PATHS®
Research Findings
Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS®) is an evidence-based classroom curriculum that focuses on teaching students social and emotional skills. PATHS® is designed to help children to develop their problem-solving skills, increase their self-motivation, and help in the identification and acknowledgment of emotions.

Compared to control groups, PATHS® students show:

• Increased understanding and recognition of emotions
• Improved thinking and planning skills
• Decreased anxiety and depressive symptoms
• Decreased conduct problems
• Decreased symptoms of sadness and depression

Curriculum Background

To fully understand one’s own behaviour, it is necessary to take emotions, thoughts, and communication skills into account. PATHS® is rooted in developmental neuroscience, which indicates that children experience intense emotions before having the cognitive skills to control and verbalize emotions. The PATHS® curriculum is centered on the ABCD model (affective/behaviour/cognitive/dynamic) of development which explains that affect, vocabulary, and cognition interact to create social and emotional competence (Kushce & Greenberg, 1994).

PATHS® emphasizes development in these areas:

• Self-control
• Self-esteem and self-confidence
• Emotional understanding
• Peer relations
• Interpersonal problem solving skills

Trends in PATHS® classrooms

• Increase in academic achievement by 11%
• Increased students’ cognitive skills tests by 20%
• Increased students’ vocabulary of emotions by 68%
• Increased teachers’ reports of students exhibiting self-control by 36%
Summary of Key Findings

Emotional Understanding

PATHS® school children, compared with non-PATHS® children, demonstrate improved understanding of emotions and are more articulate with descriptions of emotional experience (Greenberg, Kusche, Cook & Quamma, 1995). As well, PATHS® enhances social strengths such as empathy and consideration, along with a decline in emotional symptoms, hyperactivity, and peer problems (Curtis & Norgate, 2007).

Pro-social Behaviour

PATHS® has been reported to promote prosocial behaviour, meaning that PATHS® children are able to better understand social problems and are able to create effective solutions. As well, PATHS has been found to reduce aggression and disruptiveness (Greenberg & Kusche, 1998; Zins et al., 2004).

A study by the Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group (2010) found that exposure to the PATHS® curriculum reduced aggression in participating children.

Academic Performance and Cognitive Skills

PATHS students are more likely to effectively problem solve, reveal superior thinking and planning skills, and control their impulses (Greenberg & Kusche, 1998).

Teacher reports state that the PATHS curriculum significantly increases academic engagement in early elementary children (Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 2010).

Mental Health

Lessons from the PATHS curriculum help to diminish internalizing problems, such as anxiety and sadness. As well, decrease externalizing problems such as conduct disorder, Oppositional Deviance Disorder or ODD, hyperactivity, and frustration tolerance (Greenberg & Kusche, 1993, 1996, 1997).
What the results mean

Mental Health

PATHS promotes emotional well-being, and teaches children emotion coping skills. Through these learned skills, children who take the PATHS® curriculum are less susceptible to symptoms of anxiety and depression (Greenberg & Kusche, 1998).

Crime Prevention

Poor childhood self-regulation is linked to student drop out, drug use, and crime (Diamond et al., 2007). By improving self-control through training interventions such as PATHS®, these outcomes can be improved. Further, long-range benefits could stem from PATHS® potential to reduce criminal activity.

Decrease in bullying

PATHS® children are less likely to exhibit aggressive behaviour, as they are able to effectively problem-solve and empathize with others. The implementation of the PATHS® curriculum further leads to a decrease in bully-like behaviour among students within the community, and in the school climate.

Health & Wellness

PATHS® improves children’s impulse control, meaning that PATHS® children are better able to self-regulate and make good decisions. PATHS® further has the potential to reduce risk of chronic illness, such as obesity (Riggs et al., 2007). Although current school-based obesity prevention program tend to focus on eating and exercise, they neglect to address such important factors as impulse control and emotion regulation that PATHS® targets in its curriculum (Bjorklund and Brown, 1998; Davis et al., 2004).

Nationally and Internationally Recognized

SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-based Program and Practices (NREPP)

• Perfect score – program materials
• Near perfect score – dissemination

www.seakproject.com
PATHS® Research Findings

Blueprints Project of the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, University of Colorado

- Model Program – highest possible rating
- PATHS program is the only violence-prevention curriculum for elementary-age children to achieve this rating

National Dropout Prevention Center/Network

- Model Program – highest possible rating

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

- Select Program – highest possible rating

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- Best Practices Program


- Promising Program

U.S. Surgeon General’s Report on Youth Violence

- Promising Program

Center for the Application of Substance Abuse Technologies (CASAT)

- Best Practice

KidsMatter Australian Primary Schools Mental Health Initiative

- Highest possible rating in all SEL categories

Works cited:


Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 2010


