

Attitude Survey for Middle School Students

Overview and Contents

The Attitude Survey for Middle School Students (Grades 6–8) can be used as a pre/post measure to evaluate effects of the *Second Step* program. The first section of the survey (Part 1) evaluates students' acceptance of physical and relational aggression. The second section (Part 2) asks students to rate their competence using the social and emotional skills addressed in the *Second Step* program (for example, identifying emotions and problem solving).

The 26-item survey is administered in classrooms and takes about 20 minutes to complete.

This packet contains the following materials:

- Guide to Using the Attitude Survey
- Administration Script
- The Attitude Survey for Middle School Students
 - Acceptance of Physical and Relational Aggression (Part 1: What Do You Think?)
 - Perceived Social-Emotional Competence (Part 2: What About You?)

Guide to Using the Survey

Description and purpose

The *Second Step* program aims to reduce aggressive and other hurtful behaviors by fostering students' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral skills. Toward this end, the program involves teaching these skills directly and promoting prosocial attitudes. The Attitude Survey for Middle School Students assesses attitudes related to aggressive behavior. The survey can thus be used as a pre/post measure to evaluate effects of the *Second Step* program.

The first section of the survey (Part 1: What Do You Think?) evaluates students' acceptance of physical and relational aggression. Students indicate their level of agreement with using various forms of aggression. Example items include “There are only two kinds of kids—the kids who fight and the kids who get beaten up” and “If you're angry at someone, it's okay to keep them out of your group of friends.”

The second section (Part 2: What About You?) asks students to rate their competence using the social and emotional skills addressed in the *Second Step* program (for example, “When someone says or does something mean to you, how easy is it to keep your anger under control?”). Students are also asked to rate how often they use the skills and to identify the particular skills they have used and those that “need work.”

Using the Attitude Survey as an outcome measure

The Attitude Survey measures student attitudes related to aggressive behavior. However, an outcome evaluation should also include an assessment of socially competent and aggressive behavior, such as a rating completed by teachers (for example, the Walker-McConnell Scale of Social Competence and School Adjustment). Using multiple outcome measures will provide more information about program effects and aid interpretation of the evaluation results.

We also recommend a strong evaluation design (for example, pre/post assessment and multiple participating schools) and procedures to support high quality program implementation. A well-planned strategy will be essential to optimizing your outcome evaluation. Please refer to the outcome evaluation information on our Web site (www.cfchildren.org) for further detail. Consultation with someone experienced in program evaluation may be helpful as well.

Instructions for use

The Attitude Survey is recommended for students in sixth through eighth grades. This 26-item questionnaire takes approximately 20 minutes to complete, depending on students' age and reading ability. To serve as a pretest, the survey should be administered before teaching the *Second Step* lessons. A posttest administration should be given once all the lessons have been taught. The survey can be given by a teacher, counselor, or administrator within the classroom. However, we recommend that someone other than the classroom teacher conduct the administration to increase students' sense of anonymity.

Administration should be prefaced by a brief discussion about the purpose of the survey and guidelines about student behavior during the survey (for example, not saying answers out loud and respecting others' privacy). Confidentiality also needs to be addressed in the introduction. If students are tracked for evaluation purposes (that is, so their pre- and posttests can be matched), they should be told that their answers will be *confidential*, and only the staff involved in summarizing the information will have access to the surveys. (An astute student may ask about the identification codes on the survey. You will need to assure the student that there also will be restricted access to the key linking identification codes with student names.) If students are not tracked for the evaluation, they can be told that their surveys are *anonymous*.

See the administration script for recommended instructions. We suggest reading the survey items aloud to aid comprehension, particularly for younger students and those with reading difficulties or limited English proficiency.

Scoring

The Attitude Survey yields two scales: Acceptance of Physical and Relational Aggression, measured in Part 1 of the Student Survey, and Perceived Social-Emotional Competence, measured in Part 2.

Part 1 scoring. The first scale, Acceptance of Physical and Relational Aggression, is composed of three subscales. The subscales and the items (questions) that measure each subscale are as follows:

- Subscale: Acceptance of Physical Aggression: Items 2, 3, 4, 8, 11, 13, and 14
- Subscale: Acceptance of Verbal Derogation: Items 6, 7, 9, 10, and 15
- Subscale: Acceptance of Social Exclusion: Items 1 and 5

Item 12 is a "filler" question and not included in any of the scales.

Calculating subscale scores for Part 1. A *subscale score* is an average (mean) of all the items within that subscale. Scores for each subscale should be calculated for each student survey using these steps:

1. For each student survey, collect the item scores within each subscale using a spreadsheet or table. Item scores are indicated by the small numbers below the response options on the survey. For example:

3. Sometimes you have to fight other kids to get respect.			
Don't agree	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely agree
0	1	2	3

If a student circled “Agree a lot” for Item 3, the student’s item score would be 2.

2. For each student survey, calculate the mean for each subscale. The *mean* is the sum of the scores for each item in the subscale, divided by the total number of items (see example below). The calculated means are the subscale scores.

Example: Finding the subscale mean for a given student for the subscale “Acceptance of Verbal Derogation” (Items 6, 7, 9, 10, and 15).

Item number	Item score
6	2
7	1
9	2
10	3
15	2
Sum	10

$$\text{Mean} = \frac{\text{sum}}{\text{number of items}} = \frac{10}{5} = 2$$

3. For the subscale Acceptance of Verbal Derogation, one further step is required. Because the items for this subscale are worded in a positive way, whereas the items for the Acceptance of Physical Aggression and Acceptance of Social Exclusion are worded in a negative way, the ratings for this subscale must be “reversed.” To do this, for the Acceptance of Verbal Derogation subscale *only*, subtract the mean that you have just calculated from the number 3.

Example: In the previous example, the calculated mean for Acceptance of Verbal Derogation was “2,” so you would subtract 2 from 3 for an Acceptance of Verbal Derogation subscale score of 1.

A completed scale score calculation for Scale 1: Acceptance of Physical and Relational Aggression for a given student might look like the following:

Subscale	Calculated Mean	Reversed Mean (3 – Mean)	Subscale Score
Acceptance of Physical Aggression	2	Not applicable	2
Acceptance of Verbal Derogation	2	$3 - 2 = 1$	1
Acceptance of Social Exclusion	2.5	Not applicable	2.5

Note: Because the subscale scores for Part 1 measure students’ acceptance of negative behaviors (physical aggression, verbal derogation, social exclusion) a *lower* subscale score is desirable, with a subscale score of “0” indicating the least acceptance of negative behavior.

Part 2 scoring. The second scale, Perceived Social-Emotional Competence, is measured by items 16 through 23. There are no subscales for this scale. Item 24 assesses the frequency of student skill use and is used as a single score. The remaining two items (25 and 26) are open-ended questions and are interpreted separately. To calculate a score for each student for the Perceived Social-Emotional Competence scale, follow these steps:

1. For each student survey, collect the item scores for the Perceived Social-Emotional Competence scale, using a spreadsheet or table, as in Part 1.
2. Calculate the mean for this scale by adding the item scores, then dividing the sum by the total number of items (see example below). The calculated mean is the scale score for Perceived Social-Emotional Competence.

Item number	Item score
16	2
17	3
18	1
19	3
20	2
21	0
22	2
23	1
Sum	14

Note: Because this scale measures students’ perceived social-emotional competence, a *higher* score is desirable, with a scale score of “3” being the highest.

Complete scale scores. A completed scale score calculation for Part 1 and Part 2 for a given student might look like the following:

Subscale	Calculated Mean	Reversed Mean (3 – Mean)	Subscale Score
Part One			
Acceptance of Physical Aggression Subscale	2	Not applicable	2
Acceptance of Verbal Derogation Subscale	2	3 – 2 = 1	1
Acceptance of Social Exclusion Subscale	2.5	Not applicable	2.5
Part Two			
Perceived Social-Emotional Competence	1.75	Not applicable	1.75
Frequency of Student Skill Use (item 24)	2	Not applicable	2

Calculating percentage of change. To compare pre- and posttest means, the percentage of change can be calculated for each scale, subscale, or single item (in the case of Item 24):

$$\text{Percentage (\%) of change} = \frac{\text{Posttest mean} - \text{Pretest mean}}{\text{Pretest mean}} \times 100$$

If the percentage change for a given scale is a positive number, this will indicate an increase from pre- to posttest; a negative percentage change will indicate a decrease. Looking at the percentage change for students from pre- to posttest is akin to “eyeballing” the results. However, percentage change does not tell you whether the change is statistically significant; that is, whether the change is greater than chance.

Testing the significance of student change. The use of a statistical test (such as a t-test) is necessary to determine if students’ pre/post change is reliable and not due to a chance occurrence. Students’ *individual* change can be statistically tested if individuals are tracked from pre- to posttest. On the other hand, if students are surveyed anonymously, a statistical test will assess *aggregated* rather than individual change. Aggregated change refers to the comparison of school scores at pre- and posttest, requiring the participation of multiple schools in the evaluation.

We recommend using the overall Acceptance of Physical and Relational Aggression scale for analysis rather than its subscales in two cases: (1) if a small number of students are surveyed (for example, fewer than 50) or (2) if you are assessing aggregated rather than individual student change. The overall scale will yield more reliable results than the subscales due to the greater number of items involved.

Summarizing open-ended items. For Items 25 and 26, summarize by listing and categorizing students’ responses. It also may be helpful to indicate how many students gave similar answers.

Interpreting results

Displaying your results. Scale scores can be used to describe overall attitudes within a school or district. Bar and line graphs are helpful for displaying results and showing changes from pre- to posttest. A table can be used to list the categories of skills that students use and those that need improvement and the numbers of students indicating particular answers.

Interpretation of statistical significance. If statistical tests were used to assess pre- and posttest scores, your results will indicate whether student change was statistically significant. Statistical significance indicates that the results were reliable and not likely due to a chance occurrence. Note that statistical “power” for detecting significant change will be contingent on the number of students being evaluated—the more students involved, the better the probability of detecting true change.

Interpretation of “social significance.” Determining the “social significance,” or real-world impact, of the program will be aided greatly by the use of comparison schools. A significant difference between schools that receive the program and those that do not is good evidence that the program had an impact on students—even if the effect was a lack of deterioration in attitudes rather than an actual improvement.

Concluding a program effect. Student outcomes can be affected by a variety of factors beyond the program. A lack of positive change from pre- to posttest may be related to low statistical power because too few students participated in the evaluation. The absence of comparison schools may also hinder a conclusion of positive program effect if the true effect was a lack of deterioration in students receiving the program. This effect may be unnoticed if students are compared to themselves at pretest rather than to those who do not receive the program. A strong evaluation design (such as one using multiple and/or comparison schools) will allow you to attribute outcomes to the program more confidently.

Process (or implementation) evaluation can also be extremely helpful in interpreting outcome results. By documenting what the program was like “in action,” you can assess the degree to which the program was implemented as intended. The higher the implementation quality, the greater will be your probability for demonstrating positive findings and capacity for concluding program effectiveness.

Informing program implementation. Information from the attitude survey may assist schools in their ongoing implementation of the *Second Step* program. In particular, the frequency of student skill use and students’ responses about the skills they use and need work on may be useful. This information can indicate the level and nature of support students need to use the social and emotional skills they are learning effectively.

Attitude goals for students. Norms with which to compare your school/district results are not available for these attitude measures. However, a “socially significant” goal would be for students, in general, to indicate zero-to-little acceptance of physical or relational aggression. Another goal could be for students to report at least a moderate level of perceived social-emotional competence (that is, no to little difficulty), with increases in perceived competence across years of program implementation.

Frey, K. S., & Edstrom, L. V. (2004). *The Acceptance of Physical and Relational Aggression Scales*. Seattle, WA: Committee for Children.

Edstrom, L. V., & Frey, K. S. (2004). *The Perceived Social-Emotional Competence Scale*. Seattle, WA: Committee for Children.

Van Schoiack-Edstrom, L., Frey, K. S., & Beland, K. (2002). Changing adolescents’ attitudes about relational and physical aggression: An early evaluation of a school-based intervention. *School Psychology Review*, 31, 201–216.

Survey Script and Instructions

Use the following script to introduce and administer the Attitude Survey to students.

Introduction

Sections in **boldface** type should be read aloud. Sections in plain type are notes to the instructor.

Today we're doing a survey to learn about what you think about different things. This will take about 20 minutes. The survey asks your opinion about different things, for example, what to do if you're angry at someone.

There are no wrong or right answers to the questions; we are just interested in what you want to tell us. We also want your answers to be private. To keep your answers private, please gently tear off the first page with your name on it and use it to cover your answers as you go along. No one's name will be on the survey.

Please don't say answers out loud or show your answers to others. You may skip any question that you don't want to answer. Please do not write the names of other students when answering any of the questions.

(If necessary) I am going to read the questions out loud. You may choose to follow along with me, or you may go ahead and work at your own pace. Raise your hand if you need help or have a question. If you aren't sure of an answer, just make your best guess.

The Survey

The first few questions on page 1 ask about your gender, age, and grade. Go ahead and circle your answers, making sure they are dark enough for us to see.

Part 1

The rest of this page and the next covers Part 1 of the survey, entitled *What Do You Think?* Please show how much you agree with each statement by circling "Don't agree," "Agree a little," "Agree a lot," or "Completely agree." Read questions 1–15 below, on pages 1–2 of the survey.

1. If a friend upsets you, it's okay to completely stop talking to him or her.
2. Sometimes you have only two choices—getting hit or hitting the other kid first.
3. Sometimes you have to fight other kids to get respect.
4. When two kids are fighting each other, it's all right for you to stand there and watch.
5. If you're angry at someone, it's okay to keep him or her out of your group of friends.
6. It's best to avoid repeating stories about others if you don't know what's true.
7. When one kid is picking on another, it's not right for you to join in.
8. It's okay to hit someone who does something mean to you.
9. There are always other ways to solve an argument besides insulting a kid or getting put down yourself.
10. It's best to avoid listening to gossip or rumors.
11. There are only two kinds of kids—the kids who fight and the kids who get beaten up.
12. It's okay to say something mean to someone if he or she says something mean to you.
13. When a friend of yours is in a fight, it's all right to cheer for him or her.
14. It's okay to hit someone who really makes you angry.
15. If you hear something bad about someone, you shouldn't pass it on.

Part 2

In this section, *What About You?* the first nine questions ask you to circle the answer that describes you best. Read questions 16–26 below, on pages 3–4 of the survey.

16. When you're having a problem with someone, how easy is it to *understand his or her point of view*? Is it EASY!, easy, hard, or HARD!?
17. How easy is it to *identify and name the emotions you feel*?
18. When you have a problem with other people, how easy is it to *stop yourself from doing the first thing that pops into your head*?
19. How easy is it to *think of more than one way to solve a problem*?
20. When you try to solve a problem and your solution doesn't work, how easy is it to *try something else*?
21. When someone says or does something mean to you, how easy is it to *keep your anger under control*?
22. How easy is it to *say "no" to your friends* if they want you to do something you don't want to do?
23. How easy is it for you to *stand up for yourself* when someone picks on you?
24. How often have you used any of the above skills in the past month? Never, A little, Some, or A lot?
25. Which skills have you used? Go ahead and write in your answer.
26. Please write down any areas you think you need to work on to get along better and solve problems with others.

Conclusion

Thank you for answering the questions on the survey. Your answers will help us learn about what things are like for kids at this school. Do you have any questions you'd like to ask me?

Examples of student questions

Below are examples of possible questions students may ask, along with possible answers you can offer. The most important things to convey to students are (a) there are no right or wrong answers—just opinions, and (b) students' responses will be kept either *confidential* or *anonymous*, depending on the evaluation strategy.

Why are you doing this?

We want to learn about what students think about many different things. You are the experts.

What will you do with our answers?

We will look at how you all answered the questions. That will give us a big picture of what students in general think.

What do the numbers at the top of each page mean? (Referring to ID codes, in the case they are used to track students from pre- to posttest.)

The numbers are for us to keep track of whom we've given the survey to. Remember that we are keeping your answers private and that the surveys will not have your names on them. Only a few people in the office (name the staff members, if possible) will be able to see the surveys so they can summarize the information you have given us.

What do the numbers below each of the boxes mean? (Referring to the numbers the response options for each question.)

These numbers help us enter the information into a computer.

Why are you asking us the same questions again? (At posttest.)

We want to know if anything has changed or not since the last time we asked you these questions.

- Pretest
- Posttest

Attitude Survey for Middle School Students

ID #: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Date _____

ID # _____

What is your gender?	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female			
What grade are you in?	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 8		
How old are you?	<input type="checkbox"/> 11	<input type="checkbox"/> 12	<input type="checkbox"/> 13	<input type="checkbox"/> 14	<input type="checkbox"/> 15

Part 1: What Do You Think?

Directions: Circle the answer that shows how much you agree with each statement.

1. If a friend upsets you, it's okay to completely stop talking to him or her.

Don't agree	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely agree
0	1	2	3

2. Sometimes you have only two choices—getting hit or hitting the other kid first.

Don't agree	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely agree
0	1	2	3

3. Sometimes you have to fight other kids to get respect.

Don't agree	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely agree
0	1	2	3

4. When two kids are fighting each other, it's all right for you to stand there and watch.

Don't agree	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely agree
0	1	2	3

5. If you're angry at someone, it's okay to keep him or her out of your group of friends.

Don't agree	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely agree
0	1	2	3

6. It's best to avoid repeating stories about others if you don't know what's true.

Don't agree	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely agree
0	1	2	3

7. When one kid is picking on another, it's not right for you to join in.

Don't agree	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely agree
0	1	2	3

8. It's okay to hit someone who does something mean to you.

Don't agree	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely agree
0	1	2	3

9. There are always other ways to solve an argument besides insulting a kid or getting put down yourself.

Don't agree	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely agree
0	1	2	3

10. It's best to avoid listening to gossip or rumors.

Don't agree	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely agree
0	1	2	3

11. There are only two kinds of kids—the kids who fight and the kids who get beaten up.

Don't agree	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely agree
0	1	2	3

12. It's okay to say something mean to someone if he or she says something mean to you.

Don't agree	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely agree
0	1	2	3

13. When a friend of yours is in a fight, it's all right to cheer for him or her.

Don't agree	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely agree
0	1	2	3

14. It's okay to hit someone who really makes you angry.

Don't agree	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely agree
0	1	2	3

15. If you hear something bad about someone, you shouldn't pass it on.

Don't agree	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely agree
0	1	2	3

Part 2: What About You?

Directions: Circle the answer that describes you best.

16. When you're having a problem with someone, how easy is it to *understand his or her point of view*? Is it EASY!, easy, hard, or HARD!?

EASY!

3

easy

2

hard

1

HARD!

0

17. How easy is it to *identify and name the emotions you feel*?

EASY!

3

easy

2

hard

1

HARD!

0

18. When you have a problem with other people, how easy is it to *stop yourself from doing the first thing that pops into your head*?

EASY!

3

easy

2

hard

1

HARD!

0

19. How easy is it to *think of more than one way to solve a problem*?

EASY!

3

easy

2

hard

1

HARD!

0

20. When you try to solve a problem and your solution doesn't work, how easy is to *try something else*?

EASY!

3

easy

2

hard

1

HARD!

0

21. When someone says or does something mean to you, how easy is it to *keep your anger under control*?

EASY!

3

easy

2

hard

1

HARD!

0

22. How easy is it to say "*no*" to your friends if they want you to do something you don't want to do?

EASY!

3

easy

2

hard

1

HARD!

0

ID # _____

23. How easy is it for you to *stand up for yourself* when someone picks on you?

EASY!

3

easy

2

hard

1

HARD!

0

24. How often have you used any of the above skills in the past month? Never, A little, Some, or A LOT?

Never

0

A little

1

Some

2

A lot

3

25. Which skills have you used? Go ahead and write in your answer.

26. Please write down any areas you think you need to work on to get along better and solve problems with others.

