

Readiness Tool for PATHS® (Promoting Alternative THinking Strategies)

During program selection, it is important to research and compare possible evidence-based prevention programs to ensure that you are selecting the program that is the best fit for your community and available resources. This tool is intended to help you plan for the implementation of an evidence-based program with a commitment to quality and long-term sustainability.

Program Selection

Is PATHS® a good fit for your community? While researching and comparing possible programs, consider the following information to determine if PATHS® is the best fit for the community.

1. Are these the risk and protective factors identified and/or prioritized by your community?

PATHS® Targeted Risk Factors	PATHS® Targeted Protective Factors
Aggressive behavior	Emotional awareness and understanding
Impulsive behavior	Emotional regulation
Poor problem solving skills	Social skills
Poor social skills	Problem solving
Early initiation and persistent antisocial behavior	School opportunities for prosocial involvement
Poor academic performance	School rewards for prosocial involvement
Low school commitment	Interaction with prosocial peers
Favorable attitudes towards antisocial behavior	

2. Is PATHS® appropriate for the population you plan to target?

PATHS® is intended to be taught to children in Preschool through Grade 6 as part of the regular school day.

3. What are the outcomes you intend to change in your targeted population?

PATHS® has been shown to have the following outcomes:

Short-term:

- Improved Emotion Knowledge & Awareness
- Improved Self-Control
- Improved Social Problem Solving
- Improved Social & Emotional Skills
- Improved Cognitive Abilities (Executive Functions)

Long-term:

- Improved School Readiness
- Reduced Antisocial Behavior

Implementation Planning Steps

4. Is it feasible for you to invest in the following key elements BEFORE PATHS® is implemented?

- **Teacher Buy In:** Education for teachers as to what the program is, how it will be implemented, what the expectations are for implementing, and what type of support they will receive via a PATHS® coach, administrators, and support staff. This is extremely important and should occur **BEFORE** teacher training days.
- **Teacher training days:** It is vital to train all teachers who will be implementing, as well as itinerant teachers, guidance counselors, school psychologists and other professional staff that work with students regularly.
- **Principal training days:** Principal/Administrators should be trained to be able to understand the program and support students in learning social emotional skills as well as support teacher implementation.
- **Support Staff training:** Classroom assistants, cafeteria staff, and other support staff people in the building should receive at least a ½ day of PATHS® training to understand how to support students learning social emotional skills.
- **Administrative Support:** School administrators should develop a plan for supporting teachers and creating a school-wide PATHS® atmosphere of all adults using common language and strategies with children to address social emotional issues and problem solving.
- **PATHS® Affiliate Trainer:** Developing PATHS® Affiliate Trainers supports fidelity and sustainability of the program. The overarching goal of PATHS® Affiliate Trainers are to facilitate teachers' use of PATHS® with fidelity. To achieve this goal, the Affiliate Trainer(s) builds a relationship with the teacher, observes the teacher in the classroom, and provides ongoing support, monitoring and feedback related to the teacher's implementation. Affiliate Trainers will also meet with school administrators on a regular basis in order to support school-wide

implementation. Districts or organizations should consider the role of a PATHS® Affiliate Trainer as part of their initial planning and implementation. A PATHS® Affiliate Trainer works closely with a PATHS® Coach to lead many strategies that support quality implementation such as goal setting, reflective discussion, feedback, problem solving individual or classroom issues, planning, and providing resources. PATHS® Coaches help to build expertise within a district or organization to support longer term sustainability. (See sustainability section for obtaining information on how to develop an Affiliate Trainer information). For more information about planning for a PATHS® Affiliate Trainer, please contact Dorothy Morelli at dorothygm@hotmail.com

- **Academic Connections:** The School/District Curriculum Director should work with the district’s principals to determine when PATHS® will be taught and what the specific plan is for each school.
- **Curriculum:** Grade appropriate materials need to be provided for each classroom. Curriculum materials can be purchased at <https://pathsprogram.com/>
- **Budget:** A budget for annual expenses beyond the initial training and purchase of materials should be developed and incorporated into the school/district annual budget.
- **Data collection and analysis plan:** Determine the following: When evaluations (pre and post surveys) will be completed by teachers for students receiving PATHS®. Who will be responsible for distributing and collecting the surveys? Who will be responsible for data entry? Who will be responsible for analyzing and reporting the data results?

Implementation Steps

5. Can these expectations for quality and dosage be met within the existing structure and with the existing resources?

- Two 6 hour training days spaced 8-12 weeks apart
- Appropriate time provided for lesson preparation
- Grade level lessons taught in order 2-3 times per week 20-30 minutes per lesson by classroom teacher(s)
- PATHS® Kid of the Day completed every day
- Enrichment activities delivered to reinforce lesson topics by classroom teacher(s)
- Academic integration with other subject matter by classroom teacher(s) and itinerant teachers
- Generalization of PATHS® concepts during regular school day by classroom teacher(s), itinerant teachers, support staff and administrators

Steps for Assessing Program Impact

6. Does the school have the capacity to collect outcomes data and to monitor program fidelity?

Data collection:

- Pre-Surveys completed by teachers before curriculum is taught each year.
- Post-Surveys completed by teachers at the end of each school year.
- Annual Teacher surveys completed by teachers at the end of each school year.

Data entry/analysis and PCCD reporting:

- A person(s) designated to take completed student surveys and enter them into the PATHS® Spreadsheet for Outcomes Analysis.
- A person(s) designated to complete quarterly reporting requirements for PCCD (if grant-funded).

Fidelity of Implementation:

- Fidelity of Implementation Forms are completed by teachers and trained classroom visitors. These forms are entered into the PATHS® Spreadsheet to inform PATHS® Coaches, PATHS® Affiliate Trainers in development, and the school on the quality of program delivery.
- Teachers are encouraged to complete 4 Fidelity of Implementation Forms throughout the school year (2 in the fall, 1 in the winter, 1 in the spring).
- It is recommended for an individual(s), trained in PATHS®, to visit classrooms throughout the school year and complete Fidelity of Implementation Forms. These forms should not be filled out in the classroom, but rather, after the visit has occurred.
- School Principals/Administrators should plan for group time to discuss implementation challenges and successes as part of regular monthly staff meetings and/or grade level teacher planning meetings.

All EPIS data collection resources for PATHS® can be found here: <https://epis.psu.edu/ebp/paths>

Steps for Sustainability

7. Can funds/resources be identified to sustain key implementation elements of the program beyond the initial seed funding? Make sure to carefully consider and designate those responsible for sustainability planning and securing funds/resources.

- Will PATHS® program supply costs be built into the school/district annual budget?
- Will there be funds to provide annual booster training to PATHS® teachers?
- Will there be funds to provide annual training for new teachers and staff?
- Will there be capacity to continue to support a PATHS® Affiliate Trainer?
- Will there be capacity to support an Affiliate Trainer to provide annual training?
- Will there be capacity to purchase/print evaluation tools and analyze outcomes data?
- Will there be capacity to continue to support staff time to conduct observations and monitor implementation quality?

Addressing Challenges during Implementation

8. **By carefully pre-planning PATHS® implementation you will be addressing most of the common barriers encountered, however, it is still important to develop a plan for addressing day to day challenges before starting PATHS®.**
- Who will be the main point of contact in each school when a teacher has question related to PATHS®?
 - Who will be the contact person with the PATHS® trainer to relay questions and answers to teachers and staff?
 - How will school administrators and/or coaches address teachers who are struggling with implementation? What resources will be made available to these teachers?

Additional assistance and resources for implementing PATHS® can be obtained by contacting the Penn State EPIS Implementation Specialist Team at 814-863-2568.

