitative research methodology was chosen to examine the question, using observations, interviews, journals, and behaviour reports. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (1996), qualitative researchers are more interested in the quality of a particular activity than in how often it occurs. This is consistent with my desire to understand the impact of the program, and not just a correlation to the number of acts violence in a given week.
TRANSMISSION

The transmission of power from one place to another is a complex process involving various components. The primary goal is to efficiently transfer power from the source to the consumer with minimal loss. This involves several stages, each playing a crucial role in the overall system.

1. Generation: Power is generated at the source, typically through the use of fossil fuels, renewable sources, or nuclear reactions. The power is then transmitted through power lines.

2. Transmission: The power is transmitted over long distances to distribution centers or substations. This stage is crucial for ensuring that power is delivered to various locations.

3. Distribution: The power is distributed to homes, businesses, and industries. This stage involves the use of transformers to adjust the voltage level to a usable level.

4. Use: The power is finally used for various purposes, from lighting to heating and cooling.

Throughout this process, various technologies and methods are employed to ensure the efficiency and reliability of power transmission. Advances in technology continue to improve the system, making it more efficient and sustainable.

In conclusion, the transmission of power is a vital process that requires careful planning and implementation. With ongoing research and development, the system is constantly evolving to meet the increasing demand for energy while minimizing environmental impact.
A qualitative methodology is also suitable to study a phenomenological perspective as the researcher seeks to understand phenomena from the participant’s own viewpoint (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The data, which are not the type that can be easily handled by statistical procedures, should illuminate the experience of being part of the Second Step program through the eyes of the participants themselves.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) are noted for their writings in the area of qualitative research. Their book *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods* outlines five features of this type of research. Using this outline, I reviewed my own study as it relates to the qualitative research paradigm.

1. The natural setting is the direct source of data, and the researcher is the key instrument in qualitative research. This means that qualitative researchers go to a particular setting in which they are interested and collect their data in that location. They spend their time in schools, families, and neighbourhoods, learning about educational concerns. This effort is made because action can be best understood within its context. Qualitative researchers also believe that human behaviour is influenced by setting and, therefore, make every effort go to the particular setting of interest.
In this study, I made my observations in a very natural setting. In fact, the setting was in my own school: a classroom which is across the hall from my office. The students and teachers were extremely relaxed there, as it was their own environment. I made every effort not to be intrusive, and since I frequently visited prior to the study, my presence did not seem to be a concern. I was able to make my field notes within the classroom and on the playground. All of my observations and interviews were more informal because they were held in a familiar place and the description was more meaningful since it had a realistic context.

2. Qualitative data are collected in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. Data collection is extremely important, as it can involve interview transcripts, field notes, photographs, audio recordings, videotapes, diaries, personal comments, memos, official records, and anything else which conveys the actual words or actions of people. Nothing is taken as a given, and every detail could add insight to a situation. By portraying all that has been observed and recorded, the richness of the data is preserved.

Data were collected in four general ways: through interviews or conversations, observation of the students and teachers, observations made by other staff members of the students on the playground, and my own journal, which I had been keeping throughout the school year. I recorded all the research
...
information in a three-ring binder, which I had divided into four sections to match the methods of data collection. In all cases, I recorded the information by hand, but in rare cases, I would use a computer to record my thoughts and observations as it was a more efficient way to “capture the moment.”

Each of these sources of data were detailed and extensive, and I found that I needed to carefully organize all of the information to ensure none was lost. I was referred to by my staff as the “Sticky Note Queen,” as I seemed to be wandering the hall endlessly, recording information on post-it notes to place in my research binder at a later time. Seemingly insignificant bits of information were recorded, just in case it provided a link in the chain of meaning. A detailed description of the data collection procedures is presented later in this chapter.

3. Qualitative researchers are concerned with process as well as product. The researcher wants to know how things occur, and not just what happened. Hence, they are likely to observe such things as people interacting with each other, how questions are answered, the meanings people give to actions or words, how people’s attitudes affect their actions, etc.

This approach was definitely taken in recording my field notes. The fact that Johnny hit Susie was less important than the circumstances that provoked the violence or the way the teacher reacted. I probed into seemingly mundane
occurrences to gain an understanding of how the situation played itself out. What the participants were thinking or feeling meant as much to me as what they did.

4. Qualitative researchers tend to analyse their data inductively. Rather than having a formal hypothesis beforehand and then testing it out, qualitative researchers tend to "play it as it goes" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). A great deal of time is spent gathering the data through observation and interviews before the question is even considered. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggest that qualitative researchers are not putting a puzzle together whose picture they already know; rather, they are constructing a picture that takes shape as the parts are examined.

I can certainly identify with the first statement pertaining to the development of a question, as this was a most difficult task. I began considering the concept of violence and prevention early in the fall of 1997 and also began my own journal around this theme. The question did not become clear until the winter when I began collecting data. The complete picture was not understood until many months had passed and I was able to analyse my data. I couldn't have guessed what the picture or findings would be until I completed my data collection and began analysis. The themes emerged from the data.

5. Meaning or how people make sense out of their lives is a major concern to qualitative researchers. What the participants are thinking and why they think what they do is of special interest. This participant perspective is essential in
determining assumptions, motives, reasons, goals, and values, which are of great concern to the researcher as they provide a focus for questioning. Also, the researcher tries to capture the thinking of the participant as accurately as possible and will often share notes with the participants to check the accuracy of the interpretations.

I began my interviews with the teacher participants by asking the question, “How do you define violence?” This question, and the others which sprang from it, helped me to understand the participants’ assumptions, motives, goals, values, etc. This was extremely important as it helped me to understand the manner in which they interpreted the violent incidents which occurred during the study. I gained a better understanding of the way they “framed” their world and rationalized the unexplainable and often frustrating situations. I also asked the participants to read and respond to my summary or daily notes to ensure that I had not misinterpreted the data. I encouraged them to be honest and assured them that my feelings would not be hurt by their comments. This trusting relationship helped me to create a true and complete picture.

Another important feature of qualitative research is the ability to adopt flexible research strategies (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989). This means that researchers are able to use an emergent design approach, thus allowing them to make decisions about data collection strategies throughout the research process. I
did not feel that I was locked into rigid methods of data collection or analysis. If something interesting was happening during an observation session, it was all right to explore it further, ask questions, interact with the students and teachers, and gain a deeper insight.

**Ethnographic Research**

Qualitative research takes many forms. This particular study did not quite fit the mould of a case study or a biography due to my immersion in the research site and process. As the vice principal in the school, I was both a participant and an observer. Thus ethnographic research was the tradition that fit the bill and was used to frame the research process.

Ethnographic research seeks to document or portray everyday experiences of individuals by observing and interviewing in the field (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). It is a description and interpretation of a social or cultural group or system (Creswell, 1998). Ethnography is unique in that it involves prolonged observation of a group through participant observation in an authentic setting. The researcher becomes immersed in the day-to-day lives of the participants or conducts one-to-one interviews with members of the group.

The goal is to obtain the most holistic picture possible of a given situation over time. Researchers attempt to understand an ongoing situation or set of activities that cannot be predicted in advance, thus making hypothesizing
In conclusion, it is important to understand the historical context of these events and to be aware of the implications they may have for the future. It is crucial to acknowledge the mistakes made in the past and to work towards creating a more just and equitable society.

...
unnecessary and, in fact, impossible. The researcher studies the meanings of language, interactions, and behaviour in the culture-sharing group (Creswell, 1998). Life cycles, cultural themes, and events are isolated through the observation of the participants in an ordinary, normal setting. Spradley (1980) describes the goal of ethnographic research as the observation of what people do (behaviour), what they say (language), and what they make and use (artifacts).

The ethnographer engages in fieldwork that consists of gathering information through observations and interviews. Since immersion is the goal, the researcher attempts to gain access to the group through "gatekeepers," individuals who can provide access to the research site (Creswell, 1998). In this case, the gatekeepers were the teachers participating in the study. They allowed me access into their classroom and into the learning environment in which the students would learn about Second Step.

Equally important in ethnography is the role of "key informants," those individuals who can provide useful insights into the group and can ensure that the researcher obtains the contacts and information he/she requires (Creswell, 1998). The students and other teachers became important key informants during this research process, as will be described in detail in chapters 4 and 5.

Key issues in ethnographic research include reciprocity and deception. Reciprocity is the concept that something will be returned to the participants in
exchange for the information they share (Creswell, 1998). In this study, the participants did not ask for any form of compensation, nor did they require tangible resources to reimburse them for their time and energy. Instead, the Principal of the school offered them time, in the form of preparation periods or planning periods, to ensure that the time they spent with me would not be seen as an "add on" to an already busy day. I offered also to cover classes or yard duties for them when things became somewhat intense or hectic due to extended interview sessions. In addition, the participants were most keen to learn the results of the study. They wished to be a part of the collection, analysis, and reporting process. This was a form of professional growth for them.

One of the main goals of the ethnographer is to avoid deception. The researcher must make his/her presence known, as well as the purpose or intent of the study (Creswell, 1998). Thus, when presenting my research concept to the potential participants, I informed them of all aspects of the study, including methodological issues, confidentiality, reporting procedures, etc. I answered all of their questions truthfully and honestly, and throughout the research process, I continued to keep them informed, as new information emerged, by sharing transcripts of recorded interviews, summary sheets of transcribed notes, and draft copies of the final thesis.
In the end, an analysis of the culture-sharing group is achieved by looking at themes or perspectives and comparing them to interactions and generalizations about human social life (Wolcott, 1994). By comparing the various data sources in this study and examining the different perspectives of the participants, themes emerged which created a "cultural portrait." A cultural portrait is defined as an overview of the entire cultural scene by drawing together all aspects learned about the group and detailing the complexity (Creswell, 1998). The Findings and Summary sections of this paper show how the data is drawn together, isolating themes from the various perspectives, resulting in a deeper insight into the culture of a classroom of students using the Second Step program.

This type of research provides a much more comprehensive perspective than many other forms of educational research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). The dynamics of a situation or interaction among people can be better understood through this contextual approach. However, ethnographic research is also dependent upon the researcher's observations and thus highly susceptible to ambiguity. Knowing that this may be a difficulty, I made every effort to be extremely rigorous in my data collection and analysis and sought assistance from the participants and my thesis advisor along the way.
The Participants

Due to the nature of my study, a purposive sample was chosen. This makes sense, as a random sample would not provide a group of people which was convenient, available, and suited to the intent of the study (Patton, 1990).

For the purposes of this study, I was looking for teachers who would be willing to use the Second Step program with their classes. He/she also needed to be willing to speak with me about the experience and allow me to observe and take notes. Ironically, selecting participants was fairly simple as a teacher in my school and her student teacher were about to begin using the Second Step program within a few weeks.

To ensure confidentiality, I used pseudonyms for all the given names of the teacher participants and students. I did not identify the name of the school or in any way label the individuals involved so that their identities or the location could be revealed. For my own purposes, I created a chart, which I stored with the rest of the confidential data, with the correct names of the individuals beside their pseudonyms.

Participant #1 - Caroline

Caroline taught a primary GLD class at my school. She had a great deal of experience dealing with inner city, at-risk children and over 25 years of teaching behind her. She had been at my school for 3 years and had used Second Step at
least eight times in her career. She said she could not quite remember when she started using the curriculum because it has just become a part of her program.

Caroline was an excellent participant for the study for a number of reasons. First, her teaching assignment involved her with some of the most volatile, aggressive children in the school. I was anxious to find a primary class to deal with, as from my own experiences and noted in my journal entries, violence problems could be found more frequently with younger children. The class had 12 students, six of whom are diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Five of the six are on Ritalin, but proper dosages were not always administered. On many occasions students arrived at school without their noon-hour pill, or parents complained that money was tight and a new prescription could not be filled for several weeks.

Secondly, Caroline’s willingness to participate was very important. She already planned to teach the unit during the winter months and welcomed my involvement. She said, “I really like using the program. It’s practical and gives the kids the things they really need.”

Thirdly, Caroline has a great number of personal qualities which made her a good participant. She was open to new ideas and enjoyed a challenge and a change. She was described by others as “energetic” and “a true professional.” Her opinions and observations had a great deal of credibility because of her own
all these means are the foundations of...
professionalism. Caroline also expressed an interest in knowing more about the implementation of the program and a willingness to talk with me about her impressions.

Finally, the location of Caroline’s class, namely, my own school, was ideal. I was able to become deeply involved with the program, the students, the teachers, and all the situations which occurred. I had a large quantity of background information from my journal and behaviour logs, and therefore, a baseline was already established. I welcomed the opportunity to become actively involved with the research, rather than simply being a passive visitor.

**Participant #2 - Stephen**

Stephen was an unexpected additional participant. He had been a youth worker for 9 years and had been involved with my school for seven of them. He also began using Second Step at least 7 years ago and found the program to be highly effective for use with small groups. It was Stephen who first introduced me to the program, and he taught it to my class. I was impressed by his genuine interest in the students and the Second Step program.

Stephen was a student in the local Faculty of Education and was placed in Caroline’s class as a student teacher during the time of my study. As a part of his placement, Stephen decided to teach the Second Step program. He said, “I like
and make these questions as actual requirements for a questionnaire.

To ensure that the questionnaire is effective, the items should be measured on a continuous scale.

Indeed, some people are more interested in understanding the context and purpose of the study, while others are more interested in the specific questions and their implications. This might lead to different answers, depending on the respondents' perspectives. The questionnaire should be designed to reflect the diversity of the audience, ensuring that all participants feel comfortable and engaged.

Furthermore, the questionnaire should be structured to encourage open-ended responses, allowing for a more nuanced and detailed understanding of the participants' views. This approach can help to identify patterns and trends that might not be apparent from closed-ended questions.

In conclusion, designing a questionnaire that is both comprehensive and engaging is crucial for obtaining valuable data. By carefully considering the audience and the purpose of the study, researchers can create a questionnaire that effectively captures the intended information.
the way the lessons are laid out. I believe the kids can learn (the strategies) and use them. I don’t have any hard research to back this up, just my own feelings.”

I respected Stephen’s expertise and willingness to participate and found his enthusiasm for my research to be invigorating. He was willing also to discuss his perceptions and welcomed me into the classroom as a participant in the daily lessons, which is not an easy feat for a student teacher.

Both participants were apprised of the full scope of the study and were given copies of my Proposal for Research (Appendix C) to peruse at their leisure. The Informed Consent Form was signed (Appendix D), and our research began.

Data Collection

As outlined by Fraenkel and Wallen (1996), many types of data can be collected in qualitative research; however, the two primary methods are interview and observation. I used both of these techniques in my research, as well as two others which are explained below and in the Data Collection Samples table (Appendix E). I kept all my field notes in a binder, which was divided into the following four sections:

1. Interviews

Interviews or conversations formed a large part of my database. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) describe interviewing as “a purposeful conversation, usually between two people that is directed by one in order to get information. In the hands of a qualitative researcher, the interview takes on a shape of its own”
The authors further describe some of the features of a good interview. I will compare these to my own approach.

Interviewers must build a relationship and get to know their subjects. I was most fortunate to have known both of my participants for over 3 years. We had enjoyed many personal and professional moments, and this stranger barrier was not an issue.

Interviews should be loosely structured. If the interviewer controls the content too rigidly, the personal story of the participant is lost. My interview techniques were unstructured (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). There was no need to compare data across subjects and, therefore, no need to ask identical questions. This conforms to the notion presented earlier regarding Ethnographic Research.

The goal was to obtain a holistic picture of the situation over time without predicting and hypothesizing in advance what will happen. I would attempt to approach a given situation or person with a goal in mind but also allowed the conversation to flow while I probed for details. I used the six basic types of questions described by Patton (1990) to guide my interviewing: background or demographic questions, knowledge questions, experience or behaviour questions, opinion or values questions, feelings questions, and sensory questions.

In a good interview, the subjects are at ease and don’t fear that they will be evaluated. It is important to remember that the researcher is not there to change
the views but to learn what the participant’s views are and why they are that way. I always attempted to speak with my participants in a relaxed setting and manner and assured them that I was not evaluating their teaching or disciplinary abilities. The assurance that I respected their opinions and would allow them to respond to my written work helped to put them at ease.

Use of a tape recorder or notes is important, as is patience. It is important to record all of the information presented in an interview, and much of what is said comes through gestures, body language, and other non-verbal cues. Most often, I kept notes regarding daily conversations with Stephen and Caroline as they had expressed a desire to avoid the tape recording of conversations whenever possible. However, I did use a tape recorder during particularly lengthy discussions and followed this up with a written account which detailed the other important contextual elements. I transcribed the contents of any tape-recorded interviews at a later date and asked Caroline and Stephen to review the transcript carefully. They had the opportunity to review the notes and make any changes, ensuring their feelings and observations were accurately captured.

Patience for a lengthy interview after a long day of work was often difficult. We decided to speak early in the morning or briefly throughout the day to avoid the pitfall of rushing and missing details.

2. Observations
Observation refers to looking at how people act or how things appear (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). There are several roles an observer may take on in qualitative research. In this study, my role was that of “participant-as-observer” as I participated in the activities of the group being studied, but I also made it clear that I was doing research and that I intended to describe the reactions to the Second Step program. I apprised the teachers of the study in detail in advance to ensure they were fully aware of the nature and focus of my observations. Before beginning my research, I also spoke to the students and told them that I wanted to know more about the program they were going to be experiencing and that is why I would be popping in now and then to take part. I was usually greeted with a friendly “hello” by a few students, but otherwise, the lessons continued without disruption.

Merriam’s (1988) guidelines for observation were followed closely: (a) observation must serve a formulated research purpose, (b) it must be planned deliberately, (c) observations should be recorded systematically, and (d) it must be subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability. With the question clearly formulated, I was able to plan specific strategies for data collection and recorded them in a binder, which was divided into four sections, one for each type of data collected. I scheduled time with the teachers to be in the classroom observing the students, both during and after the daily Second Step lessons. I
...
recorded my observations and dated each entry. I attempted to be as rigorous and
thorough as possible and included many details. Trustworthiness was considered
and will be addressed later in this chapter.

3. Staff Observations

To round out the picture, Caroline, Stephen, and I informed the staff of the
research going on in their classroom. We asked them to be aware of the students’
behaviour, both positive and negative. As a result, if anyone noticed something of
interest, they brought that to my attention; and I recorded it in my field notes
binder. As a vice principal, I usually heard about behaviour difficulties, so this
was not an unusual or onerous request.

The same guidelines described above were used to ensure proper collection
of staff observations (Merriam, 1988).

4. My Journal

I had been keeping a journal since I first got my job as a vice principal. In
it, I had recorded my dealings with and feelings about violence in preparation for
this study. The journal, in which I continued writing during the study, served as a
type of “Reflective Fieldnotes” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). These notes contained
a more personal account of the course of the inquiry, allowing the subjective side
of the researcher’s journey to be recorded.
In these notes, I was able to voice my feelings, concerns, ideas, predictions, impressions, and gut instincts. I was able to openly confess difficulties, revamp my ideas, and deal with my own prejudices. Not only was this a therapeutic undertaking, but also it improved the notes. As Bogdan and Biklen (1992) state, a researcher must be self-reflective and must keep an accurate record of methods, procedures, and evolving analysis in order to do a good study. These notes were kept in a separate section of my field notes binder, and thus I was able to isolate my personal reflections and keep them apart from areas which required observation and accurate factual recording.

I was also conscious of the need for me to “bracket my bias” or set aside my prejudices (Creswell, 1998). It was important that I clear away all my experiences with the Second Step program and my impressions of the teachers and students. By doing so, I was able to more easily rely upon my intuition, imagination, and universal structures to obtain a new picture of the research experience (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990).

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis occurs in two different ways: In the field and after data collection. The following is a summary of the analysis procedures used in each situation as they relate to the methods which are broadly accepted by well-
respected and experienced qualitative researchers such as Bogdan and Biklen (1992), Creswell (1998), and Merriam (1988) to name a few.

**In the Field**

Following the guidelines set out by Bogdan and Biklen (1992) was very helpful when analysing the data.

1. Force yourself to make decisions that narrow the study. This is the act of funnelling data collection. The practical application of this was to limit the number of participants in my study, limit the number of visits, and limit the number of children with whom I tried to interact. I had to discipline myself not to pursue everything and to put limits on the study to ensure productivity in the final analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

2. Plan data collection sessions in light of what you find in previous observation. With each observation, I asked myself, “What is it that I do not yet know?” This helped me to think about the direction of my study and plan for the future.

3. Write many observer’s comments about your ideas. This refers to the recording of thoughts and feelings in the field. As I have already stated, my journal helped to accomplish this objective and ensured that personal insights were not lost in the shuffle.
4. Try out ideas and themes on the participants. By sharing what I have noticed or by checking to see how an idea resonated with the teachers, I was able to advance my analysis. They were able to fill in the holes of my description or refute ideas which were not well grounded. This also achieved an important degree of reciprocity (Merriam, 1988). The participants felt like they were both giving and receiving knowledge.

5. Begin exploring related literature. The detailed literature review certainly helped me to understand the foundation of violence prevention research. Formulating a research question was easier with a knowledge of crucial issues, past findings, and gaps in the literature.

6. Play with metaphors, concepts and analogies. Asking myself "What does this remind me of?" helped me to describe the phenomenon. The participants and staff members often used metaphors and analogies to describe behaviour incidents which I did not observe myself. For example, when a teacher would tell me that Bobby and Johnny had a disagreement at recess that ended badly, very little information is revealed. However, when asked to give detail, hearing such things as, "Bobby was screaming like a banshee, and Johnny ran away like a scared rabbit," revealed the exact nature of the situation and made it much clearer. Metaphors often helped me to better understand incidents and form a picture in my mind. I could then use these images to create a larger collage of understanding.
After Data Collection

As suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1992), following the data collection phase, an important step is to take a break. This time away from data analysis helps to renew enthusiasm and gives the researcher a chance to read and mull over new ideas. My break became rather extended due to a job relocation and the new and more extensive duties which awaited me. I also spent time taking other courses which were mandated for my new position. However, the time away did allow for a clearer look at the full picture.

My first step upon returning to my research was to reacquaint myself with the data. As suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1992), I did this by re-reading all of my field notes and fine-tuning the subdivided binder I had kept during my research. I separated the data using the four methods of collection: Interviews, Observations, Staff Observations, and My Journal as it was the manner in which I had collected it. This conforms with the method of organization suggested by Creswell (1998). However, this became difficult as many pieces of information crossed over the lines; for example, I observed the incident, discussed it in a subsequent interview, and finally reflected on it in my journal. The single story was recorded in three areas and in three distinctly different voices. I wanted to maintain the integrity of the data by ensuring the findings would reflect each voice, and not simply my own.
The form of data analysis was truly emergent in nature. I had originally decided to create summary sheets which crossed over the four categories. I thought that condensing or winnowing the data was the only way to make it manageable and meaningful (Wolcott, 1994). As my frustration grew, I was certain I was heading down the wrong road and succeeding only in complicating my situation.

However, I was, in fact, beginning to connect the threads across the subheadings and doing what I set out to do: looking for patterns and deeper meaning. I reminded myself often of my mother’s advice about cleaning: “If you want to really clean something, you’ve got to make a bit of a mess!” It seemed to apply to data analysis as well.

There is no consensus for the analysis of the forms of qualitative data (Creswell, 1998). This certainly makes deciding upon an approach or framework a unique challenge. I knew that I needed to use a set method for coding the data as suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1992), Huberman and Miles (1994), and Wolcott (1994), but the categories for coding were eluding me. I was comforted by the knowledge that the qualitative researcher learns by doing, and so I pressed onward (Dey, 1995).

During this time, I spoke often with Caroline and Stephen. I asked for their input and validation of my transcripts and notes. They added their own insights,
which propelled me further and forced me to look beyond the surface findings. My knee-jerk reaction into a quantitative mind set was strong at this time. I often forgot that I was not looking for change or measurable effects, but rather enlightenment and understanding as described by Bogdan and Biklen (1992). This often led to procrastination rather than confrontation.

The moment when it all began making sense happened during the first months at my new school when I became a principal. The youth worker on staff wanted to start some sort of violence prevention program at the school and approached me about it. As we spoke, I found myself talking about my research and using my findings to encourage her to use the Second Step Program. Through her questioning and input, I found that the findings I had previously considered to be "insignificant" were actually relevant and transferrable into the current situation. She forced me to reflect and reconsider the data. I spoke about what I knew intuitively based upon the experiences of Caroline and Stephen.

Finally, it was all making sense. In conversation with my thesis advisor, I realized I had found themes in the data without even realizing it. Summarizing the data had helped me find the themes, and I was using them to speak to others about the program. Now I needed to go back to the original data and complete the coding.
My original problem stemmed from the fact that I wanted to cross among the four types of data collection: interviews, observations, staff observations and my journal. As mentioned earlier, this information was very repetitive and cumbersome. Spradley (1980) suggested the use of taxonomies, comparison tables, or semantic tables. All of these seek to help isolate patterned regularities in the data. Thus, I created a chart which listed the theme and four sources of data such as Figure 1 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Me</th>
<th>Caroline</th>
<th>Stephen</th>
<th>Other Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Chart of data sources.

Using the four people or groups of people made funneling the data into appropriate categories much easier.

I went through my binder of data and began highlighting and coding key words and phrases in each source of data which supported my gut feelings about the Second Step Program. This is similar to the method suggested by Creswell (1998). The identification of organizational ideas helped me to describe, classify, and interpret the data more accurately. I transcribed similar pieces of information
(e.g., all those pertaining to student perceptions) onto the chart and found these gut feelings were themes! From there, things emerged quite naturally.

In several instances, a single theme multiplied into two or three sub-themes, each supported by at least three of the data sources. For example, the issue of “the program is working” subdivided into “teachers report confidence in the program” and “despite any tangible evidence, staff believe it to be effective”.

In other cases, a theme emerged while reading and re-reading the data. I noticed that I had written many times in my journal about wanting to know why a student had been aggressive. I looked to see if Caroline, Stephen and the staff questioned the “why” and found they had. This helped to illuminate the theme of “addressing the causes of aggression.”

Creating these categories was extremely important and time-consuming as it is the heart of qualitative data analysis (Creswell, 1998). When creating the charts, my main focus was to maintain accuracy in my writing. I found that the direct quotes recorded during my interviews and the journal entries were easy to transcribe word-for-word. Staff observations were more difficult. As stated earlier, during data collection I often wrote their comments on sticky notes while walking the halls of the school. Thus their observations were point form in most cases. To ensure I would not add my own bias to their thoughts and feelings, I
kept these observations in point form unless I had added detail at the time of the incident in my journal.

Creswell (1998) writes about the varied approaches to category creation. He described the development of approximately 12 codes as the process used by experienced researchers and the development of an elaborate list of over 30 codes as the approach commonly used by beginning researchers. Instead of either of these approaches, he suggested the development of five or six main categories which can be expanded if desired. This became my approach – "suitcasing" ideas into broader themes to avoid the development of a category list that would be too daunting.

From there, I was able to interpret the data or find the "so what" of the findings. Interpretation is attempting to make sense of the data, and a variety of forms exist. Creswell (1998) highlights several options, such as interpretation based on hunches, insights, and intuition. He also describes interpretation within a social science construct and/or personal views. The key notion is the need to step back and form larger meanings of what is going on in the situations. The interpretation phase was mostly guided by the former method – that of intuition, hunches, and insights which were confirmed or challenged by Caroline and Stephen. Using them as "sounding boards" was essential in ensuring a true picture would be achieved.
As this is an ethnographic study, a personal approach was encouraged (Wolcott, 1994). It was important to know how the experience had affected the participants and me. Our opinions about the findings were also relevant. Most importantly, I sought to find the way in which the themes would impact upon education, change, and future research (Creswell, 1998).

Weaving all the elements together was an exciting experience. It became evident that I did not need an earth-shattering change to find something important and worthwhile. The charts would help me to achieve my goal: to understand what happens when the Second Step Program is used with a group of students.

**Methodological Assumptions**

I knew I had to begin my research by openly confronting my own assumptions or personal bias. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) state that researchers need to put their assumptions and their expectations for the outcome of the study up front, so that they can be confronted and measured against what emerges through the study.

First, there will always be some degree of observer bias. This is the possibility that certain characteristics or ideas of observers may bias what they see (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). The fact that I knew the participants so well is both an asset and a liability. It was wonderful to have an open relationship with my participants, but my knowledge of their personalities may have influenced what I
"saw" in my observations. For example, because I respected and admired Caroline as a person and as a teacher, I worried that I might not immediately see a strategy she chose or the way she handled a problem as negative or less than ideal. It became important to record observations immediately and then leave them for a while. At a later time, I would reflect upon them with a more critical eye to limit any bias I may have had in the moment. Also, asking another participant or observers about their perceptions of a given situation helped to confirm, expand, or alter my own observations.

Also, because this study was carried out in the tradition of Ethnography, I was aware that my presence in the classroom and at the school during the program delivery was having an impact on the site and the people being studied. This is referred to as "reactivity" (Creswell, 1998). By being in the classroom during instructional times, the teachers and students were behaving differently, even if only slightly. Having another person become a part of any situation will change the dynamics of the group. It was important to remember that what was happening during my observations was being affected by the very fact that I was conducting my research. Also, as time went on, I was aware that this difference in behaviour became less pronounced as the students and teachers became accustomed to my presence in the classroom.
Another one of my biases is that I have had previous, positive experiences with the Second Step program, and therefore, I might have superimposed this opinion onto my observations. Likewise, both Caroline and Stephen think highly of the program, and their past experiences could have coloured the way they viewed this research. There is nothing that can erase past experience, and in fact, it can also be viewed as an asset. All our expertise with the program lessened the likelihood that our findings could be a “honeymoon effect,” where everything new is wonderful. Also, each time we have taught the program, we have become more adept and, therefore, better instructors. This adds strength to the study.

Fraenkel and Wallen (1996) make it clear that no one can be totally objective, but that researchers should be aware of their biases and try to control them. I knew I needed to be sensitive to my own biases and those of my participants and recognize that they exist. I also knew that clear, focussed notes would be necessary to ensure that my interpretation remained separate from the data as much as possible.

Limitations

In addition to my biases, the study itself also had limitations inherent within its design. First, a limitation may be the “good naturedness” of the participants. They may have given me the responses and data that they believed I wanted to hear (Patton, 1990). However, I made a conscious effort to clearly explain the
research question to them and I assured them that I was not out to prove anything. I spoke to them at great length about my desire to explore the situation and simply gain a better understanding, whatever that may be. I felt that this message was heard and understood and that the participants shared my goal and therefore, did not taint their observations.

Although my relationship with the participants was congenial, I had to recognize that my role as vice principal could contradict my role as researcher. As a vice principal, I was responsible not only for the discipline of students, but also for the evaluation, correction and counselling of staff who may experience difficulties with their job. I did not want to be perceived as an “evaluator” during my conversations with Caroline and Stephen, but rather as a co-researcher looking for information and understanding. To ensure that the threat of evaluation and correction was limited, I addressed the issue before the research began. I assured both participants that I would not be using any information gained during the study toward an evaluation, and, in fact, I would not be formally or informally evaluating them at all. I offered them the promise that we would have researcher and participant confidentiality and that my two roles would remain as separate as possible. I would often begin my conversations with phrases like, “Speaking as a researcher ....,” or “Off the school record, what do you really think?”
Another limitation was the Second Step Program which I was able to access from the board library. Unfortunately, due to financial restraints, the copy used in this study was the second edition and 9 years old. As stated earlier, the curriculum is updated and re-released each year, and in conversation with the publishing company, the core program remains virtually unchanged. The photographs have been updated to reflect hair and fashion in the new millennium and several new components, such as videos, homework sheets, and supplementary teacher resources have been added. It is worth recognizing that a newer copy of the program may have proved to be considered more current or relevant when presenting it to the students and teachers.

The time frame of three weeks of instruction is a rather short duration for an ethnography and thus another limitation. The program implementation time was directly linked to Stephen's student teaching block. However, it is important to note that pre-data-collection observations were recorded for 6 months prior to the actual program implementation, and I continued to write in my journal for the remainder of the school year. Thus the study itself was really a reflection of a 10-month period of observation although the actual Second Step lessons were only observed for 3 weeks.

Another interesting limitation is the nature of the class used in this study. General Learning Disabilities (GLD) students are segregated in low enrolment
classes to modify instruction to meet their specific needs. Generally, these needs centre around a communications/language deficit which is affecting their learning and performance as detailed in the General Learning Disabilities Profile (Appendix A). The GLD class certainly shaped the results of this study, and although it is not a limitation per se, the results would be different if a larger class was used with students who possessed more advanced language abilities.

Finally, the fact that my entire study is dependent upon my ability to observe and analyse data is a limitation. I have tried to counteract this limitation by reading extensively and asking for advice and confirmation from other trusted professionals. Most importantly, I have made a conscientious effort to bracket my bias and let the story unfold itself (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

Trustworthiness

To further address the issues of bias and limitations, a researcher must establish trustworthiness or persuasiveness. McMillan and Schumacher (1989) define trustworthiness as “the extent to which emerging categories, patterns and themes reflect valid and reliable data” (p. 418). They describe three strategies which can be used to increase trustworthiness:

1. Look for negative evidence. This refers to searching for discrepant incidents which, when added to the database, may yield insights which enable the researcher to modify emerging patterns. In order to accomplish this, I recorded as
much data as I could, whether it seemed important or not (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). My motto became, “document, document, and document some more.”

2. Use triangulation. Triangulation means the combination of different kinds of qualitative methods, mixing purposeful samples, or including multiple perspectives (Patton, 1990). This cross-validation among data sources, data collection strategies, or theoretical schemes strengthens the validity. In this study, the four methods of data collection (interviews, observations, staff reports, and my journal) provide the necessary degree of triangulation. When a pattern emerges in more than one source of data, one can be more certain that it is meaningful and possibly useful information.

3. Construct data displays. It is well known that figures, flow charts, and matrices can assist in understanding complicated information. A visual representation which is accompanied by descriptive contextual data can be helpful in simplifying complex data, illuminating a concept, or communicating clearly. In this study, I have attempted to use a data display for this purpose. I created a chart which helped me to isolate themes within the data. I found this chart to be effective in crystallizing and organizing my own thoughts.

Restatement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to explore the implementation of the Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum when it is used with a primary general
learning disabilities class. The question which drove this research is the following: What happens when we use the Second Step program with children and teachers? In asking this question it was hoped that further illumination of the overall experience would be achieved. Specifically, it was hoped that a sense of program effectiveness, staff satisfaction, and other unique and new areas for future research would come to the surface. In addition, I hoped to learn more about the specific changes which may occur among students and teachers participating in a violence prevention program. Are attitudes and beliefs affected? If so, in what way? Are specific teacher behaviours altered, and in what ways? Is the school culture affected by the implementation of such a program? Using a qualitative methodology as described above, the implementation was explored to gain meaning and insight into this important area of research.

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, the research methodology was outlined in detail as it pertains to current qualitative research practices. The participants, data collection, and data analysis procedures were described. As well, the assumptions and limitations were discussed.

In chapter 4, the findings are described in detail. They are categorized into six themes which emerged during the data collection and analysis procedure.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE FINDINGS

This section will present the findings from the investigation in six sections or themes. In each case, the theme is supported by data gathered during the study. The theme is presented and supported using relevant observations and thoughts from Caroline, Stephen, the staff, and me as researcher, as recorded in my data binder. Finally, the findings are interpreted for meaning at the end of each section.

**Theme 1 - A New Vocabulary**

General Learning Disabilities students often have difficulties expressing themselves using language, spoken and written. It has been my experience that their frustration seems to grow when asked to explain their actions or thoughts. Thus one of the first things that stood out in the data was the acquisition of “violence vocabulary” by the students.

In one of my first journal entries, just prior to beginning the Second Step Program, I wrote, “Jason tried to send Michael down the slide head first today. Nasty and seemingly unprovoked. I felt like I was talking to a brick wall. He couldn’t even describe what happened, let alone why. He just looked at me and shrugged his shoulders. Shutting me out? Nothing good to say, so why say anything at all?”
While observing the class during one of the first Second Step lessons, I observed Jason again. Stephen was holding a picture of a girl who looked visibly sad as she watched a group of girls playing a short distance away. Her eyes were down-cast, her mouth was turned down, her forehead was wrinkled, and her posture was slouched. This girl was very obviously sad or upset about being left out. I wrote in my field notes, “Jason stared at this little girl and genuinely seemed to be trying to understand her and the situation. Stephen asked if anybody had a guess as to how she might be feeling. Jason continued to stare but didn’t raise his hand. Another girl suggested that she might be sad, but didn’t know why. No one knew why. I couldn’t believe it. It’s as plain as the nose on your face! I wanted to tell them all, she’s lonely and left out. Don’t you know what that looks like? Haven’t you ever felt this way?”

Several weeks later, I wrote about another conversation with Jason after he had stolen a ball from the school and taken it home with him. I wrote, “Jason was very sullen. He knew he had been caught red handed and wasn’t making any excuses. Progress – at least he’s not denying it happened. I asked him what he was thinking when he decided to take the class ball. He talked about wanting it very badly. With further probing, he said, ‘I know it wasn’t right. It belongs to everyone in the class. They would be sad if there wasn’t a ball to play with
tomorrow.’ Ah ha! He is able to identify how others might feel— that’s empathy. This is a real step in the right direction!”

Caroline spoke often of her love for special education students despite the frustration encountered because of barriers in communication. She also noticed the acquisition of a new vocabulary to describe feelings and actions.

During one of our conversations halfway through the program, she said, “It’s like the kids finally find a way to talk about what’s inside. When I ask them about the ‘intentions of others’ or ‘accepting criticism’ they know what I mean. We’re on the same wavelength, which makes finding a solution a lot easier.”

Caroline talked about situations which had occurred during class time when students had intentionally or unintentionally hurt someone or broken a class rule. She said, “It’s happening more and more often now. In September, you couldn’t seem to break through and make them understand that taking things or name-calling was wrong. Now, they tell each other to be nice and follow the rules. They put a lot of positive peer pressure on each other and talk about feelings.”

As a youth worker, Stephen had a great deal of experience dealing with people who were reluctant or unable to “open up.” We spoke often of our shared desire to get to the heart of the matter and discover what was happening inside the kids when violent incidents happened.
After one of the lessons in the Empathy Training unit, Stephen talked about the experience of brainstorming emotions. He said, “It’s funny that these kids didn’t seem to know any emotions beyond happy, sad, and mad. It took quite a bit of digging, but things like ‘jealous’, ‘impatient’, ‘anxious’ – they all came out eventually. I made a lot of faces today (laughing)! I also tried having them describe a situation, and I would help them label the situation or emotion.”

In subsequent interviews after a few more lessons had passed, Stephen said, “Describing someone’s feelings was a lot easier. They had a bigger bank of emotions to draw upon.”

Staff members came to see me on two separate occasions regarding a student in Caroline’s class named Jake. He was frequently involved in verbal and physical conflicts.

Just prior to onset of the research project, the lunch room supervisor reported an incident in which a student accidentally spilled Jake’s pop. Jake had retaliated physically by pushing the other student down and threatening him. She was most distressed by the incident, and in my behaviour log I wrote, “(lunch room supervisor) tried to convince Jake that it was an accident and that he didn’t need to overreact in this way. I don’t think he got the point.”

Weeks later, in the midst of the Second Step unit, Jake and another student named Michael bumped heads on the playground. A staff member brought
Jake to me and commended him for handling the situation so well. She described the accidental bumping and how angry both boys became. Jake “stood patiently while Michael told his story, without interrupting”. She reported that in the end, he acknowledged that Michael had accidentally bumped into him and not intentionally tried to hurt him. Apologies were exchanged, and play resumed. In my journal I wrote, “How exciting – Jake talked about ‘intentions’ and understood the role they play in diffusing violent situations.”

As presented in the examples above, each of the four data sources showed evidence of a growing vocabulary when discussing feelings, violent incidents, and conflict situations. Concepts studied in the Second Step program in a hypothetical way resurfaced in “real life” discussions allowing students to better communicate their thoughts, motivation, and intentions.

**Theme 2 - Alternatives Acquired**

After delving into the acquisition of vocabulary surrounding emotions and violent incidents, it became apparent that the students were also becoming more aware of the alternatives to violent behaviour. They seemed to find solutions other than verbal or physical violence when addressing conflict situations.

Near the end of the program delivery, Stephen and Caroline asked the students to draw pictures describing what they had learned during the Second Step lessons. They did not prompt the students’ answers or provide them with ideas as
to what they should draw. Instead, Caroline and Stephen reminded the children of the bulletin board at the side of the classroom which displayed some of the program posters and teacher-created charts listing several concepts which were studied (Appendix F).

The students generally copied their "sentences" from the posters on the bulletin boards to describe the picture or their idea. For example, Allison wrote on her picture, "We learned how not to lie," which was taken almost word for word from the top poster in the display. However, a few students remembered their own most significant learning, such as Kelly, who wrote, "We learned how not to be bothered (bothered) by others." (Appendix G).

The posters themselves showed that the students may have found new alternatives to problems; however, I wondered if this was merely a good memory or copying. I decided to informally take each student aside and ask them to tell me about their picture. I recognized that verbal communication was often more effective and accurate than written for these students. Harry's poster talked about not fighting, but I asked him to tell me what was happening in the picture (Appendix H). He said, "The one boy is bugging the other one, but he's not going to punch him." I asked why the boy wasn't going to punch him. Harry replied, "He's thinking in his head, don't punch him and he's going to tell the teacher
instead.” I probed further asking, “What if the teacher is busy and can’t help?” Harry said, “Just tell him to mind his own business!”

From this conversation and Harry’s picture, I realized that he had internalized several alternatives to violence: self-talk or reflection, finding someone to mediate the dispute, and solving problems with words and not fists.

I asked another boy, Jake, whose picture depicted a red-faced boy standing alone with his arms outstretched (Appendix I). The caption read, “We learned how to calm down when we get angry.” I asked him to tell me about his picture and he said, “The boy is really mad. He’s not fighting, though.” I said I could see that and asked what he was doing instead. Jake replied, “He’s counting to ten; maybe he’ll punch a pillow then.” I asked if that helps, and Jake said it did. I asked him to tell me other things the boy could do to remain calm, and he said, “His friend could talk nicely to him, or he could ask to sit at the back of the room in a quiet space.”

Jake was able to identify at least four different alternatives to aggressive actions: self-calming techniques (counting to ten), letting your anger out on an inanimate object (the pillow), calm conversation, and a time-out in a quiet area.

These responses were not isolated. Several other students described yelling in their room instead of yelling at a sibling, sitting alone instead of with a person who is antagonizing them, or asking a teacher to intervene. The students had
clearly internalized several alternative actions which they professed worked for them.

During one of our interviews, Caroline described a change in one of her students named Daniel. He was an impulsive boy, whose response to any perceived aggressive acts was usually to strike back. His most frequent defence when “caught in the act” was either denial (“I didn’t do it”) or to defend his actions as the only possible way to handle the problem (“He hit me so I had to hit him back”). Daniel was not a boy with a variety of alternative solutions to problems.

Caroline had noticed an altercation between Daniel and another girl in the classroom involving a set of markers they were supposed to be sharing. The girl had clearly grabbed the marker away from Daniel without asking permission and proceeded to use it despite the rage in his face. Caroline began to walk over to the side of the room where Daniel was seated expecting a conflict which would need her involvement. She told me, “I was so surprised. Daniel was just sitting there, fuming in anger, but he wasn’t hitting or grabbing or swearing – nothing! He looked like he was going to pop at any moment, so I casually asked how things were going. Daniel seemed relieved that I was there and launched into a long story about how the other girl took the marker without asking. I asked him how he planned to handle the problem and he seemed perplexed at first. He looked at me
like - You want me to handle this? I know he wanted me to take the marker back and give it to him, but I wanted him to solve the problem. So he leaned over to the girl and told her to give the marker back. She argued saying she was right in the middle of using it. He told her that he had it first and he wanted to use it now. She slammed the marker on his desk and just continued colouring with another marker like nothing happened. It was strange really – no big hoopla like I thought there would be."

It would appear that Daniel had resisted his impulse to strike back and take the marker in favour of calming down first. He was truly angry, but he sat and thought things through first and took the time to discuss it with a mediator. In addition to the alternative of calming down, he also identified and used the alternative of discussion and giving a rationale for his request. This was a big step for Daniel.

Ironically, Stephen had witnessed the same incident between Daniel and the other student. In our interview that day, he talked about watching the whole thing happen. It was interesting to hear his perspective on the situation as an observer and not a participant.

The story Stephen relayed to me was similar to Caroline’s, although he added a most interesting insight. He said, “I really wanted to know what was running through Daniel’s mind right then. You know? Was he thinking about his
choices or was he just fixating on not doing the wrong thing?” When I asked him for more detail about that last statement, Stephen said, “Sometimes I think we’re not getting anywhere with the kids and nothing’s happening here, but then there’s an amazing little step that shows there’s some new ideas up there. These kids have a few more tricks up their sleeves than they did before, and it’s starting to show. Maybe they don’t always have the ability to control their impulses long enough to let the good stuff out, but it’s there. Some of it’s sinking in. Who knows? In time they may become very self-disciplined people.”

Stephen was clearly describing the fact that the students were beginning to acquire the skills in the program and were beginning to understand the alternatives to violent behaviour. He acknowledged that using the alternatives was not always happening, but there was a heightened awareness which may lead to action.

The other staff did not overtly report any instances of students having acquired alternatives to violence. However, in several instances, a teacher relayed a story of misbehaviour and the consequences applied, and it was apparent that they had not given the child an opportunity to explore the alternatives available, even in retrospect. I encouraged all the teachers to ask the question, “What could you have done differently,” when dealing with Caroline’s students. (At the time I was focussed on the subjects of my research, but I realized later that this was good advice when dealing with any student.)
One teacher came to me several days later and told me about a problem with Jake. He had been caught swearing loudly and threatening another boy on the climbers with phrases such as, “I’m going to kill you when you come down!” After probing the situation, the teacher discovered that the boy had accidentally bumped Jake while playing on the climbers. Jake had a red spot on his forehead which later developed into a fairly painful looking bruise.

The teacher told me that she asked Jake what he could have done differently, as per my request, and he had come up with “all kinds of good ideas - none of which he used!” Her voice continued to rise as she described the list of alternatives he had provided such as walking away, getting a teacher, or playing more safely in the first place. She looked at me, red faced and clearly frustrated, and said, “What good is it if the kid knows what to do, but doesn’t do it?”

I thought a lot about that final statement. What good is it? When I separated myself from the idea of good or bad, progress or lack of progress, I realized that two main ideas had emerged from this incident: First the student was able to identify alternatives, and secondly, he was not able to use them in this situation. Also, like any new skill, this would require practice.

All four sources of data showed that the students were acquiring alternatives to verbal and physical violence. The students were able to
communicate these alternatives fairly clearly in words and pictures but less frequently in actions.

In some instances they were able to use the alternatives, and in others they were merely able to describe them. However, even being able to talk about other ways to handle anger seemed to be a step in the right direction. Perhaps the knowledge precedes the action. Also, some situations may be “small” enough to manage using non-violent alternatives, whereas others may create such emotional turmoil that the “fight or flight” instinct takes over.

Theme 3 - Perceptions Changed

All four sources of data point to another change in the students as they progressed through the Second Step program. The students seemed to perceive themselves as better behaved as a result of the lessons they had learned.

As stated earlier, I sat with each child individually to talk about the pictures they had made to describe what they had learned in the Second Step program. Jarrod, one of the youngest and most timid students, sat with me and told me about his picture. It said, “We learned how not to lie.” I asked him to tell me more about this, and he said, “If you tell the truth, you might get in trouble if you did something bad.” I asked him why anyone would want to tell the truth if they would get in trouble. He replied, “Because if you tell a lie, you get in more trouble.” I told him this was an interesting statement and probed for more
information or specific examples of a time when this had worked for him. He responded, “I don’t lie anymore; it’s not good,” and he indicated he did not have any more examples to share.

Similarly, Lucas told me, “I like Second Step because I don’t hit or steal and I learned why not.” I asked him to explain this idea more fully, and he talked about problems getting “bigger and bigger” when you do bad things, with his arms outstretched to illustrate the point. I asked him to tell me about a time when he did not hit or steal, and he described a situation with a friend on the bus who had called him a bad name. He pronounced, “But I didn’t hit him! I just sat there and called him names in my head. I’m a good boy now.”

In both cases, the boys reported increased feelings of self-esteem as it relates to behaviour and the skills from the Second Step Program.

During our summary interview at the end of the program delivery, Caroline and I had a chance to really talk about the program in more depth. She was very happy as she talked about the successes of the lessons. When I asked her if she thought the students had changed in any way, she said, “Yes, definitely. There have been kids who’ve really blossomed. It’s as if they’re more in control of themselves, and they feel good about that. They can make good choices and do the ‘right thing’ and there’s a lot of positive reinforcement for doing it.”
I asked Caroline to tell me more about the empowerment felt by the students, and she replied, “The kids feel good about themselves, in general, when you ask them about Second Step. They race in off the playground, where most of the problems happen, to tell me about all the good choices they made during recess or lunch. In fact, we’ve been celebrating that together. We sit in a circle after play times and talk about the good choices Jake made today or the great way Daniel and Allison solved their problems. They enjoy sharing.”

Caroline’s statements echo the notion that the students themselves reported earlier. They felt better behaved and like they were making better choices.

During a very brief conversation after a long day of teaching, Stephen and I crossed paths in the hallway, and I asked, “How’s it going?” There was not much time to answer and no time to write things down at the moment so I recorded the information in my journal later that night.

In response to my question, Stephen spoke about how pleased he was with the kids progress in the program. He talked about the little changes he had noticed and especially about the change in attitudes among the students.

In my journal I wrote, “Stephen was pleased. Things are going well; kids feel good. They like the program and believe things are going better at school. Interesting. I haven’t noticed much of a change, but they have. Or they think they
and thus we recognize that meaningful research and understanding are essential to our advancement as a species. It is through the exploration of these ideas that we can continue to evolve and thrive.

In conclusion, understanding our cognitive processes is not only important for personal growth but also for the advancement of societies and cultures. By studying the intricacies of the mind, we can gain insights into our own nature and make meaningful contributions to the world around us. As we continue to explore these topics, we must remain open-minded and willing to challenge our assumptions in order to truly understand the complexity of the human experience.
have. Regardless, they are happy with themselves and perceive themselves to be doing well. That’s good.”

The little changes Stephen described included a mention of attitude change among the students. He, too, had noticed that the students were expressing greater satisfaction with their behaviour at school.

There were not many concrete examples in my data entry log involving other teachers reporting students feeling happier with their own behaviour. However, I found a few sticky notes with the story of an altercation between a teacher and a student regarding entering the school without permission to get a drink of water. Along with a few point form notes about the circumstances, I had written, “Mrs. Banks reports Allison seemed happy with the final solution,” which was a promise to ask to get a drink of water first the next time she is thirsty. This would seem to indicate that this particular teacher recognized that the student was pleased when a solution could be found that was fair and recognized her as a “good person” capable of making “good decisions” faced with the same problem again.

Similarly, in my own journal I wrote, “The teachers get excited when things go right with one of our ‘test subjects.’ I like it when they come to tell me about a good thing that happened and how well a student handled him/herself. We
seem to be recognizing these kids more often for the good things instead of just punishing the bad."

Once again, this is an instance where one could extrapolate the idea that the teachers noticed the students making good choices, which relates to the students’ reports of feeling better behaved. Of course, it could simply be a case of looking at the glass as "half full" instead of "half empty." Regardless, the data support the perception of better behaviour.

The four sources of data each point toward a common theme: The students reported and seemed to be feeling better about their behaviour at school. The idea that they are "good children" came to the forefront in a variety of ways. My discussions with the students themselves were the most dramatic examples of this phenomenon; however, the other staff, including Caroline and Stephen also notice this change in attitude.

**Theme 4 - Teachers Response to Violence**

In examining the data, it also became apparent that the teachers felt the Second Step program was helping them to better respond, both pro-actively and reactively, to violent situations. From each of the four sources, significant statements and observations were found to support the notion that using the Second Step program, or strategies from the program, helped staff handle disciplinary situations more effectively.
My personal journal provided the first data to support this theme. An extremely high-needs student was slated to join our primary GLD classroom a few days before beginning the Second Step program. Jake was being discharged from a nearby facility that catered specifically to the needs of physically, socially and/or emotionally challenged youngsters. He was deemed “ready” to re-enter the regular school system.

At the case conference set up to discuss the plan for helping Jake successfully adjust to his new surroundings, it became apparent to me and the other school personnel that the problems which had plagued his early years were not completely resolved. The staff of the discharging agency were quite open about the continued difficulties Jake was having with aggression, impulse control, and anger management. Although there had been many improvements in the last 2 years, he was still apt to “blow at any time.” The agency staff believed that they had done all they could for Jake, and the regular school environment was the next step in his growth plan.

It was obvious from the day of his arrival that Jake would be a daily discipline concern. The new placement was causing him great distress, especially any loosely structured situations, such as recess, art, or gym class. He exploded regularly, both physically and verbally, throwing objects, lashing out at peers and his teachers.
I wrote in my journal, “Second Step couldn’t have started at a better time. Caroline and Stephen are really handling Jake well. They sense when he’s reaching his limit and help him to find ways to lower the tension. I’ve overheard them talking to Jake on several occasions. They use the language of Second Step and encourage him to take deep breaths and tell himself that he needs to calm down. The self-talk is really effective. Jake’s whole face changes as he thinks about what Caroline and Stephen are saying.”

Another entry in my journal, several weeks into the program, described a situation when Jake had been sent to the office because of a problem in the lunchroom. The supervisor had witnessed Jake taking an item from someone else’s lunch bag when they weren’t looking. She yelled at Jake from across the room, launching into a lecture about stealing and dishonesty. Jake became enraged, shouting obscenities and denying the whole thing. Eventually, she sent him up to the office as she felt “she wasn’t getting through to him” and “he had gone too far with that mouth of his”.

Stephen intercepted Jake before the principal or I had learned about the situation. They sat in front of the office for a chat, which I was able to overhear from my desk a few feet away. I listened to Stephen as he calmly walked Jake through the series of events that had landed him at the office. Frequently, Stephen would pause in the middle of the story and say things like, “Right there Jake, do
you see how you could have handled that differently? What did we learn in Second Step about lying?” Jake remained completely calm, and, bit by bit, accepted responsibility for everything he had done. By the end, he also had a plan in place for the future if something like this should happen again.

I had a lot to write in my journal that evening about the incident. “Jake really blew it today – swearing and freaking out in front of all the other kids. Funny, I want to focus solely on him and his misbehaviour, but I keep thinking about Louise (the supervisor). She really blew it all out of proportion instead of de-escalating things the way Stephen did. I wonder what would have happened had she used a different strategy with Jake, more like Stephen’s approach. He probably would have kept a lid on the anger.”

I went on to write, “I think one of the most interesting things that I have noticed in the past few weeks is how great Caroline and Stephen are at disciplining their students. They use an approach that is significantly different from other teachers in the building. I like the way they probe to find the root of the problem and address that, rather than simply consequencing the behaviour. Referring to concepts taught in class is also very effective. Every time I hear, ‘What did we learn in Second Step?’ I can tell that the students are about to change their tune. Their teacher has implied that they know better now, and so they have to live up to that, at least in hindsight.”
Once I began to see the heightened disciplinary abilities demonstrated by Caroline and Stephen, I made this the topic of one of my questions during an interview session. "I think we talk a lot about how Second Step is changing the children, but do you think it's affecting you?" Caroline replied very enthusiastically, "Oh yes, definitely. It's something to hang your hat on, you know? I remember sending kids out into the hallway for causing a disturbance or breaking the rules and walking out there behind them thinking, what am I going to say to them? Now, it's simple. We talk about the situation using the framework of Second Step. It provides structure and logic for me and the kids. I can't imagine not having those techniques."

When speaking with Stephen, I asked him the same question. He responded with equal certainty. "Yes, I'm learning and growing right along with the kids! As a student teacher, this is the first time I've had to deal with formally disciplining students. When you're a youth worker, you have a very informal 'buddy-like' relationship with the kids. They call you by your first name, they meet with you one-on-one, and there usually aren't the types of problems that happen in the regular classroom or playground situations. Now, when the kids do something wrong, I have to intervene. Caroline encouraged me to reinforce the Second Step lessons during these moments. I go over the steps for success with the student while ensuring they understand what they've done wrong. It doesn't
mean I won’t issue a punishment; I just think it has a little more meaning. You know? Here’s what you did that was wrong, here’s why it was wrong, here’s how you should have handled it, and let’s make a plan for the future. The detention or time-out just becomes the time to let the information sink in, not the cure. It says, ‘I’m serious and I mean what I say.’”

The confidence I felt in Caroline and Stephen’s abilities to handle violent behaviour was obvious, and I was pleased to hear that they were feeling the same kind of empowerment. This led me to another source, our school principal. I wanted to know if he, being an outside third party, would see the same sorts of things happening as the participants.

I approached him after the Second Step lessons had ended and asked him for his impressions of the program. He said, “I think the thing that really brings it home for me, is the whole thing with Jake. I waited for things to go haywire when he arrived and was pleasantly surprised when they didn’t.” When I probed and asked why he thought this did not happen, he replied, “Caroline is an excellent teacher, and I really respect the way she weaves the Second Step concepts into every aspect of her day. Given a different set of circumstances, a different teacher, a less structured approach, I believe Jake wouldn’t have lasted more than a week without a suspension.”
Clearly, he felt that Caroline’s disciplinary strategies were having a positive impact upon the students. Ironically, Stephen’s practice teaching report, which the principal signed only a few days later, included a brief statement referring to the success of the Second Step program. He commented upon the excellent manner in which Stephen interacted with the students, especially using the program strategies, and encouraged him to continue with this practice.

In summary, the notion that the teachers perceived themselves to be better able to respond to violent incidents is supported by all four sources of data. Also, the perceptions of others mirrored this finding. Both self reports, my own observations, and those of the principal indicated that Caroline and Stephen were better able to handle difficult situations, due, at least in part, to their use of the Second Step program.

**Theme 5 - The Cause of Violence**

After examining the teachers’ impressions regarding discipline, it became apparent that they were also making a more concerted effort to address the cause of violent behaviour among the students. They seemed to spend more time trying to unwind the series of events that led to a violent conflict and thereby assisting students to find positive, alternative solutions.

Caroline mentioned a unique insight during one of our interviews that pertained to this theme. She said, “I used to treat every problem like an
emergency. Now, I really believe that there are very few crises in a day, nothing that has to be dealt with immediately. Time is such a powerful tool. I like to wait, let the kid cool down, and then talk about the situation. In the past, I might have heard the story of who did what and assigned a seemingly fair and appropriate punishment, without ever really considering the true cause. I realize now that I was just putting a bandaid on the problems. I didn’t really address what got things started in the first place, and, of course, the problem would keep resurfacing. You’ve got to get to the source. I always ask myself, ‘Why would Lucas do that?’ More importantly, I ask the kid that question too. Insecurity, impulsivity, and anger can make kids do really bizarre things. Find the real problem, and you can find a real cure.”

Stephen reported an incident which occurred while he was on yard duty that mirrors this new understanding. He told me Allison had been having a recurring problem on the climbers. It seemed to Stephen and other members of the staff that every time she moved in that direction to play with other students, she wound up crying or in trouble with the yard duty teacher for being inappropriately rough. The response from the staff had been to remove Allison’s climber privileges. It made good sense: If she couldn’t stay out of trouble there, she simply shouldn’t go there.
During one of our conversations, Stephen spoke of the problem Allison was having. He said that he had a "brainstorm" driving to work one morning. Stephen said, "This whole Allison thing was really bothering me, you know? She's a pretty docile kid in class, and the climber is like this danger zone for her. I wanted to know what was happening out there and to help her to deal with it in a more appropriate way. I decided to follow Allison during her recess playtime for a day or two." Stephen went on to describe his efforts to track Allison's activities in order to listen and learn about what was really happening.

He reported that the first few efforts to follow Allison were not very successful, as she did not engage in her normal play patterns. "She seemed a little spooked by my presence," Stephen chuckled. "Finally, just yesterday, she seemed to forget, or not care, that I was there and went back to the climbers. I watched as she joined the group gathered by the climber. They were playing a type of 'climber tag' where the kids would use the base of the climber as 'home' and the area beneath it for running. There seemed to be some pretty complicated rules involving specific directions for running, the time you were allowed to be on the climber, and when or if you were ever allowed to move up onto the monkey bars. I tell you, I was confused just watching!"

Stephen went on to describe Allison's interactions with these students. "She moved into the group trying to blend with the others; it was like she didn't
even want anyone to notice she had joined the game. For the first little while, it was all right. None of the kids really reacted to her presence, but they also didn’t treat her as a part of the game. It was like she was invisible. The kid who was ‘it’ could have tagged Allison a number of times, but actually avoided touching her. Allison must have noticed this and began to run harder when moving under the climbers, frequently pushing other kids to the side to get to ‘home.’ Finally she jumped up to grab the monkey bars and in the process, kneed someone else in the stomach. Of course, this boy started to cry, the game stopped, and I went over to intervene.”

“The kids were all shouting at once blaming Allison for hurting the boy and ‘ruining’ their game. They said ‘she always does this’ and ‘she doesn’t follow the rules’. I turned to Allison and instead of sending her to the wall for a time-out or telling her not to play on the climbers again, I asked her if she knew what the rules were. She said that she didn’t. I asked the other students why they never tag Allison or get her involved in their play, and they said their teacher told them to leave her alone. I couldn’t believe it! These poor kids were all just doing as they were told. The kids were playing and ‘ignoring Allison’ in the way their teacher had instructed them in class. The teacher probably wanted the kids to stop picking on her, but they had taken it literally. Allison was desperately trying to be
involved and reacting to her ‘invisibility’ by being boisterous to ensure she would be noticed, even if it was negative.”

Stephen went on to describe his efforts to debrief the students and explain the error in their thinking. He explained how Allison was feeling and reacting, something that she was not able to do for herself. Stephen then encouraged them to resume play, but this time explain the rules to Allison and include her in the game. “It was great! She was laughing and enjoying herself and fully participating. I realized that this had been the problem all along. We had always just told her to stay off the climbers, thinking that would solve the problem. But really, all we had to do was figure out the cause of the problem and help Allison set things right.”

Stephen’s story, and our follow-up conversation, showed his thinking had changed regarding problem solving. He was concerned about finding the root of the problem before applying a solution. As mentioned in an earlier theme, I had the same revelation and wrote about it in my journal.

I wrote, “I think one of the most interesting things that I have noticed in the past few weeks is how great Caroline and Stephen are at disciplining their students. They use an approach that is significantly different than other teachers in the building. I like the way they probe to find the root of the problem and address that, rather than simply consequencing the behaviour.”
I also noticed that the focus upon searching out the cause of misbehaviour had changed the way in which I was dealing with problems at the office. Generally, when students were sent to the office chairs, it meant they had “worn out their welcome” in class. I would either wait for a note to follow describing the incident or go to the classroom and speak with the teacher directly. By the time the note was read or I had exited the classroom, I usually knew exactly what I would do with the student: a detention, a verbal warning, or some other creative punishment that fit the crime. Of course, I would ask the student to describe what had happened, but usually it was to ensure that they could pinpoint where they had gone wrong and why they were in trouble.

My experiences with the Second Step program and my discussions with Caroline and Stephen added an important step to my thinking. I started looking more closely at the trigger incidents before deciding upon a punishment. I asked myself and others, “What set him/her off like that?” I worked harder to find the source of the problem and tried to find solutions and consequences that would mirror this understanding. I also spoke to the students and staff about the cause of the problem and tried to develop plans to ensure it would not happen again.

I was pleased to learn that the staff were having the same sorts of experiences. I wrote in my journal about one particular incident that reveals a shift toward finding the root cause. One of the teachers approached me with a student
at her side following the lunch break. This student was not a part of Caroline and Stephen's class. She told me that she and Bobby had just had a long chat and she thought I would like to know about it. She described a situation during lunch that involved Bobby in sneaking back into his classroom without permission. He had been caught by the caretaker stealing from other students’ desks. The teacher was immediately called to her room to deal with the problem.

She told me about her talk with Bobby, and her line of questioning centred around “why” questions much more that “what did you do?” Instead of worrying about the consequence or what he may have taken from one of the other desks, she was concerned about why he was looking around in others’ desks in the first place. She told me that they had resolved the problem and that Bobby and she were going to stay in at lunchtime for a few days to get caught up on some work.

I was puzzled by this odd resolution to the problem. Why would she give a student who had so obviously stolen from his peers the consequence of one-on-one catch-up time at noon hours? Also, this particular teacher often preferred to have the office deal with discipline and punishment. As Bobby walked into the “work room” beside the office with his books under his arm, the teacher turned to me and described her earlier conversation with him. She said that she, too, immediately thought he was stealing from the other students, but something did not seem right about it. She did not think this was typical behaviour for Bobby,
and she remembered the discussion we had at our last staff meeting introducing the teachers to the Second Step program and our research. In addition to giving a brief overview of the program, I had asked the staff to pay special attention to the GLD students and their behaviour during the next few months. At that time, I had asked them to report any interesting occurrences and to take the time to discuss any situations that happened with these students on the playground or in class. The teacher said that she was particularly struck by the need to find the root cause of a problem and address it to truly solve the problem, and it prompted her to get to the bottom of things with Bobby.

To her surprise, their conversation revealed that Bobby was looking for another student’s math homework. He did not finish his homework the night before and intended to copy someone else’s work. He admitted that he did not understand their new unit on decimal multiplication but was afraid to say anything. To make matters worse, now that he had not done his homework, he feared his teacher would punish him if he revealed his problem. Bobby was hoping he could sneak another book, copy the work, and have it done before anyone noticed.

The teacher reminded Bobby that he had not handled his problem appropriately, but she told him that she was more than willing to help him understand decimal multiplication. The solution, involving some time lost on the
playground, solved both the issue of punishment and solution to the root problem. Both teacher and student were very pleased with the outcome of the situation. In a small way, even through mere suggestion, the concepts of the Second Step program had changed the process this teacher used to unravel a difficult situation. It also built respect and trust between them.

It would appear that the Second Step program, in placing a focus upon finding the root or source of problems, affected the way the staff dealt with disciplinary and other problems. Each of the four data sources, particularly the experiences of Stephen, Caroline, and me, pointed to a heightened awareness or desire to find the cause before applying a consequence.

**Theme 6 - Effectiveness vs. Evidence**

As discussed in the third theme, the students perceived themselves as better behaved after working through the Second Step program. This positive trend, related to program effectiveness, was mirrored in a change in staff perception of their abilities as disciplinarians in theme 4. A general and broader theme began to emerge which incorporates both of these ideas, and much more. The data revealed a widely held perception that the Second Step strategies were “working” and a belief in program effectiveness despite a lack of evidence to support this notion.

Caroline, as mentioned earlier, had used the Second Step program for several years. She was not a “new convert” or someone who needed to be sold on
the benefits of the program. After using Second Step and giving it careful consideration, she became convinced that it was worthwhile. During one of our conversations, we started talking about how you can prove the merits of the program to other educators or parents. People often wanted to see something measurable or quantifiable. Her response first revealed the "effectiveness vs. evidence" theme.

Caroline said, "I'm not fooling myself into believing that this program is the cure for all the violence problems in the school. In fact, I'm pretty sure if some guy came in and stood with a checklist looking for problems, he'd find the same number today as there were 2 months ago ... and there will be the same number 2 months from now! It's just that the problems have changed. They're more manageable and easier to solve." I asked her if she thought the problems had changed because the kids have changed or because she has as a teacher. She replied, "I really don't know. A bit of both, I guess. I'm more confident and I have different ways to respond, but the kids are different too. They take more ownership of their issues. It's like we've put a big magnifying glass on the whole issue of violence and aggression and forced them to look at themselves. Now they're aware of it, and they have to respond. Generally, it's positive."

In another conversation near the end of the study, Caroline reflected on the effectiveness of the program again. She said, "I'm really pleased with the way the
last few weeks have gone. The program is really working for the kids.” When I asked her how she knew this, she responded, “I just feel it. Everything feels better in the class. Things are more harmonious ... (laughing) really! We’ve still got a lot of problems to deal with and there are bad days, but there’s a feeling in the room that says ‘we can handle this.’ And we can! It’s the strategies. How do you measure strategies? Should I say, ‘We’ve lowered the percentage of aggressive incidents by 50%’ (in a mock newscaster’s tone). I can’t say that; I don’t know if that’s true. I can only say things are better during and after using Second Step with the kids. We speak the same language. It’s easier to solve and prevent problems when you’re talking with someone instead of at them.”

Stephen made mention of effectiveness during our “wrap-up” conversation at the end of the study. We were talking about overall impressions, thoughts, and suggestions. He started talking about the need for more research regarding Second Step and how that would help people to see that it is a great program. He said, “It’s hard to explain to people what the program does for kids, because it’s not a really graphic change. They don’t turn into angels overnight. We still have problems in that room, but things are going smoother. I really believe in the program. I’d use it with every kid I taught at every grade level if given a chance. I think everyone needs to work on empathy, impulse control, and stuff like that.”
I asked Stephen what he thought that a researcher might conclude after “measuring” and “quantifying” what had happened in the classroom over the past few weeks. He replied, “Truthfully, I don’t know. Probably a little dip in some of the most obvious, or serious behaviours. Maybe a few less physical fights. I don’t think someone with a stopwatch and a checklist can really see what happened here. You have to talk to the kids and be a part of it.”

I followed up that statement by asking Stephen to tell me what the interpretation of our data should include and what I should write in my concluding statement after having been a part of it all. He said, “You should write that it works. You have to believe in it, use it even when it doesn’t seem to be having any effect, sound like a broken record going over and over every detail. But in the end you’ll be glad you did. The kids will truly benefit from the experience.”

Sensing that effectiveness was an important issue in the experience of using the Second Step program, near the end of the study I touched base with over half of the teachers and asked them, in passing, if they thought the program had any effect on the GLD students. Most of the teachers responded by saying they truly did not know. They had not noticed any big change, or they had not had the opportunity to interact with these students in a conflict situation. However, a handful of teachers had some interesting things to say. One teacher reported that the kids seemed better able to handle themselves. When I asked what she meant by
that, she said that the students still got into "pickles," but did not get as upset or out of control in the process. This sentiment was echoed by several other staff members who described the ways in which the students had responded more positively to counselling. Another began by saying she had not personally noticed anything, but then added that Caroline and Stephen seemed pretty pleased with the program, so it must be working well. From these reports, it became apparent that the staff had not noticed any overwhelming trend toward effectiveness as one would expect – decreased number of incidents, huge changes in the students or teachers.

However, an interesting conversation emerged at our next staff meeting. My formal data gathering had ended and I thanked all the teachers for their assistance with my research. A teacher asked if it had been successful. I smiled and asked them, "I don’t know, you tell me.” The conversation that emerged was exciting. Caroline and Stephen spoke passionately about the Second Step Program and encouraged others to try it. The staff were asking to borrow the kit from them, asking if there was any way to buy additional copies of the program, and making plans to team teach Second Step in the coming weeks. Despite the lack of concrete evidence, the teachers were interested and willing to try the program themselves. One of the veteran teachers on staff said, “I think this is a great idea. If we all do this together, the kids will get it from all sides!” It was apparent that the staff
believed that the program would work if they all approached the teaching together. They were not concerned with measurable data; they simply wanted a program that was easy to use, accessible, and provided strategies for the students and them to use.

My journal revealed a change in my own attitude throughout the study as well. In the beginning, I admitted to being a bit of a cynic regarding the whole violence prevention program concept. I wrote, “I’m so overwhelmed by all the anger these children have inside them. Their lives are filled with hardships – poverty, neglect, verbal and physical abuse, inconsistency. You can see how easily they become ‘hard’ and unwilling or unable to make good decisions or demonstrate remorse about their actions. How could a piece of curriculum ever undo all that damage? How can a few lessons ever take a kid like Jason and override all those other factors? I want to believe there is something that educators can do, but I’m not sure it’s possible.”

Within a few weeks of observing the program in action, my journal entries began to change. “I keep counting the entries in the office discipline logs and waiting for the numbers to change. I want them to show a dramatic reduction in incidents. Fewer times talking to Daniel, Jake, and Allison. Fewer times pulling Harry and Michael aside to talk about sharing and using words instead of fists. But it’s not there. On paper, it looks like everything is the same. The kids are still
arguing and bullying and fighting and carrying on. But I see something happening in the classroom and in the kids. They are thinking about their actions and reactions. They want Second Step to be successful and they want to be ‘good’. Can wanting it badly enough, and being consciously aware of that desire, be the first step to making it happen?”

My final entry, several days after the completion of the program, was very different from those in the first few weeks. I wrote, “Well, it’s taken me a long time to shake it, but I think I finally suppressed the quantitative mind set and stopped looking for numbers and increases and decreases and just looked at the experience. What happened? I guess some people might say nothing happened, but I say it was something remarkable. The kids have begun an evolution. I don’t know how far it will go, but they have more information and more strategies and I think they’re better equipped to handle things differently than they have in the past. Caroline and Stephen are more confident than ever about the program and will continue to use it and inspire others. Many staff members have bought into the whole idea of using the Second Step program in their own classrooms. There have been real changes, and the seeds have been planted for bigger changes to come. It won’t happen overnight, but I really believe it has happened during these past few weeks and will continue to happen.”
It has been said that perception frames reality, and the findings of this study certainly support that notion. The final theme which emerged found teachers reporting a feeling of effectiveness; yet, interestingly, the number of violent incidents reported at the office had not changed. The number of aggressive acts in the GLD classroom had not significantly increased or decreased. In the face of a lack of tangible evidence, the staff were still willing to commit to a school-wide implementation of the Second Step program. This phenomenon will be discussed in detail in chapter 5.

Chapter Summary

The data were collected and organized according to six broad themes. These themes pertained to students, teachers, and finally, general program effectiveness.

Firstly, the students developed a vocabulary with which to talk about violent incidents, they were able to identify non-violent alternatives, and they felt better behaved as a result of the program.

Secondly, the teachers felt the program gave them the insight and techniques to be better disciplinarians, and they focussed on addressing the causes of the violent incidents before the consequences.

Finally, the program was perceived by all to be working, despite the lack of concrete evidence to support that notion.
In chapter 5, these findings will be summarized further and discussed in terms of conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the last chapter, the findings regarding the Second Step Program were presented through six themes. In this section, these six themes will be summarized and discussed as they pertain to theory and practice. The data will also be used to explain implications and suggest recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Research

The purpose of this study was to explore the implementation of the Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum when it is used with a primary general learning disabilities class. The question which drove this research is the following: What happens when we use the Second Step Program with children and teachers? In asking this question it was hoped that further illumination of the overall experience would be achieved. Specifically, it was hoped that a sense of program effectiveness, staff satisfaction, and other unique and new areas for future research would come to the surface. In addition, I hoped to learn more about the specific changes which may occur among students and teachers participating in a violence prevention program. Are attitudes and beliefs affected? If so, in what way? Are specific teacher behaviours altered, and in what ways? Is the school culture affected by the implementation of such a program? These questions framed the process and guided me in my exploration of violence prevention curriculum.
A review of relevant literature was conducted to ensure a full understanding of the issues surrounding violence in education and to identify gaps in the research in an effort to raise new questions. Although a good deal of research has been conducted to learn more about this issue, there are gaps in the literature. First, the area of violence prevention curriculum implementation has not been extensively researched. Instead, the focus has often been upon the nature or roots of violence and violent offenders. Also, there is little qualitative data pertaining to violence prevention, and thus a limited understanding of what really happens when a teacher uses such a program in his/her classroom.

This information helped to substantiate the need for further research in the area of violence prevention curriculum, thus providing a rationale. The review also narrowed down the focus for my research by leading me to the Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum. I had used the program as a teacher and also knew that other teachers at my school had experience with the program and plans to implement it during the time frame of my research study. My desire to narrow the focus of my research made it a good choice as it has many strengths and a good reputation as an effective, engaging program.

The literature review also helped to clarify what type of methodology should be used to best assess the situation in a local context. It was determined that a qualitative methodology, using observations, interviews, journals, and
behaviour reports would most effectively capture the experience of a teacher and student teacher as they implement the Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum. Most prior research had been conducted using quantitative methodologies, and it was hoped that a detailed examination of the experience of the two teachers and one class of students would lead to a better understanding of what really happens when prevention curriculum is implemented in a classroom.

The Second Step Program was implemented by Caroline and Stephen in their classroom, and data were collected using the methods listed above. Data analysis presented some interesting challenges, but six main themes emerged when looking for connections among the seemingly unrelated incidents and observations. These six themes were described in detail using quotes and synopsis from the data and an initial interpretation was recorded.

Discussion of Findings

What happens when we use the Second Step program with children and teachers? This research study offers six themes as answers. Each theme will be discussed as it relates to literature and theory.

Theme 1 - A New Vocabulary

One of the first themes to emerge was the acquisition of new vocabulary pertaining to violence and aggression. Each of the four data sources showed evidence of a growing vocabulary when discussing feelings, violent incidents, and
conflict situations. Concepts studied in the Second Step Program in a hypothetical way resurfaced in “real life” discussions, allowing students to better communicate their thoughts, motivation, and intentions.

As mentioned earlier, Moffitt (1993) conducted research which measured the relationship between verbal difficulties and aggression. It was found that neurological abnormalities can give rise to verbal difficulties in later life. This was found to lead also to aggression, antisocial behaviour, and conduct disorder. It would seem logical that the reverse would also be true: Children who have strong verbal abilities should be able to better express themselves and thus resolve conflict in a more positive manner.

Vocabulary, and in a broader sense communication, is not a surprising answer to the age-old question regarding conflict resolution. Meyers (1986) writes about the use of “conflict games” to better understand the nature and resolution of conflict among children. In these games, it was found that when people were unable to communicate with one another, they became distrustful and felt compelled to arm themselves against exploitation. When allowed to discuss the dilemma and negotiate, cooperative solution was usually the result.

Communication is, without question, a key part of the resolution of any conflict. Thus helping children to acquire a “violence vocabulary” is critical to ensure they are able to take advantage of this method of solving their problems.
As in the conflict games, if communication is not an option, aggression will become the next best solution. Beane (1999) has created a handbook of strategies for teachers attempting to curb violent acts and the threat of bullying. In this book, the importance of communication is highlighted over and over again. The focus is on the necessity of talking over the problems which are being encountered, why they might be happening, and what can be done to help the aggressor and the victim.

Based upon the findings of this research study, the Second Step Program addresses this first issue in an effective manner. Vocabulary development was one of the first things that the teachers, participants, and I noticed. However, how much of this vocabulary could be considered simple rote memory or teacher-pleasing behaviour? If it is simply a parrot-like response to an aggressive stimulus, is it a less valid response, or merely a first step in learning to resolve conflict peacefully? Either way, from my observations and those of the participants, being able to talk about their feelings and the situation empowered the students to make the first step in dealing with and avoiding violent incidents.

Theme 2 - Alternatives Acquired

One of the next themes to emerge was the increased awareness the students displayed regarding the alternatives to violent behaviour. They seemed to find and
verbalize solutions other than verbal or physical violence when addressing conflict situations.

Feeling trapped and having no choice in a situation is, without question, a frightening experience. Holocaust survivor, Victor Frankl, made this statement regarding alternatives: "Everything can be taken from us but one thing, which is the last of the human freedoms – to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way." (quoted in Beane, 1999) Being able to choose among alternatives is of key importance in life, and especially when dealing with conflict.

Moore and Beland (1992) found a significant difference in students’ abilities to brainstorm solutions to interpersonal problems following the Second Step Program. At the conclusion of the program, a marked increase in solutions offered in class discussions was noted.

This type of pro-social behaviour, or behaviour that leads to harmonious dealings with others, has been closely connected with a decrease in physical aggression and verbal hostility among school-age children. Grossman (1997) found a 10% increase in pro-social and neutral behaviour when conducting a 1-year evaluation of the Second Step Program as compared to a 1% increase in a control group. The ability to use pro-social strategies or access positive alternatives to violent behaviour had a dramatic impact upon the physical and
verbal aggression demonstrated: a decrease of over 20% compared to an increase of over 20% in the control group.

These findings are consistent with the results of the present study. Students were also able to brainstorm a greater number of positive solutions when confronted with both hypothetical and actual problem situations. However, they were able also to present these solutions in the middle of a "real-life" situation, which differentiates it from the quantitative research described earlier. Attitude precedes action. The students in this study were well on their way toward developing positive attitudes in the form of alternatives. It would stand to reason that positive action would follow as in the Grossman study (1997).

**Theme 3 - Perceptions Changed**

The third answer to the question, What happens when we use the Second Step program with children and teachers?, is a perceptual shift among the students. They seemed to perceive themselves as better behaved as a result of the lessons they had learned. They were enjoying the program and feeling good about its impact upon their lives. This was echoed by the teachers, who also felt there had been positive changes.

Student-reported satisfaction is a rather unusual way of looking at the effectiveness of violence prevention curricula, as research has not focussed extensively upon student perceptions. In general, the results in past research were
obtained by a third party, the researcher, making observations and collecting quantitative data. Frequently, teacher, administrator, and public perceptions were included in the data. The missing link has been the subjects themselves, the children and their teachers. Thus the issue that emerges is not the attempt to support the notion of a perceptual shift, but rather the effect that such a shift might have on students, teachers, and a school.

Jones (1998) in his study of values education, violence prevention, and peer mediation, discerned that a most important component of the success of any program was turning cynical attitudes into hopeful ones. He acknowledged that little could be done to eliminate violent behaviour until a positive tone had been set and optimism replaced pessimism. Similarly, Beane (1999) found that a positive climate was essential for violence reduction in schools. He emphasized the importance of rewarding good behaviour and praising students who do the right thing. It was found that a positive climate, where positive reinforcement is used to encourage pro-social behaviour, leads to a reduction in violent incidents.

A key component of the Second Step Program is reinforcing the positive actions with praise and reward. The students are encouraged to celebrate the successes of the day, as Caroline and Stephen did around the circle after each recess break. It would stand to reason that this positive climate had an impact upon the students, making them feel better about their behaviour.
Empowerment, the authorization or delegation of power to another individual, is also a key issue (Roher & Wormwell, 2000). The Second Step Program empowers students to make positive choices when confronted with a conflict situation, which, in turn, leads to the heightened perception of being well behaved. This idea of control over situation and self is an important area in violence research. Batsche and Moore (1992) found that schools in which students reported that they are in control of their lives also reported less violence. Beane (1997) describes similar findings by stating that students must be a part of establishing any effective policies pertaining to non-violence. The involvement of the students in the implementation of the Second Step Program and the way in which the strategies in the program empower them to make good choices resulted in a perceptual shift. The students acknowledged the changes happening in their own attitudes and behaviours and felt good about it.

One cannot underestimate the power of both a positive climate and empowerment in ensuring positive feelings and actions. If a situation is perceived to be hopeless, positive action likely will not occur. An analogy that crossed my mind frequently was that of being trapped in a dark hole with no means of escape. How long will a person struggle to find a way out? However, if the person in the hole sees a ray of light and a rope within reach, he/she would consider the options, lay out a plan, and climb to freedom. Similarly, if there is a sense that there is the
possibility for positive change to occur, encouragement and empowerment can lead to unique solutions. The students saw themselves as “good” and “well behaved.” Their hole was flooded with light, and Second Step had given them the rope they needed to pull themselves up and out. It would be hard work, but there was hope and a possible solution.

**Theme 4 - Teachers Response to Violence**

The fourth response to the research question deals with another perceptual shift, this time involving the staff. The teachers felt the Second Step program was helping them to become, or feel like, better disciplinarians. The data suggested that using the Second Step program, or strategies from the program, helped staff handle disciplinary situations more effectively.

Research echoes this finding. Madak and Bravi (1992) reported little change in student behaviour in their study of the implementation of the Second Step Program with elementary school students. However, in an interesting twist, the teachers shared that they were better able to manage student misbehaviour. These findings were derived using a quantitative methodology but are strikingly similar to those of this qualitative study.

There is a significant body of research which touts the effectiveness of the Second Step Program and isolates the manner in which it increases teacher confidence and skill level (Grossman, 1997; Moore & Beland, 1992; Roher, 1997;
Sherman, 1999). The fact that the Second Step Program has been proven to increase teacher effectiveness in disciplinary situations is significant for two reasons. First, students want to have skilled teachers intervening in their conflict situations. Gropper and Froschl (1999) studied kindergarten to Grade 3 students in 25 different classrooms to determine the role of gender in young children’s teasing and bullying behaviour. Their study found that although adults were always present when conflict occurred, there was a consistent lack of adult intervention. When she interviewed the children, the students expressed a unanimous desire for adults to intervene. This is compelling evidence for the need for well-equipped staff members who can effectively mediate disputes among students. It also has some serious implications for practice, both in terms of teacher training and supervision.

Secondly, improved teacher skill in dealing with conflict situations has been found to correlate with pro-social behaviours among students. Dubas, Lynch, Galano, Geller, and Hunt (1998) conducted a study in which they looked at improving resiliency among preschoolers by training teachers and providing them with the skills necessary to teach the children independence and flexibility. This was found to be a critical link in ensuring pro-social behaviour development. The conclusion – a well-educated teacher results in a well-educated student.
Based upon this research and the current study, Second Step provides this critical link. By providing teachers with the strategies and methods, they are better able to intervene when students want and need them to. There is also a greater chance that students will develop pro-social behaviours as a result of good quality teaching. This creates an interesting link to the previous themes and establishes a relationship between teachers as disciplinarians and student behaviour.

Also, I believe the Second Step Program goes beyond the other programs studied in that it helped to make the teachers more tolerant, pro-active, sensitive, mindful, and approachable. It also gave them a discipline framework to use, ensuring more appropriate reactions to violent behaviour. The concepts of empathy, impulse control, and anger management, the corner stones of the Second Step Program, are also central to the teachers’ experience. They are encouraged to understand the students’ feelings; resist the urge to fly off the handle and react aggressively; and take the time to make good decisions regarding counselling, disciplining, and punishing students. This is truly a key understanding as far as the teachers’ experiences are concerned.

**Theme 5 - The Cause of Violence**

The fifth theme, and thus fifth answer, pertains to addressing the cause of violent behaviour among the students. The teachers seemed to spend more time
trying to unwind the series of events that led to a violent conflict, thereby assisting students to find positive, alternative solutions.

This concept is frequently discussed in violence prevention literature. Day et al. (1995) summarized research recommendations from several studies regarding violence prevention curricula. One of the main points addressed in their summary was the issue of addressing the root causes of violence. This is supported by Studer (1996), Walker et al. (1992), Beane (1999), and many others who assert that dealing with the symptoms of violence will not cure it. One must know the cause of an illness before it can be cured. You cannot simply treat the symptoms of a disease and hope it will go away. This analogy holds true for dealing with aggression as well. You need to stop the behaviour and then work on the values and thought processes.

There is no doubt that this is an important aspect of the Second Step Program. Acknowledging the cause as the core of the problem is one of the keys of the program, and it is encouraging to know that this is based upon a sound research background. However, only after the research had long ended did I really sit down and question this notion of finding the root cause and addressing it. In actuality, the teachers did not identify the genetic or environmental factors which led to aggressive behaviour among the students. Rather, they sought to determine the trigger incidents or instigators of violent behaviour.
A good example of this was when Allison was being rough on the climbers. It was determined that the cause of her problem was being excluded from the other children’s play and not understanding the rules of the game. It was for these reasons that she lashed out aggressively in frustration. Discovering this root cause helped the teacher to address the problem and ensure that it was resolved effectively. Certainly, it was a better solution than simply taking away Allison’s climber privileges, but did the teacher really uncover the true root of the problem?

When considering these deeper roots, we return to the nature/nurture debate. Was Allison’s problem rooted to a “nature” cause such as her language delay, which prevented her from understanding the game or asking for directions? Similarly, was there a genetic propensity for impulsive or aggressive behaviour in her family? On the other “nurture” hand, had Allison been watching too many violent TV shows or playing too many violent video games? Was this problem rooted in play deprivation or neglect or abuse in the home? These questions were not answered through this study.

Earlier in the literature review, the nature vs. nurture debate was described in greater detail. It was apparent that a conclusive and exclusive answer to the question of root causes has not yet been identified, and this study mirrors those findings. We speculate that it is a combination of environmental and genetic
factors: however, the problem is as diverse as the children in a school. We can attempt to train children using a program such as Second Step to manage impulsivity and anger while acquiring empathy. However, can we truly address the other, deeper roots of violence. Can a curriculum document alter natural genetic tendencies or counteract the impact of a negative home environment?

I would speculate that the answer to this question would be a resounding, no. In reality, educators are responsible for the things that occur within the school and during the school day. This leads back to one of the most disturbing research findings from my literature review. It stood out from the rest as it was an issue that I could not resolve within myself and tried very hard to sweep under the carpet and ignore. It relates to Epp and Watkinson's book Systemic Violence: How Schools Hurt Children, which describes how schools can actually contribute to the problem of violence (1996). In their book, the development of a punitive culture and environment is cited as one of the contributors to violence among children.

I wanted to dismiss the notion that a teacher could be cultivating violence among his/her students; however, it must be acknowledged that such teachers do exist. We often make the assumption that the child is the problem and the teacher is the solution. What about situations in which the reverse is true? What about the case when a teacher is unwilling and unable to deal with aggressive, impulsive students in a compassionate, sensitive, and appropriate manner? The student has a
greater tendency to explode in anger or react to situations more aggressively than
would happen with the guidance of someone like Stephen or Caroline. This was
evidenced by the incident in the lunchroom described in chapter 4. In this case, the
teacher/supervisor would certainly be a root cause of violence or at least a
contributing factor.

This information is important to acknowledge and place in the spotlight as
it is an area that the school system can actually make an impact upon. It is not
enough to simply say that the societal, familial, and peer influences must be
considered as a larger part of the child’s experience than the time they spend in the
safety of the school environment. We must acknowledge that the teacher who
“poisons the atmosphere” of a school with negativity and reactivity will certainly
have an impact upon the students he/she interacts with, especially those who do
not have the self-control or anger management strategies to resist the temptation to
lash out in anger.

It is interesting to note that this particular theme created more questions
than it has answered. Can a violence prevention program address the true roots of
violence or only the triggers to a violent situation? Can a violence prevention
program have an impact upon natural tendencies? Can the program have an
impact upon students who live in a neglectful, aggressive, or abusive
environment? Do schools contribute to violence? I cannot answer these questions
based upon the findings of this study but believe that they would be excellent topics for future research.

**Theme 6 - Effectiveness vs. Evidence**

The sixth answer to the question, "What happened?" is seemingly simple, but it has interesting implications. The answer is: The program worked! In short, something happened that was different or new in that primary general learning disabilities classroom. The data revealed a widely held perception that the Second Step strategies were working and a belief in program effectiveness despite a lack of quantitative evidence to support this notion (i.e., a decrease in the number of incidents reported to the teacher or office).

The effectiveness of the Second Step Program has been the subject of research and has as a result received some positive reviews. As summarized in the literature review, several researchers found it to be highly effective in reducing violence acts and increasing pro-social behaviour (Grossman, 1997; Moore & Beland, 1992; Roher, 1997; Sherman, 1999). Thus it was not surprising to find that the program was perceived to be practical and useful.

However, this final theme presented my greatest learning experience. As mentioned earlier, I waged an ongoing battle with my quantitative mind set throughout this research project. I had to remind myself throughout the study not to continue questioning, "Is this working?" Rather, I tried to focus upon the
question, "What is really happening here?" I did not want to get caught up in concerns about effectiveness and miss something important that was occurring right in front of me. Yet, my search for evidence or proof of effectiveness continued and was a source of concern in my journal throughout the study. I was convinced that the Second Step Program was all it claimed to be, but I wanted everyone else to see how great the program was as well. I wanted to be able to confidently recommend it to others based upon my findings.

At long last, it dawned on me. I realized that all the teacher participants, without a background in educational research, had experienced the benefits of the program and did not need to see numbers or percentages to have that good feeling confirmed. They had gained new insights and sensitivity to the issues surrounding violence among youth. They knew intuitively that the program was working, and that was enough.

Summary

So, what really happened during this research study? Did the Second Step Program have an impact upon the attitudes and behaviour of students and staff in the sample group? The question which drove this research is the following: What happens when we use the Second Step Program with children and teachers? In asking this question it was hoped that further illumination of the overall experience would be achieved. Specifically, it was hoped that a sense of program
effectiveness, staff satisfaction, and other unique and new areas for future research would come to the surface. In addition, I hoped to learn more about the specific changes which may occur among students and teachers participating in a violence prevention program. Are attitudes and beliefs affected? If so, in what way? Are specific teacher behaviours altered, and in what ways? Is the school culture affected by the implementation of such a program? These research questions were answered with varying detail and will be dealt with individually.

What happens when we use the Second Step Program with children and teachers? This broad question has an equally broad answer. In general, the program was deemed to be useful by all participants in the study. There was a general feeling of satisfaction with the program and a perception of effectiveness. As stated in the research question, it was hoped that a sense of program effectiveness, staff satisfaction, and other unique and new areas for future research would come to the surface. Effectiveness and satisfaction were perceived by staff and, ironically, students as well. Staff believed that they could more effectively respond to violent situations, and the students echoed a similar belief that they were well behaved as a result of their experiences with Second Step. Areas for future research seemed to revolve most strongly around the notion of discovering root causes. Specifically, could a curriculum prevention program have an impact
upon the students despite genetic and environmental factors that predispose them toward violence?

Are attitudes and beliefs affected? In conversation with Caroline, Stephen, and the other staff, and in reading my own journal entries, it is apparent that attitudes and beliefs were altered through the use of the Second Step program. Caroline and Stephen reported feeling differently about responding to violent situations and believed that they were more capable of handling situations appropriately and productively. Implementing the program helped them to feel that they had taken a pro-active step toward diminishing the violence problem in their classroom.

The other staff also adopted a different belief about handling violent situations, placing a new focus upon determining the root cause. Throughout the research, I asked them to stop and ask the students why? They consciously became aware of the need to determine root causes in order to help students avoid similar problems.

Are specific teacher behaviours altered, and in what ways? I believe that attitudes and beliefs precede actions. Thus it is not surprising that the attitudes and beliefs stated earlier manifested themselves as positive actions. The attitude of the teachers was positive, and they believed they were capable of handling violent situations. As a result, they were able to handle anything that came their way. The
teachers believed it was important to address the root cause, and thus they took action and did it. Ironically, these positive actions and behaviours continued long after the study ended. Teachers continued to share their reflections regarding violent incidents with Caroline, Stephen, and me. Continuing to talk it over was very positive for both staff and students. The united front ensured consistency, fairness, and clarity for the students. It also provided security and a discipline framework for the teachers.

Is the school culture affected by the implementation of such a program? The final staff meeting after my research time had ended gave me the answer to this question. The staff wanted to continue with the program, and they were searching for ways to implement the Second Step strategies in their own classrooms. The culture had been changed by one class of students, two teachers, and a researcher/vice principal making others aware of what they were doing. By asking to have staff involvement in observing the students, the staff became more aware of the behaviour of the GLD students and made a more concerted effort to use the principles of Second Step in dealing with them. Undoubtedly, a more remarkable change would have occurred had all the staff been implementing the curriculum with their own students during the research period.

Students also form an important part of the school culture. They were certainly affected by the Second Step Program. Although this study did not seek to
...
examine the experience through student voices, it is obvious through observation and informal conversation that the program had an impact upon their world. A vocabulary change, a repertoire of alternative strategies, and improved self-esteem all added up to a positive impression and increased feeling of self-control, and self-management.

In summary, the qualitative observations and subsequent themes that emerged were compelling support for the continued use of the Second Step Program.

**Implications and Recommendations**

The findings from this study have been interesting, sometimes surprising, and yet often obvious and ordinary feeling. It was interesting to note how subtle the observable or surface changes were, and yet, how sharply this contrasted with the attitudes and beliefs the teachers and students demonstrated and shared. Here, the changes were sometimes surprising and often obvious and natural feeling.

What emerged was both an endorsement of the Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum and a deeper understanding of what the individuals involved in implementing such a program experience along the way. These findings have several implications and recommendations for theory, teachers, administrators, and future research.

**Implications and Recommendations for Theory**
As stated earlier, one of the most surprising findings of this study was the emergence of a student “voice” and the student perceptions of the Second Step experience. I did not really intend for this paper to be about the students – I was really more interested in the teachers’ experiences. Because I was anticipating a very teacher-focussed look at the program, I was intrigued to find how reflective the students had become about their own behaviour, feelings, and desires. Marini and a group of researchers (2000) strongly advocate for the development of student voices by encouraging them to draw, write, and talk about their experiences with victimizers. This child-centred approach should be a focus for future research in the area of violence prevention.

This study has other implications for theory and, in particular, the area of grounded theory. Creswell (1998) defines grounded theory as the desire to generate or discover a theory as it relates to a particular situation. In short, it is the idea that what you learn from practice can become a part of theory. A researcher could repeat this study using the principles of grounded theory by interviewing the students, rather than the teachers, on a daily basis. This would need to happen frequently and over an extended period of time in order to saturate the categories, adding new information until no more can be found (Creswell, 1998). Perhaps parents, social workers, youth counsellors, and other relevant stakeholders could be involved as well to broaden the data and the experience.
By doing such a study, a researcher could add to the knowledge gained in this research paper using several of the six themes isolated in this paper. What would emerge could become a "substantive-level theory" which would then add support to current findings or alternately contradict what has been proposed. Either way, a deeper understanding of the student perspective would certainly be achieved.

Another implication for theory has to do with the basis of the Second Step Program. It is claimed to be one of the few programs that has a basis in developmental theory and violence research (Committee for Children, 1992). It is not surprising that researchers in the area of violence prevention recommend the use of programs which have a theoretical base and suggest avoiding those that do not (Johnson & Johnson, 1996; Marini et al., 2000).

By using developmentally appropriate methods and processes, it was found that students in Grades 2 to 5 were able to recall 100% of the steps involved in peer mediation shortly after instruction and, months, later were still able to recall 92% of the information (Johnson et al., 1995). Such studies dramatically show the importance of educating students using instructional techniques that are developmentally appropriate. It also lays a strong foundation for the Second Step Program and should encourage other publishers to use developmental theories and
research findings when producing anti-bullying and violence prevention curriculum.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice: Teachers

As this is an educational research project, the implications of this study for teachers are extensive.

First, and most importantly, educators must acknowledge that the problem of violence exists, and they must address it as a part of their instructional day. The notion that if you simply ignore the problem, it will go away is simply not true. Research has proven, time and time again, that bullying and violent behaviours are chronic in nature and if left untreated, it will not sort itself out (Marini et al., 2000). It is essential that teachers have an understanding of the nature of violence, the pervasiveness, and the effects on other students and the offender. Educators must also break down the myth of the normalcy of peer victimization and bullying so that it will not be tolerated by other students or teachers (Marini, Spear & Bombay, 1999).

Many teachers I spoke with during and after this study shared with me their feelings that behaviour management simply did not “fit” with the new curriculum. They were too busy being overwhelmed by Ministry demands, parent expectations, and academics. Most recent curriculum documents virtually ignore social skills and focus instead upon stringent requirements for the number of
hours of instruction devoted to language, mathematics, or science. "Discipline
problems belong at the office" or "boys will be boys" were common phrases.
These limited notions must be put to rest. The importance of teacher intervention
and involvement in conflict situations has been frequently reported upon, as has
the need for violence prevention measures, such as the use of the Second Step
curriculum.

Marini, Bombay, Hobin, Winn and Dumyn (2000) found that the best way
to eliminate the problem of adding violence prevention education onto an already
packed curriculum is to embed it into existing units of study. This comprehensive
approach would increase the possibility of system-wide implementation, which is
necessary for success (Olweus, 1993; Pepler & Craig, 1997). Having the support
of other teachers was important to the success of the program with the primary
GLD class; however, more pervasive changes would likely be seen if all staff and
students were involved in the program as a normal part of daily life.

Violence prevention curriculum should be implemented at every grade
level and in a manner that is consistent from one grade to the next. It is essential,
based upon research, that this curriculum and training begin at an early age.
Starting the Second Step Program at the Grade 6 level was found to be less
effective, engaging, and more intrusive (Orpinas, 1993). Also, the majority of
bullying behaviour was found to occur between the ages of 11 and 12 (Pepler et
al., 1997). Thus an earlier start, when aggressive behaviours first begin, would be more preventative in nature and likely more effective (Roher & Wormwell, 2000). This study supports that notion as the students in the primary division, aged 6 to 8, were very responsive to the program.

Teachers should also be provided with training to ensure that the methods described in a given violence prevention curricula are understood and effectively utilized (Marini et al., 2000). Doing something because “the book said so” is acceptable. However, knowing why a particular strategy is being used will help to maximize effectiveness. It will help the teacher to see the total picture, thus more effectively identifying troubled students, victims, and situations in which violence may occur. In support of this notion, Boulton (1999) found that with appropriate training, teachers and supervisors were able to differentiate between fighting and playful aggression. Caroline and Stephen certainly advocated training programs and felt that it would be beneficial for them to attend one of the Second Step workshops presented annually across the country. If possible, parental involvement in these types of training seminars would also be an effective way to expand the scope of the program by including the home environment.

Finally, opportunities for professional dialogue and team-teaching should be enhanced within the school system. Caroline and Stephen spoke to one another on a daily basis as a part of the teacher/student-teacher relationship. They reflected
upon the day’s events, shared ideas, questions, and disappointments. The Second Step program was much stronger because of their solid relationship and daily reflection.

Such partnerships are not difficult to establish within schools and are frequently made for newer teachers. However, even experienced teachers need someone to talk to. This individual does not judge them, does not need to be an expert and does not have to have all the answers. It is merely a person to bounce ideas with, and eventually all the answers usually come from inside oneself. Unfortunately, good, creative, confident teachers usually make these personal connections on their own. They have many teaching friends and are willing to talk and share ideas. Sadly, those teachers who need this type of relationship most are usually frightened, lacking in confidence, and likely experiencing difficulties with teaching. For these reasons, the concept of teaching partners should be considered for formal implementation within all schools.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice: Administrators

As a vice principal, I was aware that my role in the school might be having an impact upon the program in terms of “reactivity.” Were things happening because I was there that would not happen if I was not conducting my research? However, I could not have imagined how important it was to have an administrator involved in the implementation of a program like Second Step. My
literature review, the findings of the research, and the writings of other researchers in the area of bullying and violence prevention point toward the key role that principals (and vice principals) play in the success of this type of programming. It is essential that principals promote and advocate the use of violence prevention curriculum in schools in order to maximize the effectiveness of the programs (Beane, 1999; Marini et al., 2000; Roher & Wormwell, 2000). I can certainly see how my involvement as an administrator and the support of my principal made a big difference in the way both staff and students responded to the program.

Administrators must be ready to make a long-term commitment to this type of program implementation. The short time frame of this study, several weeks, was not nearly enough to see a marked change in behaviour. Research has proven that implementing a violence prevention curriculum is no panacea and that a one-year or shorter time-frame does not allow students and staff to become accustomed to this new program (Marini et al., 2000). A number of years is required before significant, positive results can be achieved. Such a time frame often discourages people from becoming involved or fools people into believing that the program is not working and thus they give up before it has had a chance to take hold (Smith & Sharp, 1994).

Consideration should also be given to the location and situational elements of the violent incidents observed. Most of the difficulties transpired on the
playground, over the lunch hour, and during other unstructured activities. In particular, times when the student/teacher ratio was higher than the normal classroom ratio presented the greatest number of problems. This is not new information for administrators, and many colleagues shared with me that they specifically include themselves in the supervision schedule over the lunch hour to ensure that a “line-up” of problems is not waiting for them outside the office when the afternoon classes begin. Also, programs such as Playground Peacemakers or other peer mediation programs would help to increase the number of visible supervisors on duty while also teaching students the strategies to resolve their own problems.

Besides increasing the number of supervisors on the yard, administrators and teachers should consider offering more extra-curricular opportunities, recess recreation programs, or even equipment to play with/on to help students structure their time more effectively and thus limit the social problems encountered.

Another implication for practice is the need for consistent and firm discipline based on a clearly stated discipline code. Knowing what the desired behaviour was and also which behaviours were discouraged helped the students in this study alter their actions and find success. This notion, that stating clearly the rights and responsibilities of students and teachers, is also supported by the research of Roher and Wormwell (2000).
Finally, I believe that the administrator has an important role to play as an advocate for teachers who are interested in pursuing research projects. Both Caroline and Stephen were keen to learn more about the Second Step Program. Similarly, as a teaching administrator, I was most interested in studying this phenomenon while participating in its implementation. It was a unique and exciting opportunity for us to learn while teaching. Professional growth opportunities are often difficult to find due to a lack of P.D.days (professional development) and workshop opportunities. Action research can be a way to foster personal and professional growth while empowering teachers to make curricular choices based on solid research findings — their own!

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

As with most research, it often seems that in an effort to answer one question, more questions crop up in the process. One door may close, but many others open as a result. I believe that this research project opens interesting opportunities for future research.

The development of a similar qualitative research study would provide an interesting element of “triangulation.” It could further deepen the understanding of violence prevention and also help to find other voices - the students, the teachers, the parents, the administrators, or the community. It would be interesting to see what new themes would emerge and if any of the six themes presented in
this paper are repeated. An important element could be extending the duration of study and, if possible, involving the whole school in the program implementation.

Having completed my research, I believe that more research into the roots of violent behaviour is extremely important. Knowing why something is happening can make a big difference in how people handle the situation. Bandaid solutions, or those that deal with the symptoms and not the illness, are simply not effective. Recognizing that it is not always possible to determine a root cause, knowing more about the etiological factors of violent behaviour will ensure stronger prevention programs can be selected or developed (Marini et al., 2000). Some of the questions identified earlier could be considered as possible research topics, such as:

1. Can a violence prevention program address the true roots of violence or only the triggers to a violent situation?
2. Can a violence prevention program have an impact upon natural tendencies?
3. Can the program have an impact upon students who live in a neglectful, aggressive, or abusive environment?
4. Do schools contribute to violence as speculated in the Epp and Watkinson book (1996)?

Finally, future researchers may wish to delve deeper into the experiences of students taking part in violence prevention programs such as Second Step. The
voices of children was not a focus for this research project; however, it became apparent through observations and staff reports that there was a lot happening within the students. This is a fascinating area that would merit further study. By examining the students’ voices, rather than teachers, one might better answer some of the questions that have been left hanging, such as those pertaining to nature vs. nurture, teacher-pleasing behaviours vs. real change, rote memory vs. new vocabulary, etc. Only the children can truly answer these questions.

Personal Implications and Recommendations

Personally, I have found this study to be most enriching. I have taken a complex question and systematically sought to answer it. Along the way, I felt like I had opened Pandora’s Box, and from one small question, many new questions emerged. This was unsettling at first, but I realized that it was merely part of the process. I kept the research focus in mind and stayed on course, but I realize now that all these emergent questions actually helped me to find the six themes and will provide possibilities for future research.

Early on, I stated that I wanted to gain a better understanding of the reality of violence, and I believe I have. Professional reading has helped me to see the immensity of the issue of violence. It will never seem as small, simplistic, or narrow again. I have gained tremendous respect for those researchers who have devoted themselves to tackling the issues surrounding violence prevention. It is
not an easy task due to the complexity of the issue. I feel lucky to have participated in an ethnography and thus having been a part of the experience of implementing the Second Step Program. It would have been less enriching to have been on the outside looking in. Interacting with the participants helped me to gain a much deeper understanding of the issues.

As a principal, an educator, and a member of society, I found this study to have many other implications as well. Under the Education Act, I am charged with the responsibility of ensuring the safety and security of my students. I have come to understand that I cannot do this alone. It is possible only with the support and cooperation of the entire staff and a community that believes in the importance of violence prevention education. When my staff began to ask for help or when my youth worker asked questions about violence prevention curriculum, I began to catch a glimpse of the impact that a program like Second Step can have on a school community. My role has not changed; however, my priorities and the way I look at my place in the school certainly has. I realize that if I can initiate a small positive change in one classroom and invite others to participate and learn from it, it may take hold and become a part of the school culture.

Since completing my research, I have had the opportunity to inservice student teachers, new teachers, and colleagues in the benefits and use of the Second Step Program. Ordinarily, presented with this type of challenge, I would
have drawn together a variety of related resources, shared a few key pieces of advice or "tricks of the trade," and encouraged these new teachers to observe others and learn by doing. Now, my framework is much more developed. The principles of the Second Step Program have become a part of my belief system, vocabulary, and way of responding to violent situations. I feel compelled to continue to expand my knowledge in the field of violence in education through professional reading and further research, so that I will be able to share accurate, timely, and relevant information with people who see me as something of an expert in the field.

Most importantly, I have learned that research is not always about finding an earth-shattering change or the perfect program. Second Step is not perfect, in the sense that it will not work for every teacher, student, classroom, school, or situation. It will not always be the answer to every question or the best resource from which to draw. Like many programs or curricula, it is as good as the teacher who uses it, the level of commitment he/she devotes to it, and the level of support in the school community. However, as my mother always says, "You can’t make a silk purse out of a sow’s ear." The program has enough substance to become that silk purse in the skilful hands of a willing teacher. I suppose in a way, that is as close as we will get to perfection. I intend to communicate the findings of my research with the publishers of the Second Step Program in an effort to provide
specific suggestions for improvement. In that way, this study might have an impact on the future implementation of the program throughout North America and possibly improve the quality of instruction for students and teachers.

Earlier a profile of a potential violent offender and the profile of a bully were presented. This checklist was designed to help parents and teachers identify students who are at-risk for violent behaviour. Now I wonder if such a checklist should be developed for teachers as well. A profile of the “Violence Prevention Expert Teacher” and perhaps a profile of “The Teacher At Risk”. What would these profiles include? From Caroline and Stephen, I have learned that the expert teacher would likely possess many of the following characteristics: empathetic, intuitive, open-minded, optimistic, pro-active, reflective, and possessing the desire to learn and share information. On the other hand, a teacher at risk would likely possess the opposite characteristics: fearful, narrow-minded, pessimistic, reactive, and lacking the skills and abilities to effectively implement a violence prevention program without significant guidance. I wish to develop such a profile, expanded to capture the myriad of characteristics, to help me as I hire new teachers and identify those teachers already in the system who are at risk. I would like to ensure that the notion of systemic violence has as little impact upon my school as possible.
I have also learned a basic truth about change. I believe that recognizing a problem's existence, placing a curriculum focus upon it, and rallying support from others must make some sort of change. With all of that attention on a segment of undesirable behaviour, something new and, hopefully, positive will result. In this study, the students were immersed in the Second Step program, due to the involvement of their teacher, a student teacher, the staff as observers and participants, and me as a researcher and vice principal. It became a way of thinking and being because they were surrounded by it. The change was not earth-shattering or immediate, but the influence of the program due to the involvement of such a large group of people was evident.

My journey began the day I entered the classroom as a new teacher and faced violence among students for the first time. I wanted to make a difference and help to make things better for students. I believe, as a result of my research, that the implementation of violence prevention curriculum, such as Second Step, is a big part of making that positive change happen in schools. I do not believe that the end of a research project is the end of the learning. The journey will continue and, with it, my desire to make all schools safe for students, one small, "non-earth-shattering" change at a time.


Broude, G. J. (1999). Boys will be boys. Public Interest, 136, 3-17.


Publishers.


of parental behaviour management and support needs with children aged 3 to 5 years. *International Journal of Disability, Development, and Education.* 46(2), 223-246.


Roland, E. (1989). *Bullying: The Scandinavian research tradition.* In D. Tattum and D. Lane (Eds.), *Bullying in Schools,* (pp. 21-32). Trentham: Stoke-on-Trent.

The study was conducted from January 2022 to June 2022 in a sample of 120 participants. The participants were divided into two groups: Group A and Group B. Group A received the treatment, while Group B served as the control group. The results showed a significant improvement in the treatment group compared to the control group. Further analysis revealed that the treatment was effective in reducing symptoms in the first 12 weeks. However, the long-term effects were less pronounced.

The data was collected through a standardized questionnaire and supplemented with semi-structured interviews. The data was analyzed using statistical software. The results were statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

The study was funded by the Health Research Council, and the results were published in the Journal of Clinical Medicine. The study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards and the Declaration of Helsinki.

In conclusion, the treatment proved to be effective in reducing symptoms in the short term. However, further research is needed to understand the long-term effects and potential side effects. The study provides valuable insights for future research in this field.


Table 1

General Learning Disabilities Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A learning disorder evident in both academic and social situations that involves one or more of the processes necessary for the proper use of spoken language of communication, and that is characterized by a condition that:</th>
<th>is not primarily the result of:</th>
<th>results in a significant discrepancy between academic achievement and assessed intellectual ability, with deficits in one or more of the following:</th>
<th>may be associated with one or more conditions diagnosed as:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♦ impairment of vision</td>
<td>♦ receptive language (listening, reading)</td>
<td>♦ a perceptual handicap</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ impairment of hearing</td>
<td>♦ language processing (thinking, conceptualizing, integrating)</td>
<td>♦ a brain injury</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ physical disability</td>
<td>♦ expressive language (talking, spelling, writing)</td>
<td>♦ minimal brain dysfunction</td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ developmental disability</td>
<td></td>
<td>♦ dyslexia</td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ primary emotional disturbance</td>
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<td>♦ developmental aphasia</td>
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<td>♦ cultural difference</td>
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<td>Item</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Setup</td>
<td>Configuration and initial setup for the system.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>Integration with other systems and services.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Testing</td>
<td>Testing procedures and quality assurance.</td>
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<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>Monitoring tools and metrics for system performance.</td>
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<td>Security</td>
<td>Security measures and protection protocols.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>Performance metrics and benchmarks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>System Architecture</td>
<td>Architecture and design of the system.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical Documentation</td>
<td>Documentation for system configuration and operation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tutorials</td>
<td>Educational materials and guides for system use.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Best Practices</td>
<td>Recommended practices and guidelines for optimal system performance.</td>
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<td>Compliance</td>
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Table 2
Second Step Scope and Sequence

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<td>Emotions</td>
<td>Communicate Feelings</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Cause &amp; Effect</td>
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<td>Active Listening</td>
<td>Identifying Feelings</td>
<td>Intentions</td>
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<td>Similarities &amp; Differences</td>
<td>Intentions</td>
<td>Expressing Concern</td>
<td>Feelings Change</td>
<td>Fairness</td>
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<td>Fairness</td>
<td>Accepting Differences</td>
<td>Conflicting Feelings</td>
<td>Active Listening</td>
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<td>Preferences</td>
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<td>Similarities &amp; Differences</td>
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<td>Predicting Feelings</td>
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<td>Preferences</td>
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Source: [Table Source]
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<td>Focus on a Problem</td>
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<td>Making Conversation</td>
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<td>Resisting the Impulse to Lie</td>
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<td>Choose a Plan</td>
<td>Joining in at the Right Time</td>
<td>Apologizing</td>
<td>Focus on a Problem</td>
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<td>Choose a Solution</td>
<td>Dealing with Gossip</td>
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<td>Asking Permission</td>
<td>Temptation to Steal</td>
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<td>Temptation to Cheat</td>
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<td>Temptation to Lie</td>
<td>Keeping a Promise</td>
<td>Setting Goals</td>
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<td>Dealing with Fear</td>
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<td>Taking Responsibility</td>
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<td>Keeping out of a Fight</td>
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<td>Dealing with Putdowns</td>
<td>Make/Respond to Complaints</td>
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<td>Name Calling and Teasing</td>
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<td>Dealing with Criticism</td>
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<td>Dealing with Being Left Out</td>
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RESEARCH WITH HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

Brock University Proposal for Research

Marian Reimer #9101700
February 2, 1998

Section A - RESEARCH DESIGN: Purpose, Methodology & Ethics

1. INTENT

Violence among children is not a new problem. This area has been thoroughly researched to determine causes and trends (A.P.A., 1993; Langone, 1984; Sherrow, 1996). The summary and recommendations of most research articles point to the need for effective "prevention programs" implemented with young children (Day, Golench, MacDougall & Beals-Gonzalez, 1995). However, research concerning violence prevention programs is limited.

This research is designed to gain an understanding of what happens when the Second Step Violence Prevention Program is used in a primary GLD classroom (Committee for Children, 1992). It is an exploration, and thus a formal hypothesis is not appropriate. Instead, a desire to better understand the situation is the goal.

The research will be conducted using a qualitative approach (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; McMillan & Schumacher, 1989).

2. POPULATION

For the purpose of this study, a non-random, purposive sample is required. One teacher in the District School Board of Niagara has volunteered to be a participant in my research. She is an appropriate candidate as her teaching assignment is within my own school, she is involved with at-risk and aggressive students, and she is willing to implement the Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum. The participant is also a member of the staff in which I am the Vice-Principal, and therefore, I have a good background knowledge of the difficulties
facing her students and the ability to personally observe the class in action. 
A student teacher, who was also our school’s Youth Worker, will serve as another 
participant as he will be in the class during the months of the study and will be 
primarily responsible for teaching the curriculum. He is also a most willing 
participant, and volunteered his time readily.

The teachers will be using four to six weeks of class time to implement the 
Second Step program, which they had intended to do prior to learning of my 
research. They planned to teach the lessons first thing in the morning and 
afternoon each day, until the unit is completed. This should be accomplished by 

In my role as the Vice Principal, I am already be involved with the students 
of the class, and during the study, I will also make a formal effort to observe the 
class in action. The participants have agreed that this will not be a problem.

3. TREATMENTS, INTERVENTIONS OR MANIPULATIONS

Due to the nature of this study, the only intervention being used is the 
Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum. The program is sanctioned by The 
District School Board of Niagara, and highly recommended for use in schools. 
The Instructional Resource or “Media Centre” has many copies of the program, 
and we will borrow the kit from them.

The program will involve the teachers and students in three units of study: 
Empathy Training, Impulse Control, and Anger Management. The lessons 
(approximately seven in each unit), involve students in discussions about a 
photograph of children in a conflict situation. The teacher models the strategy 
being taught, such as an “I Message”. The students role play similar situations 
and practise using the desired conflict resolution skill. Follow up discussion and 
activity ideas are provided.

During this time, the teachers will communicate with me on a regular basis. 
I will also record my observations in a journal and other staff members will be 
asked to be aware of the behaviour of the class while on the playground. I will 
record any observations they make.

4. RATIONALE

Despite the plethora of research conducted to study violence and it’s 
causes, very few published articles have addressed the effectiveness of prevention 
programs. With the trend toward an increase in aggressive behaviour, the 
question of prevention becomes all the more relevant. What happens when a 
program like Second Step is used?
Studies designed to test the effectiveness of the *Second Step* program have led to mixed results. Moore and Beland (1992) found the program to be successful in increasing knowledge and skills related to violence prevention. Similarly, Grossman (1997) also found students in the *Second Step* program demonstrated less aggressive behaviour and increased pro-social behaviour, compared to the control group of students. Roher (1997) supports these findings.

In contrast, Orpinas (1993) found the program to be somewhat successful with grade six students in Texas. Two out of six classes reported a decrease in aggression, however, teachers were dissatisfied with the program. They felt the lessons were too complex, time consuming, and too infrequent. Madak and Bravi (1992) found the program to be less effective, but a teacher rating of the program as either “average” or “very good”.

These inconclusive results would indicate that further research is definitely required. Also, a qualitative methodology would allow for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of violence and the program’s use. Rather than data which springs from a record of numbers of violent acts or disciplinary actions as reported by a school or city, the reflections and observations of the teachers and researcher will allow for a more thorough examination of the multi-faceted and highly “unquantifiable” concept of violence.

5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study has very few ethical implications and considerations. The District Board of Niagara has been contacted as well as the Principal of my school, and informal permission to carry out the study has been granted pending the approval of the Brock Ethics Committee. The teachers have been invited to participate and have been fully informed of the scope and purpose of the research study. They will be informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point in time.

To protect anonymity, the names of the participants and the school will be changed or omitted in any written work, including the final thesis. At no point in time, will the names of students be recorded for study, except as it normally pertains to my job as Vice Principal. The interview records, tapes and/or written records will be stored in a locked cabinet throughout the duration of the study and will be destroyed upon it’s completion to ensure confidentiality. The participants and their students will not be involved in anything which would cause them physical or psychological harm.

As Bogdan and Biklen (1992) state, the participants will be treated with respect and honesty at all times. The teachers will have access to the data before
publication, and feedback, alterations, and additions will be welcomed and implemented. Also, every possible effort will be made to ensure that the data is clearly distinguishable from the researchers' interpretation.

6. DATA COLLECTION

The data will be collected through interviews, observations, staff reports and my journal. The procedures for collecting data in this manner have been thoroughly researched (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996; Merriam, 1988). The interviews will either be tape recorded or brief notes will be taken by the researcher, depending upon the preference of the participants and the feasibility.

Field notes of observations, staff reports and my journal will also be kept extremely confidential and stored in a locked location. The "divided binder" with the information, will be stored in a locked cabinet along with any other data, such as audio tapes, and destroyed following the research.

Only the participants, Professor Susan Drake, and I will have access to the data.

7. INSTRUMENTATION

Due to the nature of qualitative research, the research instrument will be me. I have thoroughly researched the proper methods for the four methods of data collection: interviews, observations, staff observations, and journaling (Bogdon & Biklen, 1992; Patton, 1990). The detailed protocols I will follow in my data collection, have been laid out in the attachment.

8. INFORMED CONSENT

Informed consent will be obtained in writing using the Informed Consent Form. All the information presented on this form will be discussed in detail to ensure a complete understanding of the participants' rights. Also, the participants will have the opportunity to read the methodology to ensure complete understanding of the study.

Due to the qualitative nature of this research, the participants will also be asked to review the data prior to publication to ensure accuracy and to allow for reciprocity. They will also be provided with a copy of their own data, and a summary of the findings if so desired.
Section B - RISK TO PARTICIPANTS

1. This research does not involve a topic which might be expected to cause participants emotional distress. Violence can be an emotionally charged issue, however, the context of violence prevention should eliminate any undue anxiety. The teachers will be asked to reflect on the program and their students' behaviour and attitudes in a way that is comfortable for them and protects their teacher-student confidentiality. Also, the participants' teaching skills and abilities are not being evaluated, and every effort will be made to ensure comfort and confidence.

2. The researcher and participant will likely choose to meet in private, such as an unused classroom or the office, to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. In this way, the teacher can feel free to discuss their perceptions of the program, their students reactions and their impressions. while remaining anonymous. Meeting in public would jeopardize the confidentiality which the participants and students require. However, because we are colleagues, and have known each other for over 3 years, this type of private conversation shouldn't cause discomfort.

3. This research will not cause the participants any mental, psychological, or social harm. The research will not focus on personal issues or teaching ability, and therefore, should not cause any embarrassment or offense. Discussing the program and it's effect on their students shouldn't cause any anxiety, and the casual nature of the interviews and observations should ensure comfort for all concerned.

4. This research will not cause the participants any harm to their health. Nothing in the research would require the teachers to do something out of the ordinary or risky.

5. This research does not infringe upon the rights of the participants in any way. The teachers will be fully informed of their rights and their partnership in the research will be emphasized. They will have free access to any information regarding their data, be ensured confidentiality, and be asked to confirm the statements made about their observations.

6. This study presents no further risks to participants such as deception. The participants will be fully informed of all aspects of the research.
Title of Study: “An Exploration of the Implementation of the Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum in a Primary General Learning Disabilities Class”

Researchers: Professor Susan Drake and Researcher Marian Reimer.

Name of Participant: ___________________________________________ (please print)

I understand that this study in which I have agreed to participate will involve four to six weeks to implement the Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum. I understand that I will be interviewed and observed during the program and that this information may be tape recorded or scribed, at my discretion. I am aware that other staff will be asked to report to the researcher regarding my students actions and that the researcher will be keeping a personal journal of the events. I will be able to examine all of my data prior to publication.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without penalty.

I understand that there is no obligation to answer any question/participate in any aspect of this project that I consider invasive.

I understand that all personal data will be kept strictly confidential and that all information will be coded so that my name is not associated with my answers. I understand that only the researchers named above will have access to the data.

________________________________________________________________________
Participant Signature Date

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in the study, you can contact Marian Reimer at (905)682-6609 (work) or (905)937-7187 (home), or Professor Susan Drake at (905) 688-5550, extension 3931.

Feedback about the use of that data collected will be available during the month of June, 1998, and you will be contacted to share the results and to obtain a written explanation if so desired. Thank you for your help! Please take one copy of this form with you for further reference.

***

I have fully explained the procedures of this study to the above volunteer.

________________________________________________________________________
Researchers Signature Date
Table 3

Data Collection Samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Observations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“She seemed a little spooked by my presence,” Stephen chuckled. “Finally, just yesterday, she seemed to forget, or not care, that I was there and went back to the climbers. I watched as she joined the group gathered by the climber. They were playing a type of ‘climber tag’ where the kids would use the base of the climber as ‘home’ and the area beneath it for running. There seemed to be some pretty complicated rules involving specific directions for running, the time you were allowed to be on the climber, and when or if you were ever allowed to move up onto the monkey bars. I tell you, I was confused just watching!”</td>
<td>Stephen intercepted Jake before the principal or I had learned about the situation. They sat in front of the office for a chat, which I was able to overhear from my desk a few feet away. I listened to Stephen as he calmly walked Jake through the series of events that had landed him at the office. Frequently, Stephen would pause in the middle of the story and say things like, “Right there Jake, do you see how you could have handled that differently? What did we learn in Second Step about lying?” Jake remained completely calm, and, bit by bit, accepted responsibility for everything he had done. By the end, he also had a plan in place for the future if something like this should happen again.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff Observations</th>
<th>My Journal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher told me that she asked Jake what he could have done differently, as per my request, and he had come up with “all kinds of good ideas - none of which he used!” Her voice continued to rise as she described the list of alternatives he had provided such as walking away, getting a teacher, or playing more safely in the first place. She looked at me, red faced and clearly frustrated, and said, “What good is it if the kid knows what to do, but doesn’t do it?”</td>
<td>I had a lot to write in my journal that evening about the incident. “Jake really blew it today — swearing and freaking out in front of all the other kids. Funny, I want to focus solely on him and his misbehaviour, but I keep thinking about Louise (the supervisor). She really blew it all out of proportion instead of de-escalating things the way Stephen did. I wonder what would have happened had she used a different strategy with Jake, more like Stephen’s approach. He probably would have kept a lid on the anger.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F

Photograph 1

Second Step Classroom Display
Picture 1
Kelly's Poster

We learned how not to be bothered by others.
We had band-aids for our little cuts and breaks.

Oftentimes, we had to put our own band-aids on.
Picture 2

Harry’s Poster
Picture 3
Jake's Poster

we learned how not to calm down when we got angry.