

Manitoba Provincial Report

IMPROVING THE EARLY MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF MANITOBA'S CHILDREN: FIRST FINDINGS FROM THE PROVINCEWIDE PILOT AND EVALUATION OF PAX – (updated July 2018)

PAX IN MANITOBA

"In February 2012, the Manitoba Government launched PAX, a first-of-its-kind, province wide pilot project offering Grade 1 teachers the training and tools to help thousands of children develop social, emotional and self-discipline skills. Originally created by an elementary school teacher, PAX has proven to immediately improve the classroom environment by reducing disruptions and allowing for more effective and focused learning. Long-term studies have shown that, after playing PAX just in Grade 1, students do better in school and need fewer special education services." -from the February 28, 2012 Manitoba government News Release

The 2-year, \$1.3 million provincial pilot and evaluation included 200 schools from nearly every school division in Manitoba including First Nation and independent schools. Half of the classrooms started using PAX in the 2011-12 school year and the other half started in the 2012-13 school year. The project involves about 5,000 students and their teachers, with short- and long-term outcomes to be measured over time.



"The great thing about PAX is that it maximizes the potential of our young people right from the start." said Children and Youth Opportunities Minister Kevin Chief, [past] chair of the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet. "When we give kids the tools they need from a young age – tools that teach them self-discipline and team-building – we have seen that they are more likely to stay in school and graduate, they're more likely to avoid drug and alcohol addictions, and they're less likely to be involved in crime. That's exactly what we want for Manitoba's children." - from the February 28, 2012 Manitoba government News Release

What We Need:

Educators across the province, including the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS), the Manitoba School Boards Association (MSBA), the Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS), and the Student Services Administrators' Association of Manitoba (SSAAM) have identified improving children's mental health as a top priority for Manitoba. We need to do this, as early, as widely, and as effectively as possible. Prevention and early intervention is much more powerful and cost-effective than trying to treat the problem after the fact.



INITIAL RESULTS OF PAX ARE VERY PROMISING

How We Did the Pilot and Evaluation in Manitoba:

The initial evaluation results from our provincial PAX pilot are very promising. The pilot is a national first, and is the largest of its kind worldwide. Using a strong scientific design and methods, we were able to measure whether PAX caused any improvements in children's mental health and well-being.

Manitoba used the scientific gold-standard for determining whether a program has effects, which also provides an equal opportunity for all who want to participate to do so. Known as a randomized controlled trial (RCT), this design used a lottery to determine which 100 of the 200 interested schools received the program in the first year of the pilot, and which 100 schools would wait to receive it in the next year, while first serving as a comparison group. Children's mental health outcomes were measured at the beginning and the end of the school year in both groups.

In the RCT design, any differences in outcomes between the two groups can be scientifically attributed to the program.

What We Found:

Compared to children in schools not yet doing PAX, Grade 1 children who participated in PAX:

- ❖ have significantly fewer conduct problems (e.g., bullying other children),
- ❖ have significantly fewer emotional problems (e.g., feeling anxious or depressed),
- ❖ have significantly fewer inattention problems
- ❖ have significantly fewer peer relationship problems (e.g., bullied by other children), and
- ❖ show significantly more prosocial behaviour (e.g., sharing with and helping others)

The data indicate that PAX appears equally effective for boys and girls, and up to twice as effective for Aboriginal children, across all of these outcomes.

All of these improvements in children's mental health resulted from about half-a-school-year of PAX in the classroom, measured using a gold-standard questionnaire completed by teachers.

Previous research suggests that making PAX available from the beginning of the school year can lead to even stronger outcomes.



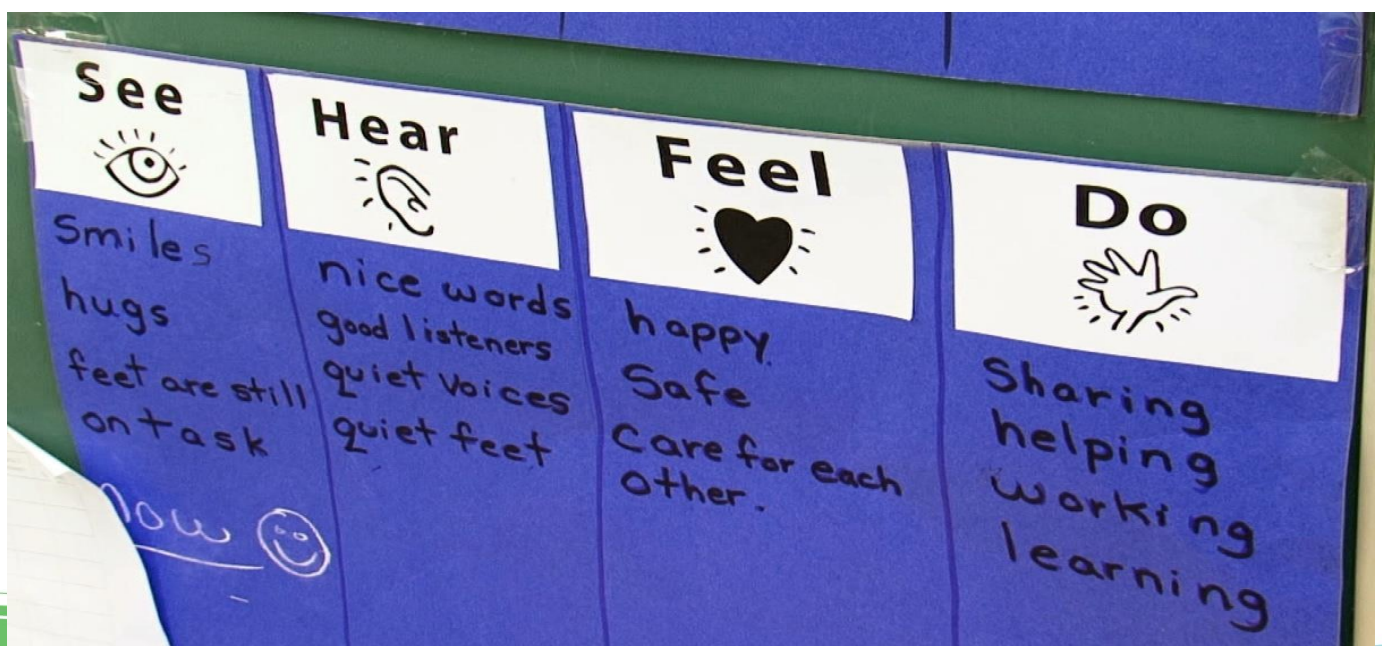
Manitoba's PAX evaluation results are similar to previous research, and also compare favourably to the results from evaluations of other separate programs designed for single, specific problems (e.g., anxiety prevention programs, depression prevention programs, violence prevention programs), with the added advantage of resulting from a single program that can help improve several problems at the same time.

Our province wide PAX pilot and evaluation also confirmed how early we need to promote our children's mental health and well-being. Manitoba teachers are reporting that, provincially, about 40% of our Grade 1 children have some difficulties in their mental health (e.g., emotions, behaviour, attention, and getting along with others).

PAX resulted in significantly fewer children with minor, definite, and severe difficulties in their early mental health. PAX also resulted in more children with *no* reported mental health difficulties by the end of the school year. While these improvements were also observed in the wait-list schools (due to naturally occurring changes in children over time, and other resources already available in schools), the improvements in PAX schools were significantly greater, indicating that PAX adds measurable value to classrooms across Manitoba.

How We Measured the Outcomes: Manitoba used one of the most widely used and well-validated measures of children's mental health, the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), which covers five of the most common and important areas for children: Emotional Symptoms, Conduct Problems, Hyperactivity/Inattention, Peer Relationship Problems, and Prosocial Behaviour. Preferred by parents over other measures, the SDQ can be completed by parents, teachers, or self-completed by older children. The PAX pilot asked teachers from all 200 schools to complete the SDQ for each of their students. Not all teachers were able to complete it both times or for all of the children, but we received enough to complete the initial data analysis.

Manitoba's PAX pilot has reached thousands of children across the province and the initial evaluation results are showing that we can prevent or reduce mental health problems at an early age, particularly for those who are more vulnerable. PAX offers our schools, teachers, and children some of the additional tools they've been asking for and need to help all of our children develop better mental health and well-being



Next Steps in the PAX Pilot and Evaluation:

Over the coming years, Manitoba will continue to follow the longer-term outcomes of PAX, including educational, mental health, and social outcomes as the children grow up in Manitoba. This will help inform ongoing discussions and decisions about improving the mental health of young people in our province.

Cost-Effectiveness: Benefit-cost analyses from the renowned Washington State Institute for Public Policy (updated July 2015) shows a public return of \$65.00 in benefits for every \$1 invested in the PAX Good Behavior Game:

<http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/BenefitCost/Program/82>

Informed by these promising first findings, along with continued requests from schools and school divisions, on May 4, 2015, Children and Youth Opportunities Minister Wight, the chair of the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, announced expansion of PAX to additional Grade 1 classrooms across the province, as part of new funding for the first year of a comprehensive, multi-year Child and Youth Mental Health Strategy:

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?archive=&item=34761>.

“Investments in mental health help children grow up healthy, happy and give them the best chance to succeed in school and beyond,” said Minister Wight. “Together with our community partners, we’re developing a comprehensive strategy that will prevent mental health problems early on and provide effective supports and services for those who need them.” - from the May 4, 2015 Manitoba government News Release

For more information on PAX, please visit the Healthy Child Manitoba website:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/pax/>

Healthy Child Manitoba Office
3rd floor - 332 Bannatyne Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3A 0E2
Phone: 204-945-2266
Toll free: 1-888-848-0140
Fax: 204-948-2585
E-mail: healthychild@gov.mb.ca



Healthy Child Manitoba
Putting children and families first

Manitoba 