Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies

Program Summary

The Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) Curriculum is a program for educators and school staff designed to facilitate the development of self-control, positive self-esteem, emotional awareness, and interpersonal problem solving skills. PATHS has been used, researched, and found effective with classrooms of students as a prevention program or with a specific target population such as special needs students as an intervention program. The purposes of the PATHS Curriculum are to enhance social and emotional competence and understanding in children, as well as develop a caring, prosocial context that facilitates educational processes in the classroom.

An effective social-emotional cognitive program is important because children frequently have difficulties with self-control, self-esteem, affective understanding, social problem solving, and peer relations. The PATHS curriculum provides teachers and school staff with a systematic developmental procedure for enhancing social competence and understanding in children. More specifically, PATHS addresses the following goals in the areas of social-emotional development:

- Increased self-control.
- Enhanced self-esteem, self-confidence, and the ability to give and receive compliments.
- Increased understanding and use of the vocabulary of emotions, verbal mediation, dialoguing, and interpersonal communication.
- Improved ability to recognize and interpret the differences between feelings, behaviors, and perspectives of self and others.
- Understanding of attributional processes that lead to an appropriate sense of self-responsibility.
- Recognition and understanding of how one’s behaviors affect others.
- Enhanced motivation and use of creativity.
- Increased understanding and use of logical reasoning and problem solving vocabulary.
- Improved knowledge of, and skill in, the steps of social problem solving-leading to the prevention and/or resolution of problems and conflicts in daily life.

The foundation of the PATHS Curriculum is a theoretical model titled the ABCD Model of Development. The model shows that social-emotional competence requires skill development in each area of emotional, behavioral, and thinking skills. It is also essential that a child learn to integrate these skills. The model proposes that to fully understand one’s own behaviors, those of another person, or interpersonal interactions, it is necessary to take emotions, thoughts, communication skills, and so forth, into account.

A basic premise is that effective coping requires the child to inhibit their first impulsive reaction, identify their feelings and listen to any others involved, define the problem, and discuss the best plan of action.

The ABCD Model of Development has four components that are necessary for successful coping and adaptation. Each component of the ABCD Model of Development is outlined below.
Affective

• Ability to understand your emotions
• Ability to control your emotions.

Behavioral

• Ability to control your behaviors
• Appropriate behavioral skills

Cognitive

• Analytical/Logical reasoning skills
• Independent thinking (Decision making, responsibility for solving own problems)

Dynamic

• Positive self-esteem
• Healthy personality development

The PATHS Curriculum fosters an environment where children can become independent thinkers who will feel internally motivated to “do the right thing,” because they understand why it is important. Children can improve their behaviors because they believe they should (and are capable of doing so) not solely because an external authority believes this. PATHS encourages development of an internal basis for self-control, interpersonal interactions, decision making, and so forth. To achieve this goal, children must learn to think and reason for themselves.

Background on the Developer & History of the Program

PATHS was originally developed over 30 years ago by Carol A. Kusché, Ph.D. and Mark T. Greenberg, Ph.D. to help deaf children express their emotions. The original curriculum was contained in six volumes that cover four conceptual units, Readiness and Self-Control (One Volume), Feelings and Relationships (Three Volumes), Problem-Solving (One Volume) and a Supplementary Lessons Unit (One Volume). A new version of the PATHS curriculum was released in early 2011 and is now organized into grade-specific classroom modules.

Preschool PATHS was an adaptation of PATHS created in 1994 authored by Mark T. Greenberg, Ph.D. and Carol A. Kusche, Ph.D., Celene Domitrovich Ph.D., and Rebecca C. Cortes, Ph.D. in collaboration with Headstart directors and master teachers.

Carol Kusché, Ph.D., is a clinical associate professor at the University of Washington and a faculty member at the Seattle Psychoanalytic Society and Institute and the Northwest Center for Psychoanalysis.

Mark Greenberg, Ph.D., is the former director of the Prevention Research Center for the Promotion of Human Development and the Bennett Chair of Prevention Research at Pennsylvania State University, and a co-recipient of the Distinguished Contributions to Public Policy for Children Award from the Society for Research in Child Development.
Kusché and Greenberg are among an elite group of pioneering researchers in prevention science, and have been consistently recognized for their achievements in the field. Dr. Greenberg was also honored with the prestigious Society of Prevention Research’s 2002 Prevention Science Award.

Celene Domitrovich Ph.D. is a child-clinical psychologist who has been working in the field of prevention research since 1993. She is the lead author of PreK/K PATHS® Curriculum and has been involved in several research studies to determine its effectiveness.

Rebecca C. Cortes, Ph.D. has been working in the fields of Developmental Psychology and Prevention Science since 1997. She has worked in various roles at the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington where her focus has been on the prevention of mental health problems in young children. Rebecca is one of the authors of the PreK/K PATHS® Curriculum and has been a PATHS™ trainer for the last 10 years.

**National and Global Recognitions**

- **SAMHSA’s National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP)**
  The PATHS curriculum is one of only 12 SAMHSA Model Programs that have documented Academic Achievement outcomes and is one of only two programs designed for children ages 5-12. PATHS also received a perfect score on its program materials and a near perfect score of 3.6 points out of 4 for dissemination in SAMHSA’s National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP).

- **Blueprints Project of the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, University of Colorado**
  PATHS is one of 11 programs to achieve the highest possible rating of “Model” program and is the only violence-prevention curriculum for elementary children to achieve this rating.
  [http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/modelprograms/PATHS.html](http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/modelprograms/PATHS.html)

- **Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)**
  PATHS has been designated as a “CASEL Select” program because it provides outstanding coverage in five essential SEL skill areas (self-awareness, regulation of emotions, social awareness, good relationship skills, and responsible decision-making); has at least one well-designed evaluation study demonstrating its effectiveness; and offers professional development supports beyond the initial training.

**Other Recognitions**

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)-Best Practices Program
- U.S. Dept. of Education, Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program’s Expert Panel-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
- National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)-Recognized for its effectiveness
Logic Model & Theoretical Rationale

A logic model is a way to visually represent the underlying rationale for the behavioral changes associated with an evidence-based program, and it explains how and why the program is effective.

A logic model shows how specific program components or activities influence risk and protective factors and the skills, knowledge, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors of the program participants, both immediately following the program (short-term or proximal outcomes) and in later years (long-term or distal outcomes). The logic model for a program is based on an established theory of how specific risk and protective factors are related to youth development. Typically, a program’s components are designed to increase certain protective factors and decrease certain risk factors that have been shown through research to predict future development.

PATHS is grounded in the science of children's brain development, which has determined that children experience and react to strong emotions before developing the cognitive abilities to verbalize them. By teaching specific strategies and skills in the five domains of social and emotional development (self-control, emotional understanding, positive self-esteem, relationships and interpersonal problem-solving skills), PATHS has been shown to improve emotion knowledge & awareness, self-control, social problem solving as well as reducing antisocial behavior, and improve cognitive abilities (executive functions).

The PATHS Logic Model developed by the EPISCenter in collaboration with the program developers can be found on-line at [http://www.episcenter.psu.edu/ebp/althinking](http://www.episcenter.psu.edu/ebp/althinking).
Targeted Risk and Protective Factors

During research studies, the Promoting Alternative THinking Strategies (PATHS) curriculum has been shown to improve protective factors such as self-control, understanding and recognition of emotions, ability to tolerate frustration, more efficient conflict-resolution strategies, and thinking and planning skills. The PATHS curriculum has also been shown to directly impact behavioral and emotional difficulties. Replicated findings show decreases in externalizing symptoms (aggression, hyper-active disruptive behavior) and internalizing (anxiety/depressive symptoms), and improvement in peer relations, and academic engagement in the classroom.

Targeted Risk Factors

- Aggressive Behavior
- Impulsive Behavior
- Poor problem solving skills
- Poor social skills
- Early initiation and persistent antisocial behavior
- Poor academic performance
- Low school commitment
- Favorable attitudes toward antisocial behavior

Targeted Protective Factors

- Emotional awareness and understanding
- Emotional regulation
- Social skills
- Problem solving
- School opportunities for prosocial involvement
- School rewards for prosocial involvement
- Interaction with prosocial peers

Goals & Demonstrated Outcomes

In rigorous clinical studies*, the Promoting Alternative THinking Strategies (PATHS) curriculum has been shown to:

- reduce teachers' reports of students exhibiting aggressive behavior by 32 percent,
- increase teachers' reports of students exhibiting self-control by 36 percent,
- increase reports of prosocial peer relations,
- significantly improve students' ability to tolerate frustration,
- increase students' scores on cognitive skills tests by 20 percent,
- increase students' vocabulary for emotions by 68 percent,
- increase students' ability to use effective conflict resolution strategies, and
- reduce depression and sadness among special-needs students.
*at one- or two-year follow-up, compared to matched-comparison children

The following is a select bibliography of reference materials for PATHS:


Additional Research Articles

- Prevention Research Center http://www.prevention.psu.edu/projects/PATHSPublications.html
- PATHS Training Website: https://pathsprogram.com/research

Return on Investment and Cost-benefit Information

An Explanation of Return on Investment Calculations

A cost-effective prevention program is doubly appealing from a societal standpoint, as such a program can successfully prevent or reduce delinquency and problem behaviors in youth and it results in a future reduction in the financial burden of interventions to taxpayers. For example, a program that diverts a youth from a criminal path will spare society the justice system expenses associated with processing offenses, such as police, court, and prison costs. In such a case, the necessary resources for the prevention program are worth the investment as they prevent other future expenses. In addition, cost-effective prevention programs have now been shown to also provide a return-on-investment or fiscal benefits above and beyond the program costs for taxpayers.

In 2004, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy conducted cost-benefit analyses for a variety of prevention programs by calculating the economic benefits derived from specific prevention programs and subtracting the costs incurred to implement the programs. The scientifically rigorous review and analysis provided credible evidence that well implemented prevention efforts can result in a significant return on investment.
To conduct cost-benefit analyses, monetary values are assigned to observed changes that are attributed to prevention programs in the following key outcomes:

- Crime (such as costs to process an arrest, prosecutor costs, victim costs, detention and supervision costs, prison operation expenses)
- Education (graduation rates, test scores, post-high school education, special education rates, grade repetition)
- Employment rates and earning potential
- Substance use (abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs)
- Public assistance (including welfare receipt or social services such as foster care)
- Teen birth rates
- Child abuse and neglect
- Health and mental health service needs

To view a chart of the economic benefits of prevention programs and for more information on return on investment research, please see the Return on Investment subsection in Section Three of this Guide.

The potential economic benefits of a successful prevention or intervention program can be readily demonstrated to policymakers and the public in general. Programs that both reduce problems identified by local communities while also reducing costs to society are especially important as state and local governments become more accountable for both costs and outcomes. Given typical budget constraints, policymakers seek to fund crime prevention programs that will at least “pay for themselves” while delivering necessary services to their community. It is important for prevention programs to communicate the return-on-investment figures derived by economic experts and their locally assessed impacts.

Click on the link to read a full report on Pennsylvania’s efforts to capture cost benefit information for prevention programs: The Economic Return on PCCD’s Investment in Research-based Programs: A Cost-Benefit of Delinquency Prevention in Pennsylvania

**Delivery, Administrator, and Support Staff Roles**

The Promoting Alternative THinking Strategies (PATHS) curriculum was designed to be taught by the classroom teacher; however, it is very important to have additional implementation supports to enhance the transfer of learning from the classroom to other areas in the students’ school and home life.

The school psychologist or counselor, the school and district administrators, and the support staff within each school building are crucial to creating a community like PATHS atmosphere in a school and the likelihood of positive outcomes for students. That is not to say that you cannot have success without these supports, but these supports make implementation easier.

The school psychologist or counselor can often be an underutilized resource for classroom teachers if they are trained in PATHS. Having the school psychologist or counselor familiar with the PATHS Curriculum and possibly available to observe or co-teach lessons and give help and feedback can be a
tremendous asset to a school. This person can also be key to training new teachers to use PATHS as well as answer questions and discuss difficult issues with teachers.

The school administrators are able to support PATHS in several ways. They can provide positive incentives to teachers for using PATHS, promote positive attitude about PATHS among parents and community members, encourage discussions of PATHS implementation during staff meetings, reinforce PATHS concepts with students both privately (during one on one discussions) and publicly (e.g. school assemblies), and provide funds within the school budget to support and sustain implementation. A PATHS Principal Manual is available on the EPISCenter website: [http://www.episcenter.psu.edu/ebp/altthinking/schoolandclass](http://www.episcenter.psu.edu/ebp/altthinking/schoolandclass)

It is also important to have lunch supervisors, playground monitors, classroom aides, bus drivers, and other school personnel who have regular contact with students familiar with PATHS and the key concepts that students are learning as well as how to apply these concepts to everyday situations students will experience. For example, a brief in-service training on how to use the Control Signals Poster which will be visible around the school can help students transfer their classroom learning to the playground, cafeteria, and other school settings.

A PATHS Coach is a support person locally hired by the site to help administrators, teachers, and support staff begin PATHS implementation. The coach can create resources to support implementation for teachers, model integrating PATHS into curriculum areas such as language arts, math, science, and social studies, and provide general support for data collection, and supply coordination. A PATHS Coach can also help to educate parents about PATHS.

**Training**

Two models are recommended for Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) curriculum training. Each site should consult with their PATHS trainer to determine the best model for their site.

- **Model One**
  Two day teacher training at the beginning of PATHS implementation and a one day teacher booster/follow up session after 4-6 months of implementation.

- **Model Two**
  Two day teacher training within a month to six weeks of each other at the beginning of PATHS implementation and a booster/follow up session after 4-6 months of implementation.

It is recommended that all school support staff and administrators also attend PATHS training. For school administrators, the full two day training is recommended. Support staff can be included as participants in the two day trainings or be scheduled for a separate training that is tailored for the site’s specific needs.

Contact Dorothy Morelli, SEL Worldwide at 615-364-6606 or dorothy@selworldwide.org for the current training rate for a two day training workshop with a maximum of 30 teachers plus travel expenses and per diem.

Booster or follow up trainings are recommended for all teachers implementing PATHS annually to enhance their knowledge of PATHS and strengthen their implementation and troubleshoot challenges.
All training workshops are led by certified, experienced trainers who help participants gain in-depth knowledge of the program's contents and intended goals. There are certified PATHS trainers in Pennsylvania; however, training requests are coordinated by Dorothy Morelli, SEL Worldwide at (615) 364-6606 or dorothy@selworldwide.org.

**Program Costs**

Below is a list of expenses that are important to consider when implementing PATHS. A budget worksheet to help sites determine ongoing costs beyond the initial startup costs can be found on the EPISCenter website, http://www.episcenter.psu.edu/ebp/altheadthinking/resourcesandarticles

- **A PATHS grade level program kit for each teacher:**
  - Preschool/Kindergarten: $879 (Includes instructor’s manual, curriculum manual, storybooks, puppets, our feelings chart, posters, “feeling faces” cards, stickers, coloring books, and a CD with family communication and support materials)
  - First Grade: $669 (Includes instructor’s manual, curriculum manual, turtle puppet, our feelings chart, posters, “feeling faces” cards, stickers, “Remember To Do Turtle” window clings, and CD with family communication and support materials)
  - Second Grade: $489 (Includes instructor’s manual, curriculum manual, our feelings chart, “feeling faces” cards, posters, stickers, “Control Signals” window clings, and CD with family communication and support materials)
  - Third Grade: $439 (Includes instructor’s manual, curriculum manual, posters, stickers, “How Are You Feeling” window clings, and CD with family communication and support materials)
  - Fourth Grade: $489 (Includes instructor’s manual, curriculum manual, 4 novels, posters, “Step by Step, Problem Solved” window clings, and CD with family communication and support materials)
  - Fifth/Sixth Grade: $519 (Includes instructor’s manual, curriculum manual, 4 novels, posters, “Talk About Bullying” window clings, and CD with family communication and support materials)

- **Initial training for all teachers.** Please contact Dorothy Morelli, SEL Worldwide at dorothy@selworldwide.org for an estimated training cost for your site.

- **A follow up or booster training for all teachers annually.** Please contact Dorothy Morelli, SEL Worldwide at dorothy@selworldwide.org for the current training rate.

- **Training for school administrators, itinerant teachers, guidance counselors, and support staff.** This can be scheduled in conjunction with the initial teacher training or for a separate time.

- **Ongoing Consultation with PATHS trainer.** $50/hour approximately two times per month.

- **Yearly copies of Feelings Faces Cards for grades K-2.** Feelings Faces Cards are given to students to help them recognize and be aware of how they are feeling at certain times of the school day. These copies are made on cardstock. Budget for this expense annually.

- **Rings for Feeling Faces Cards for grades K-2.** Rings for students to keep their feeling faces together. Budget for this expense annually.
• **Copies of Parent Letters Home & Home Activities.** With each PATHS lesson there is a parent letter and/or home activity that needs to be copied for each student. Plan to make these copies for each class implementing PATHS each year. Budget for this expense annually.

• **Extra posters.** It is important to have visual reminders for students of the PATHS concepts. Also, it is helpful for administrators, guidance counselors, and itinerant teachers to use the posters in their interactions with students.

• **Books from the Bibliography List.** (Optional, but strongly encouraged). PATHS integrates well in most schools’ language arts curriculum and it would be helpful for teachers to have access to books about feelings and problem solving. Refer to the Bibliography list for books that would be relevant to PATHS. Books could be housed in the school library or books could be purchased for individual teachers or grade levels.

• **PATHS Coach** (Optional, but strongly encouraged). A PATHS Coach is a support person locally hired by the site to help administrators, teachers, and support staff begin PATHS implementation. The coach can create resources to support implementation for teachers, model integrating PATHS into curriculum areas such as language arts, math, science, and social studies, and provide general support for data collection, and supply coordination.

• **Funding to hire a local evaluator at the site’s discretion.** The EPISCenter provides funded sites with a spreadsheet for calculation of measures for reporting outcomes to the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. Sites may consider identifying an evaluator for additional evaluation services, if desired.

• **Verification of implementation quality visit by developer or designee.** PCCD funded sites are required to have the implementation quality of their program verified by the developer or trainer in year two of their grant. The Quality Assurance Review Process for PATHS is outlined [here](https://shop.pathsprogram.com/).

An estimated cost for one visit with the grantee’s overall program coordinator for PATHS is approximately $2000 per day through SEL Worldwide. In addition to travel costs that include airfare or mileage, hotel, airport parking, and per diem of $50.00. Each site should contact Dorothy Morelli, SEL Worldwide at 615-364-6606 or [dorothy@selworldwide.org](mailto:dorothy@selworldwide.org).

Please be aware that a developer or designee may require visits to multiple sites to verify sufficient implementation quality. Potential grantees **need to contact the developer or designee** to get an estimate of the travel and time expenses for the verification of implementation quality visit for their specific site and include that cost in their budget for the second year of grant funding.

PATHS curriculum costs as of August 2018. Please refer to the PATHS Program website for current curriculum costs. [https://shop.pathsprogram.com/](https://shop.pathsprogram.com/)

### Implementation Planning

Promoting Alternative THinking Strategies (PATHS) curriculum lessons are designed to be taught approximately two times per week during the school year depending on the grade level and the amount of lessons at each grade level and the concepts and reinforcement occur on a daily basis. Each site will work with their certified trainer to determine the best timeline for implementation that works most effectively for them and may depend on funding availability and training availability. It is optimal to begin PATHS at the beginning of a school year; however, this is always not feasible due to
funding or training issues. PATHS has been successful been started mid-school year in many cases and extra assistance is given to the site by their certified PATHS trainer to develop a plan for when this as necessary.

Here are some possible scenarios of how to implement the PATHS curriculum:

• **Scenario 1:**
  - Year 1-Pre-K, K, and Grade 1 teachers trained and begin implementation.
  - Year 2-Grade 2 and Grade 3 teachers trained and begin implementation.
  - Year 3-Grade 4 and Grade 5 teachers trained and begin implementation.
  - Scenario 1 allows students to learn basic PATHS concepts and each year build on those basic concepts without having to add review and supports for older elementary age youth.

• **Scenario 2:**
  - Year 1-Grade K-2 teachers trained and begin implementation.
  - Year 2-Grade 3-5 teachers trained and begin implementation.
  - Scenario 2 will require that the site build in supports for youth so that they understand the basic concepts before moving into the lessons for their grade level. A scope and sequence for each grade level can be developed with the help of the site’s certified PATHS trainer.

**Description of Outcomes Assessment Process**

In order to get the most out of Promoting Alternative THinking Strategies (PATHS) curriculum, it is important to monitor the process as you implement the curriculum. You should prepare for and evaluate how well PATHS is received by youth, changes in youth behavior, how closely the lessons are being taught to their original design (fidelity), and the perceptions or satisfaction of the teachers teaching the curriculum.

Below is the list of evaluation tools required by the Penn State EPISCenter to collect the outcomes needed to report to PCCD for the PATHS program:

• **EPISCenter PATHS Student Survey (Pre and Post)**
  Used to evaluate student behavior and student engagement with the PATHS lessons. These surveys are completed by classroom teachers for each student participating in PATHS. The PATHS Pre student survey should be completed prior to program implementation and the PATHS Post student survey should be completed at the end of each school year or after the last PATHS lesson has been completed for the year.

• **EPISCenter PATHS Annual Teacher Survey**
  Used to gather feedback from teachers on their experience using the curriculum and the number of students served. This survey is completed one time each year at the end of the school year.

• **EPISCenter PATHS Program Monitoring Form**
  Used to review whether or not the key concepts of PATHS are being taught during the lessons
and students are engaged in the PATHS lessons. This form is used by a trained PATHS observer for approximately 20% of the PATHS lessons taught.

- **EPISCenter PATHS Administrative Support Form**
  Used to gauge administrative support of PATHS implementation. This form is completed one time at the end of each school year.

- **EPISCenter PATHS Discipline Referral Tracking Form**
  Used to track the number and type of discipline referrals for students receiving the PATHS curriculum. This form is completed each quarter.

It is important to have a plan in place for collecting outcomes data before beginning implementation of the PATHS Curriculum. You may obtain copies of these tools by contacting the EPISCenter at 814-863-2568 or download them from the EPISCenter’s website at [http://www.episcenter.psu.edu/ebp/altthinking/evaltools](http://www.episcenter.psu.edu/ebp/altthinking/evaltools).

Staff at the EPISCenter is also available for help in developing a plan and timeline for outcomes data collection.

PCCD funded sites are also expected to monitor implementation quality and fidelity to measure how closely the program is being implemented according to the developer’s original design and recommendations. Fidelity observations are to be conducted by an observer who has been trained in the PATHS program using the [EPISCenter PATHS Fidelity Observation Tool](http://www.episcenter.psu.edu).

The EPISCenter provides funded sites with a spreadsheet for calculation of measures for reporting outcomes to the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. Sites may consider identifying an evaluator for additional evaluation services, if desired.

**Optional**

There is also an Implementation Record and Evaluation that is part of the developer’s evaluation toolkit that can also be used by teachers to record how effectively a PATHS lesson was taught. Using this record can be helpful in strategizing how to implement lessons more effectively once you have identified challenges. It gives information for sharing ideas for implementing lessons more effectively with other teachers. The Implementation Record and Evaluation is available in the PATHS Evaluation Toolkit. (See below for link)

**NOTE:** If you are non-funded PCCD site implementing PATHS, there is a PATHS Evaluation Toolkit from the developer to collect outcomes data. The Toolkit includes instructions for using the evaluation tools, scoring student evaluations, evaluating changes in student behavior, and reporting on class progress. Below is the email address to contact PATHS for additional information on obtaining this toolkit:

[Info@pathsprogram.com](mailto:Info@pathsprogram.com)

**Fidelity Recommendations**

With any evidence based program, it is important to develop a plan to monitor implementation quality or adherence of fidelity to the model of the original program that has been researched and tested for effectiveness. Monitoring implementation quality will increase the likelihood that a site will achieve the same positive outcomes as found with the program developer’s original research.
Sites are expected to monitor implementation quality and fidelity. Fidelity observations are to be conducted by an observer who has been trained in Promoting Alternative THInking Strategies (PATHS) curriculum. It is important to note that observing PATHS lessons are not meant to be a critique of a teacher’s teaching skills but rather an observation of the student’s engagement with the PATHS lessons and their understanding of the concepts.

The EPISCenter PATHS Program Monitoring Form is the observation tool used for assessing implementation quality for PATHS. In addition to lesson observation, the tool is used to capture whether or not a teacher models and generalizes PATHS topics to build a caring classroom structure through teacher relationship and classroom atmosphere. While teaching PATHS lessons is important, it is equally if not more important to give students “real life” practice in learning the concepts and utilize teachable moments beyond lessons. Classrooms are also assessed in student engagement in the lessons and whether or not the students are familiar with the PATHS concepts in general. An overall global rating is then assigned to each classroom. It is expected that observations are completed on approximately 20% of PATHS lessons taught.

**Addressing Common Barriers to Implementation**

It is acknowledged that with implementing Promoting Alternative THInking Strategies (PATHS) curriculum or any evidence based program, there can be barriers that may make it more difficult to implement PATHS with good quality. Some of the barriers that have been identified are listed below. Planning for these in advance can help schools avoid some implementation challenges and promote long term sustainability.

One common issue with PATHS program implementation is teacher buy-in and lack of administrative support both of which are crucial to successful PATHS implementation. It is important to pre-plan with the Director of Curriculum for your school district on how to address this issue. Demonstrating the connection between the PATHS program and the PA Department of Education’s Academic Standards and the ease of integrating the PATHS program into multiple academic areas helps to create buy in with both teachers and administrators. The PATHS program can help students meet the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts, the American School Counselor Association standards for academic, career, and personal/social development, and the Head Start Standards of Performance. Resources to support these standards can be found on the PATHS Program website. https://pathsprogram.com/

It is also important to emphasize how the PATHS program creates a positive classroom and school climate and therefore lessens the need for behavior management in the classroom and more time is available to be spent on learning.

Administrative support for implementation is crucial to successful PATHS implementation. If you are a principal/administrator considering implementing PATHS in your school, review this PATHS Elementary School Principal’s Guide to understand how you can best support teachers and staff.

Getting all staff in a school engaged in PATHS implementation is another common barrier. Generalizing PATHS concepts throughout the school day is an integral part of the program and having all staff know and using the general PATHS concepts for identifying feelings, stopping to calm down and problem solving is important so that students are being given consistent messages.
Other common barriers that need to be addressed in the planning stages are creating a system for collecting data, developing a system for fidelity observations, and engaging parents. Consulting with your PATHS trainer will help you address any specific concerns related to barriers to implementation for your site.

**Involving Your Collaborative Board and Other Stakeholders**

**Local Collaborative Boards:**
Local collaborative boards can play an important role in program development and sustainability. A collaborative board can be defined as a board of diverse community partners who work together to organize, plan, and implement prevention strategies. Examples of collaborative boards include but are not limited to: Integrated Children’s Service Plans (ICSP); Communities That Care (CTC) Delinquency Prevention Policy Boards; Balanced and Restorative Justice Teams; State Health Improvement Coalitions; State Incentive Grant Planning Boards; Criminal Justice Advisory Boards; and Weed and Seed Assistance for Impact Delegation (AID) Teams or other collaborative boards, including those established to focus on implementing healthy community objectives. It has been demonstrated that those prevention programs planned and implemented through a collaborative board structure are more likely to be implemented with fidelity and more likely to be sustained. Consequently, providers benefit from identifying and working with their local collaborative board when planning PATHS and throughout implementation.

Creating and maintaining a relationship with a Collaborative Board has been shown through research to support sustainability for evidence-based program implementation. Things to consider in establishing a relationship with a Collaborative Board and suggestions for reporting can be found here:

**Other Resources for Program Information**

- [https://pathsprogram.com/](https://pathsprogram.com/)
  The website of the publisher of the Promoting Alternative THinking Strategies Program. This website includes social emotional learning resources, a detailed look at the PATHS program, research and support and resources for current users of PATHS.

- [https://www.selworldwide.org/](https://www.selworldwide.org/)
  The PATHS Training Website has detailed information about the trainers.

- [http://www.episcenter.psu.edu/ebp/altthinking](http://www.episcenter.psu.edu/ebp/altthinking)
  The EPISCENTER website has resources and support for both PCCD funded and non-PCCD funded PATHS sites. Logic model, evaluation tools, resources for schools and classrooms are just a few of the resources available here.

**Citations**