


From "Evidence to Action"

Presentation at ASI,  
Charlottetown, PEI 2017-08-22



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Objectives

1. You have 5 minutes to meet with the Deputy Minister. What will she ask you? What will you say?
2. The SEL toolkit for Nova Scotia: an example of 'Knowledge to Action'
3. 'Take-home' messages



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What will the DM ask?

- What does your program/activity aim to do and why is that important (to me or to my department)?
- How do I know that your program actually does what it claims ?
- What will I get for my investment (or what do I have to give up to make sure your program can be implemented)?



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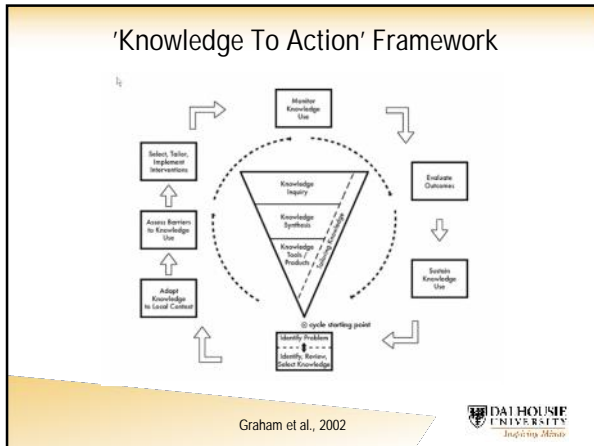
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### Identify a problem that needs addressing

Disruptive behaviours (e.g., bullying and conduct problems) are harming children and reducing impact of education.

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### Adapt the identified knowledge or research to the local context

- Survey of practices in NS schools
- Identified
  - ▶ 30 programs used by schools to address social and emotional issues
  - ▶ Most chosen by asking colleagues for recommendations
  - ▶ Almost no evaluation

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### Assess barriers to using the knowledge

- Discussion with DOE officials and school administrators
- Findings
  - ▶ No time
  - ▶ No money
  - ▶ Sources of info tough to digest
  - ▶ Immediate crises take up time
  - ▶ Public priorities
    - current emphasis: literacy and numeracy
    - social-emotional skills are seen as a 'nice-to-have' not a 'need-to-have'



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### Select, tailor and implement interventions to promote the use of knowledge

- The SEL Toolkit
- Focus on programs already used in NS plus other programs recommended by Toolkit authors
- Balance between scientific credibility and ease of use for end users
- Critique of Evidence is explicit
  - ▶ GRADE approach used
- Recommendations immediately useful to administrators



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### SEL Toolkit



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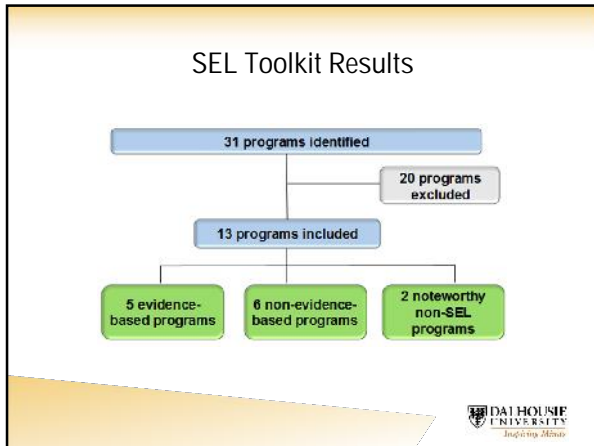
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### Evidence-Based Programs

Program	Target Population	Recommendation
PATHS	K - 6	STRONG
Second Step	K - 8	STRONG
Caring School Community	K - 6	PROVISIONAL
Roots of Empathy	K - 8	PROVISIONAL
The Fourth R	Gr 7 - 12	PROVISIONAL

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### Program recommendation: PATHS

Recommendations/Strong Recommendation Towards the PATHS Program for children, aged 3-12		
Population: School-age children and preschool to grade 3 (ages 3-12)		
Intervention: Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) -5-7-10 Universal Program		
Features	Decision	Explanation
<b>High or moderate quality evidence</b> <i>(to drive high quality evidence)</i>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	There is moderate to high quality evidence suggesting that PATHS increase emotional competence and problem solving skills in the target population. Most studies evaluated all of the usual outcomes of SEL. However, in long-term follow-up studies were conducted to evaluate maintenance. PATHS was shown to be effective for students in general and special education classrooms.
<b>Certainty about the balance of benefits versus downsides</b> <i>(to drive certainty)</i>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	There is certainty that PATHS provides benefits and improvements in emotional awareness in children from low- to middle-income families. There are no sites mentioned for both general and special education classrooms. No studies suggested any evidence of downsides as a direct effect of the PATHS curriculum.
<b>Certainty of similarity in values</b> <i>(to drive certainty)</i>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	There is little to no variability in the values or practices. There is certainty in the values.
<b>Resource implications (are the resources contained worth the expected benefits)</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Minimal and ongoing costs associated with PATHS. Despite minimal resources, all sites realized showed strong positive benefits of the program, and materials can be reused annually. Therefore, the resources contained are worth the expected benefit.
<b>Overall Strength of Recommendation:</b>	A strong recommendation to promote PATHS for social and emotional learning outcomes.	

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**'Knowledge to Action' steps 5 & 6**

- 5. monitor knowledge use
  - no active monitoring in place
  
- 6. evaluate the outcomes of using the knowledge
  - study to compare schools with and without implementation



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**7. Sustain ongoing knowledge use**

- ▶ In 2013, DOE provided \$300,000 funding to support schools that choose a toolkit identified as evidence-based
  - ▶ Continued in 2014 & 2015!!



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**7. Next steps**

- 2017: DOE grant to investigate impact of SEL programs on SEL skills



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### Why did this work?

- Clearly defined specific purpose met immediate need
- Message crafted to be digestible by policy-makers
- Quantitative data about outcomes and costs
- Scientific and transparent methodology
  - ▶ GRADE
  - ▶ 'Bias' and 'random error', the two major 'threats' to proper interpretation of evaluation results, were assessed for each programs



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### Lessons learned

- Relationships count!
  - a "one-off" meeting with a policy maker won't cut it
- Present knowledge in a form that is immediately useful to policymakers.
- Collaborate with policymakers to see that knowledge translated into action.
- Keep it simple & speak to your expertise
  - explain the specific contribution your intervention will make to the over-arching societal goal of optimizing the mental health of children and youth



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Thank you!

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@JohnCleBlanc

SEL Toolkit available  
at: [www.cpssatlantic.ca](http://www.cpssatlantic.ca)



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