

Webinar Transcript : Leading and Staying on Track

- [Susanna] Hello everyone and good afternoon. I know we're still having people trickle in, but I will just get started with the housekeeping today so that we can get right into the meat of the presentation. So thank you for joining us for LD@schools' third webinar for the 2023/24 school year. My name is Susanna Miller and I will be handling all the technical side of things this afternoon. So if anyone is experiencing any difficulties at this time, please contact us using the Q&A box or the chat box at the bottom of your screen and we will do everything we can to assist you. So after the webinar today, we will be sending out the presentation slides, a link to a survey, and that survey really helps provide us with a lot of feedback for planning. So we really do ask that you spend the three minutes filling it out and a webinar recording will also be available in approximately three weeks. If you'd like to have a copy of the slides sooner than that, you can visit our Padlet, which is here on screen. You can use the shortened Bitly link right there. If that's too much for you to type out, I will be cutting and pasting that into the chat once I finish talking here so you can access the slides right away. So again, we ask that if you have any technical issues, you just use these buttons at the bottom of the screen to talk to us and we will do everything we can to help. Just as a note, all the funding for the creation of these webinars was provided by the Ministry of Education. Please note that the views expressed in this webinar are the views of the presenters and do not necessarily reflect those of the Ministry of Education nor the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario. While we're doing this presentation today, we will also be live tweeting. So if you'd like to join the conversation, you can find us over at Twitter, X, whatever you wanna call it. Our handle is right there at the bottom of the screen @LD@school, and we'll also be using the hashtag #webinar so you can find all our tweets and all the tweets from previous webinars. So that takes care of all the housekeeping for this afternoon, And I'm going to pass things over to Martin Smit, our educational consultant, who will introduce our presenters and get us started for today. Over to you.

- [Martin] Great. Thank you very much, Susanna. I'm hoping that we're seeing the slide, the first slide of the presentation?

- [Susanna] That we are.

- [Martin] We're good?

- [Susanna] We are looking great.

- [Martin] Perfect. Well, thank you very much. And so some of you may know me. I'm Martin Smit, and I'm the educational consultant for the LD@school Project, working with Susanna and the rest of the team. And it's really my privilege to be moderating this session today. We're talking about leading and staying on track, leveraging data to monitor and implement informed programs that make an impact. And it's a really big title and we have some really great

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information to share with you today, and it's my pleasure to introduce our two guests today. And I'm gonna start with Trudy, Trudy Smit Quosai, and you can read a little bit about her. She's the C-E-O of Greo Evidence Insights. And Trudy will tell us a little bit more about that as we get started, and you can read a little bit about her in the box there, but I just wanted to add that Trudy has spent a career supporting effective policy and practice decisions in diverse settings, including the post-secondary education, the employment health sector, and family policy. She speaks to people all over the globe and throughout North America, Europe, New Zealand, Australia, and just in the chat before she was saying Holland Scotland are coming up, but also you should know Trudy is a runner. She's an outdoor enthusiast, she's a sailor. She's got two boys and with everything, all cards on the table, she's also my sister. So I'm really happy to have Trudy here to join us.

And Ben Hazzard, Ben is a new acquaintance for me and not just a colleague, but certainly turning into a friend, which I'm really happy about. And you can see again, Ben's accolades and what he does. He's working for the Lambton Kent District School Board. And in addition to all those things that you can read about, Ben does a lot of contributions to the community. He's a board member for community living in Wallburg. He's been the race director of the St. Clair River Run. He's created websites, podcasts, and presented at conferences across North America and Asia. And Ben is the father of two sons. And so we've been catching up a lot of chat about kids getting to that age of university and beyond as with Trudy. So these are the two folks that are going to be talking to us. A lot of expertise. Trudy has has a PhD and Ben is currently working towards his PhD. So that was the reason we were really directing this website more towards senior teams and central teams. but of course, everyone is welcome to come and learn with us today. I just wanted to set the stage a little bit for the webinar today. We're all familiar with this document, the "Right to Read Report," and it still surprises me when I have a look at it and realize that it was two years ago that it was released. And I know Ben, we've talked about waiting for that report, waiting for that February date and all those delays with it coming and now it's like two years. Wow. So 157 recommendations. And I always like to kind of set the lens here to say that, that the Ontario Human Rights Commission said Ontario is not really fulfilling its obligations to meet students' right to read. And that's why we've been doing a lot of work at LD@school to try and build tools and resources to help us move towards a brighter future for these kids. And really in a nutshell, what it's about was, was moving from that three queuing system and the whole language resources that we've been using in Ontario for so many years to a more precise and evidence-based form of instruction.

And I put Scarborough's rope up there and I know Ben's gonna talk to us a little bit more about that as we go. But that infographic there from Scarborough really talks and really I think focuses for us how precise we need to be around instruction and how complicated reading really is. All the various components that go into making a skilled reader in terms of decoding, automaticity and comprehension. And if we look at a little bit of our history, we know from that report, the Ministry of Education did make a commitment to revise the language curriculum. We

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know that pretty much right after the report they released the "Effective Guide to Reading Instruction," and I know that's getting well-used across Ontario as well as just in the last year, PPM168, and a lot of work around screeners, and of course the PPF that have coming out. And that's kind of, I think, a good launching point for us today because we're looking at what do you do with that funding, the partnership funding? How do you use it and how do you make sure you're getting the best bang for your buck? And of course, why are we doing it?

Well, it's pretty clear that we know that students can read, and that's really the crisis here is to say up to, depending on the research that you read, but somewhere around 95% of our students are able to read well in fluently. And we know that that is not currently the case and it's where we really need to work too. And I love this graphic because it shows it's that 70% that really depend on the type of instruction that we're getting. Response over the last two years has been really varied across the province. We know that some boards are jumping in with both feet and some boards are just kind of testing the water. And today what we're gonna talk about really are just some ideas around decision making and selecting and implementing programs. And so we worked together with this team to predetermine some questions. You're more than welcome to use the chat and we'll have a little bit of time for questions at the end. And I stole this slide from Karen Brunell, and I just thought it really kind of sets the stage here. Maya Angelou, the civil rights activist and poet, and she says, "Do the best you can until you know better, then when you know better, do better," and I really hope that today we know how to do a little bit better.

The last webinar that we did that targeted senior men, we framed it a little bit around some of the recommendations. And so this is Recommendation 36, that's gonna kick it off. And it really talks about the need to move away from resources that are not consistent with scientific evidence. And that's where we want Trudy to come in because Trudy's work is really centered around research and using research, selling research, or making research available internationally, and particularly around gambling and the importance of that being reliable and doing what it's intended to do. So Trudy, I'm gonna start out with you, and I mean you're welcome to talk a little bit about what you do, but we're gonna move into how do we select programs that are consistent with scientific evidence? What are the questions that people need to ask? How much do we need to really know? Do we need to be experts? And where do we go to learn more? Trudy.

- [Trudy] Great, thanks Martin. And yeah, I'm really excited to be here and speaking with all of you today. It's kind of a strange full circle. Before I started doing what I'm doing now, I oversaw accessibility services at the University of Guelph for about 12 years. So I was really very involved in understanding aspects of access for students with learning disabilities in the post-secondary setting. So now looking at these questions as they apply in earlier education is a really interesting question. Sort of ended up moving from that place into Geo Evidence Insights. So moving from post-secondary education into this gambling space. But the connection really is in

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that evidence-based practice. So I head up a team of really smart, kind of nerdy, really creative people. And we work around the world helping often regulators, so gambling regulators, and also in other areas that could be considered population health. And in some cases we work with the gambling operators. And I'm gonna be specific here because it becomes important later in what I talk about. We only work with provincial Crown corporations. And the reason for that is that the World Health Organization has indicated that when you have something risky like gambling, or alcohol, or cannabis, the safest model is through a state or a provincial monopoly.

So that is important for me to state because I'm gonna talk about things like bias and who's paying for the work you do. As Martin mentioned that we work with clients around the world. We are a not-for-profit, and the way we do that is a number of different ways. We've got the largest library of gambling resources in the world, and that's a curated library with synthesized evidence. We have a data repository that people can use to verify findings as well. We synthesize information, we do primary research, and we build in evaluation. So we build in evaluation capacity and work with organizations to actually do the evaluation for them. All of this really contextually specific. So just to kind of give you an idea of where I'm coming from and where my background is in talking about these questions, and also to give it to a little bit of context. So what we do is we help the regulators and the operators use the best evidence that we can put together for them to inform the policies and practices. So overall, regulators and operators, they want to provide gambling in a way that's safe, but they often struggle in finding the right information about what's gonna work, what's gonna have the impact they want, in what context, and what is the best payoff for the investment that they make. I think that some of those questions might sound familiar to the kinds of questions we're talking about here. And sometimes we see provinces might get kind of frustrated and they'll decide just to do what the neighboring province is doing, 'cause at very least they won't look worse than the province beside them. They can say, "We're doing as well as Quebec's doing or Alberta's doing," and that's the bar. So again, that might sound a little bit similar for you. So what we do is work with them, help them locate and evaluate the evidence. And I just lost the screen. Did anyone else? The slides?

- Yeah, I did too, Trudy.

- Yep. The slides have just...

- [Susanna] Yeah, the slide popped away.

- [Trudy] Okay, I'll keep going while you sort it out. And yeah, so we aim to help people apply that evidence and to bridge situations where there might not be perfect evidence, and of course to build in the evaluation. So the questions that we're looking at here are, how do we evaluate programs are consistent with scientific evidence? What questions do we need to ask about that?

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So maybe if we can flip to the next slide. So a few of the things to consider when deciding on an implementation, a program, an intervention, a curriculum, is what is the strength of the evidence? And as you know, this can come from go anywhere from anecdotal evidence to very rigorous validated studies repeated in situ in classroom or systematic reviews where they systematically bring together similar studies and look at the work across those studies, which really gives us much more strength and confidence than if we look at just one study. One study gives a little bit of information, but you're going to feel much more confident if there's a weight of evidence. And then questions of validity, reliability, and bias. So for example, are the tools being used in the study the right tools? Are they measuring the right thing? Are they measuring literacy with a literacy tool or are they using some other measure of fluency that is not appropriate? Can the study be replicated? Has it been replicated? And very importantly, who stands to gain by the study? Has the study been funded by somebody who stands to gain? Is it being conducted by the people who developed the curriculum? So understanding what the bias is, it doesn't necessarily mean that it's bad, it's just another piece of information to consider. And that's why I felt it was important to talk about where we receive funding because we want to be very clear about where we may potentially have any sources of bias there. And I'm gonna talk more about some measures of evidence as well. The next question that you may ask... Oh, sorry.

Staying on the previous slide still. Yeah. Is the implementation questions. So when you look at the evidence that's available, is it a fit with the context that you are in? So I understand that finding this information in one place is a little bit of a challenge. And in some other jurisdictions, so in the UK and the US, there's things like the What Works Clearinghouse that pulls these information or information about interventions together with some kind of evaluation and rating. So the question is, does that context match the context that you're in? Does that school system match? Does that client group or student group match? Questions about when you are looking at the evidence for success, is there enough information available to help you implement that program in a way that will result in success or impact? Is it documented? Are there manuals? Is there a rollout plan? Are there supports for that? Is there any evidence for cost versus value for the work? So that's a decision that I'm sure all of you are making. What kind of value is received for the cost? And in some cases that might be articulated in the research, particularly in the Clearinghouse sort of situation. And where is the impact expected? What is the degree of impact and at what level? What group? Is it in a primary group, an elementary group, a post-secondary group? So that actually you're using the evidence in the right place. And finally, evaluation, and I'll talk more about that as well. If the research evidence includes evaluation, same question, is it a rigorous evaluation? Is it third party unbiased? And then also thinking about the opportunities to share this evaluation information. And I'll talk more about that as well, and I'm learning all kinds of exciting things from Ben about the data that is collected at the school and board level and the opportunities for potentially sharing that information to strengthen the collective decision-making.

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So yeah, if we jump to the next slide, this slide sort of speaks to different levels of evidence and I think we can get really caught up in different terms, and my intention with this slide is not at all that. People are memorizing the difference between evidence-based, research-based, research-informed. I think you can turn yourself inside out. It's really kind of thinking about that hierarchy of, so is there evidence that this program doesn't work at all? And just to remember that no evidence of impact is not the same as evidence of no impact. So if you have evidence that it doesn't work, that's pretty definitive. More often, you don't have evidence of whether it works or not, the jury's still out. Oh, can we go back to that one for a minute? Yeah, thanks. And then kind of moving up. So we talked about the anecdotal evidence that's based on theory, and this is where we might get into a theory of change, where we have the evidence that supports a pathway and the inputs and how we expect it to make the change. This could be super valuable in terms of guiding future research and evaluation, but it's not evidence of impact in itself. So then moving up to individual studies, repeated studies, and then things like meta-analysis, which look at impact size across a number of studies or systematic reviews that look at evidence of impact across studies. One thing I would like to point out with this, because it's a real challenge for us when we work, and we work in basically human systems as well. We're not neat and tidy. It's not easy to randomly assign people to addictive experiences and non-addictive experiences. So we need to rely on sub ideal research often. So if we put our bars so high, for example, always having systematic reviews, we may see a lot of reports that say, "Insufficient information to draw a conclusion." And so then you feel like throwing up your hands and saying, "I don't know." So it's really bridging what's the best information I have? What do I know about my context, and how do I make the best decision that way? And evaluate, evaluate, evaluate. So on that note, let's talk about evaluation.

So I'm going to tell you areal quick little story about some work we did with an operator in BC, the provincial operator who is really committed. In fact, they have as part of their statement of operations that they will take no money from somebody who experiences problem gambling. And now as a short little gambling lesson here, which I think is relevant, particularly when I think about the chart, Martin, that you showed of learning to read. So about 1% of the population is defined clinically as problem gambling. Very small, the impacts can be catastrophic, but it's very small. Most of the harms occur in that sort of low to moderate risk 'cause it just makes up a much larger proportion of the population. So if you can make an intervention that works on that larger proportion, you have the potential to make a lot of impact, and that's what this group wanted to do. They had the thought that for people in potentially low to moderate risk, a financial literacy program might help people make better decisions about gambling, how they spend their money, how they stop gambling when they might be beyond their means. So they had this intuition that this might be a good idea. We helped them find some evidence, we had to go to adjoining subject areas because there wasn't a lot of financial literacy in gambling in Ontario to consider. So we had to widen our net and pull together what we believed was the best evidence to guide an intervention, helped to create an intervention with the assistance of

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the frontline people who would be implementing and knew the client group, documented it, rolled out... What it was, I don't know if you can kind of visualize was a little mini putt set up in the casino. And when people came to mini putt to win a little prize, non-cash, they would be asked to talk about financial literacy. So people had a script to walk through and then there was a survey afterwards and some focus groups. So we were able to study how people experienced this intervention, and in the first iteration we found that the frontline people felt like they were kind of too programmed, too scripted, they didn't like that, and they also felt like they were hitting some people who are much higher risk than they anticipated. So we adapted the script to be more natural to let people talk as they want and as well provided some backup and signposting for those higher risk people, iterated again.

So we jump to the next slide. You can kind of see how with each plan, do, study, act cycle, you kind of improve your performance and you widen your scale so you can start small and get wider and wider, collecting data, analyzing, learning until you fully implement. And yeah, if we jump to the next one, just talking generally, why we really like this approach is, I mean it's really pragmatic. You can start to do something. I'm really sure you have the same experience that many of the people working in the gambling field, there's a big imperative to do, do, do. Do something, do something, do something, and doing something's better than not doing something which we know not to be true and can be really distracting and difficult for people. So this is a structured way to say, "Let's think about what we're going to do in a way that we can iterate and get better." Through that process you build support, your team comes on board, it's not being done to them, it's being done with them. It's rigorous. The data collection and analysis is structured in and it's flexible. So you don't need to follow a certain pathway, you iterate and change as you go. And through this process with our operator, we were really able to initiate a really successful intervention that people found enjoyable. The people providing it found it was enjoyable, the people receiving it felt it was enjoyable, and we'll continue to collect the data to see what kind of impact it's had. So stay tuned for that. And I think Ben, you were gonna talk a little bit about contextualizing that kind of process.

- [Ben] I was Trudy. I'm just fascinated when you speak and understanding your context in the gambling space and also the importance of and evidence that you're using. And I wanna say thank you to Martin and Susanna for inviting me to be part of the webinar today. LD@school just does so many wonderful things and helps and meets the needs of so many in our community and in our province. So really wanna say thank you to LD@school for Inclusion today. I'm gonna share some of the conversations and context. Like, Trudy, when I hear you speak, I nod along, and you might heard me even like humming along as well. I was like, "This is great. I agree."

- [Trudy] There's a lot of parallels, isn't there?

- [Ben] There are, and then I think, "Wait a second, I'm in a small to mid-size school board, I

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don't have a research department." I was like, "Yeah, let's get the research department to do this for us." I'm like, "Wait a minute, we are the research department." I think that's part of the context, right? Is access to some of these resources and feeling sometimes isolated from that. So that's a great thing, Trudy, when I get to learn from you, understand these principles, as well as think about things I need to be looking for as well. And really these kind of this planned PDSA framework really is helpful and the iterative process. So I had come up kind of like thinking about this in our pre-prep, and I was thinking, "Oh, so what are our process that we've come to find some of these interventions that align with the "Right to Read Report" and really engage with evidence that they have an impact. So that's what this cycle is, and I'm gonna bring this back a couple times to kind of bring it to life, but first step is really reviewing evidence and gathering information from networks. I've got some really great friends on the call today, so great LKDSB folks, and superintendents, and leaders from across the province. So thanks for texting me and distracting me during the presentation, friends, but you are the network.

This is the number one, learning and getting connected to each other, but also within our district. So in our district we work together with special education or student support services and wellbeing, an elementary program. So we began from the beginning to bring our own perceptions to the finding program and finding what has evidence of impact for some of these items. Number two, that's what I was thinking, Trudy, as you're talking about helping folks, then I'm thinking, "You know what? Number two is finding a small group of implementation and understanding that, then actually building recommendations, gathering impact, and then working for how we might implement the guidelines. And Martin, if you're still there, I think the slides went away, but I have slides up on another screen so I can just keep talking as my friends online will tell you, "Can never end." So I thought this circular process, Trudy, kind of was similar to that iterative process that you were talking about and really can be helpful as we contextualize. how do you select a resource? How do you select what you're going to do? Because from an elementary, from a secondary, from a school K to 12 context, we have this funding, as Martin had said earlier, like the priority funding, the ministry gives us some money, but you kind of have one shot to spend that money and then you're hoping you've chosen wisely. And if you haven't, it's probably a little bit of a challenge going forward because there isn't additional funding to keep buying different interventions along that road. So if we go to the next slide that really gets to Recommendation 70 from the "Right to Read Report," which is a recommendation from the Ontario Human Rights Commission says that we need to stop using reading interventions that do not have a strong evidence base. But I'd even flip that, which means, it's not that we stop teaching, it's if we stop using these, then we have to use something. So then what do we use and what do we fill that gap with? And that fits right into the next slide that Martin will flip us to.

And this is the question that we get, "Is it just as simple as going on the paint by number? Just pick a strategy from a list? Not really. "Pick a resource from a list?" And that's where like we have sometimes lists in our documents that we receive from the ministry, but how does it fit

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together? Trudy had mentioned the What Works Clearinghouse and most folks on this call would be familiar with that because it's such a great resource, but it's a different context. Do we have something Ontario, Canadian based? It's difficult sometimes to get things that fit within the purchasing procurement processes that we have as a public institution in Ontario, so we need to have Canadian and Ontario based content as well. So that becomes a challenge when we're using something like a What Works Clearinghouse, which is the American website and American resources. So what does that mean from a Canadian context? And sometimes publishers, the earlier conversation about bias and about who's funding the work, publishers would love to just sell us the next generation and the next iteration of a resource, a textbook, whatever that might look like, but really it's not as simple as that. Like how do we go through our process? And it gets to me to think about the other part which is, it's about buying something, sure, but there's lots of different textbooks. And if that would've solved the challenge, it'd be solved. And I don't think it is solved. And I think that's why we're here, that's why we're trying to figure this out. So if you go to slide 19, it really gets to the next part of my thinking, which is, "Yes, pick something to do, but what's the implementation plan? And can people in a vertical alignment in the organization, in the school board, from classroom desk right through to director, to trustees, can they articulate what's going on with our literacy plan? Can we communicate that for public confidence but really for impacting student learning?" So this is a graphic that we've created to try to build on the implementation part of that process. So I'll link together different programs that we have purchased that have evidence, but as we go through this, we've really had to create a how does it all fit together? Because we get a multiple progress. If we don't how they fit together, if we don't understand the nuance, then we might be actually missing the real impact that the program's had. So here you'll see phonemic awareness. Many folks in the call will be very familiar with that. The sounds that make up words and phonics, how we attach the graphic representation to the sounds. And we've had to create a simple, easy to implement item, because we do know that these things from the work of Shanahan in 2020, that these in his review of all the different literature, these are really predictive. So we call these foundational in our district that build the house of reading. It aligns with the next pieces, and I'll just have

Martin maybe move forward here a little bit and I'll just show you why we do this is then now we can build in our programs and showing how that fits together. So we have selected Heggerty to use as a tier one, and Flyleaf as a tier one, tier two resource to meet these pieces. And then we try to then show that within the multitude of context that we have and that we have different pieces. So if we keep advancing... I won't belabor the point too much, but how does this fit with the ministry document? It fits right in with the ministry document. This is the direction we've had. Now to Trudy's point, we had to go find and do our research on our own. We didn't have a repository. When you said you had the largest repository of research on gambling and on addiction, I was like, "That would be great. Can you do that for literacy? That'd be super awesome. That'd be super great." And if we keep on going, you'll see right into Scarborough's Rope, how does it all fit? And we go one more, you'll see I bring it right back from

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Scarborough's Rope, right back to our visual. And then going one more to 24, hits us right here, and this is, I'm putting our screen in there, Acadience that we've selected. And we're saying now to extend the metaphor that if reading is this house and we're building on this foundation that Acadience is like a home inspection. It's are we predicting that students will have a reading house that is vibrant and will learn to read with proficiency? Or are there some things we're not sure exactly what it might be, but are there things that are students not achieving that benchmark and could be interrupting this? And I think something that we reflect on a lot is the... And in 2014 talked about it and Goddard et al at 2010, really talking about how central principles are to the success of literacy implementation at elementary schools. So from a senior team planning perspective, are we all on the same page? So I think it's about mobilization of some of that knowledge, Trudy and Martin, it's beyond just knowing it, it's do we understand it and are we able to apply that? And interestingly, teacher perception of principal actions has a significant impact on if new tools actually get implemented from a literacy context in the classroom. So I reflect a lot on how are we supporting principals? Are school principals able to articulate how it all fits and what's most important?

And back to Trudy's PDSA process and iterative cycles, are we including principals and teachers and the system in the process to refine our practice as we go forward? It really leads into how do we encourage educators to change thinking and change classroom practice? 'Cause we can know all the things in the world, that's why I'm kind of getting to the implementation side of that. That's where I spend a lot of my time thinking. And if the book doesn't get dusted off, if the program doesn't get implemented, it's not having an impact. I'm pretty sure that that's a fair commentary. I think I can fit in with your slides on that one. And we're moving from best practice to the evidence of impact, and we know that... We've reflected on the need to stop trying to convince people to do things, but to give people tools that have an impact. And then educators, from ECEs, teachers, principals, will report back the great successes and the impact that that's had. So when we show slides that say "Evidence of impact," they may not have the broad scale piece across the whole system, but they have the specific ways that that's had an impact on students within their classroom really personalizing that approach. And it really leads to Recommendation 63 because we wanna engage with impact. And we'll just pause for a moment. There we are. So Recommendation number 63, which talks about the ministry talking about mandating data collection. I kind of hinted at that with Acadience piece and developing measures to monitor progress. But I always like to pause because I've just went on a monologue for a while. Trudy, is there anything that you wanna highlight before I move into my data conversation?

- [Trudy] Well, I'm pretty interested to hear the data conversation. I think this mandating to collect and share data is probably one of the most important pieces and to allow boards to learn from each other and make good decisions. So yeah, please carry on, Ben.

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- [Ben] And implementation really drives when we're not just sharing that with others, which we are and we are today, we're also sharing that with families, and families in that feedback cycle. That's another part of the iterative feedback cycle. I had a conversation today with a principal about, "So what happens when a student in my school isn't on benchmark for reading? How does that conversation go?" So there's lots of that. I think it's a nuance and a layered process, and a recent PPM states that we do have to create... I do have implementation of a screener for reading that was from a list that the ministry provided that needs to be in place for the fall. So the ones I'm gonna share with you coming next that if Martin wants to move forward are not from that list. We went through and we did a bunch of investigation.

So this is the part where I'm wishing I had Trudy's list of all the things from an education context. But we went through and we found things that were peer reviewed and were the basis of what the work happened. So when we first began looking for a phonemic awareness process, we went and we engaged with our networks, we went and talked to folks who visited onsite, we gathered data, we actually talked about, what is the impact? We used phonemic awareness screeners and then we did small groups. Here's one of our intervention teachers doing a small group session with phonemic awareness. So you can tell that because there's no cards in front of 'em, no books, we're just doing sounds and oral language, that foundation of phonemic awareness, and we're doing that process right here in this slide. And this talented educator is able to do the work. So we did a pre-screener and a post-screener and then did about five pieces of intervention, five times of intervention, only five intervention moments. And that flips us to the next slide.

And then we just gathered and said, "Is it gonna work in our context?" And so I'll just pause, I love these kind of slides. They're a bit of a personal bias here because I like how this sets up. So if I can just explain it first. This is a phonemic awareness screener that was administered pre and post. What we have is we have percentage of students that the teacher has determined the first area of intervention is the skill that's on the bottom of the screen. And the skills go from beginning to more advanced across to the right and then to proficient on all phonemic awareness measures in the screener to the far right hand side of the bottom of this graph. So what you can see is the blue is the first, the first bar is the pre, the post is the orange. And what we could see with just a little bit of intervention, we could see that it's kind of similar to that gambling conversation. It's hard to like do a control group. You don't get any of this good things, and then you get all the good things. So we always feel that in education. So it was more a single arm study where we were like, "All right, let's do pre-post, let's do the intervention." And we saw this nice orange bar shifted to the right, which means we're more complex skills. So we actually improved. And that was in a small group. So as we moved forward that helped us select that tool that resource as something to implement.

So on slide 29 you'll see a picture and I wanna just bring the classroom to our webinar today. If we're talking LD@school, I'm leaning into the at school part of this webinar. This is a classroom in our district. This is just a talented teacher who is then as a tier one intervention,

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taking that phonemic awareness intervention and doing it as a tier one approach, which is what we wanted. And doing a little Heggerty hand signs, if you're aware of Heggerty and the phonemic awareness item. So we did that then as a tier one, but we didn't stop with the evaluation and the monitoring to see how's it going. Are we having the intended impact or did we miss something in the implementation? I always think about the nuance of how that works. Sometimes we miss something because we missed a part of the nuance or part of the implementation. We kind of didn't pay attention to the right things. So we gathered it. So if we go to the next slide, you'll see the pre-post here. So this is our gathering impact. You can see blue is the pre, orange is the post, it's the same piece, right to proficiency. So we go more simple from the left to more proficient on the right of the screen as we go forward. And you can see now this is just straight student numbers as we just monitored after just three months of using that program in classrooms. We did an assessment of that with our screener. And you can see, look at that. We had from nine proficient students according to the phonemic screener to 559.

So I would say we were able to be very proficient using that as a tier one support. So that's a phonemic awareness support. And as we move forward, we started that with the phonemic awareness back to that one of those foundations, and then we've begun the process. Now how do we choose a phonics approach 'cause the clear from the Ontario Human Rights Commission says we need to take out the programs that don't have evidence of impact. So we now have the broad scale evidence of impact and now the local scale of impact. So slide 31, just bringing back the school. Back to LD@school, Martin. So this is right from this school year, we were using the quick screener, which is a peer reviewed screener that measures phonics skills and decoding skills in alignment with Scarborough's Rope. That great diagram from 2001 that has guided most of the work in Ontario in the last number of years. And I know one of my good friends, Karen Brunell, who I was in my master's with, I've kept in touch, and I know that's central to her work as well, and she's a big friend of this group. And so we did the same type of thing. We're using Resourced, Flyleaf, as some decodables and specific systematic explicit phonics instruction, and then we use this peer reviewed, reliable, valid screener to see how we did.

So if we go to the next slide on slide 32, Martin, you can see we see a similar thing as we're going through our process. As we check in as that first time, we don't see those huge jump right off the bat because we're in the implementation phase, but we're seeing impact. So you're seeing now with much more complex skills. This is actually multiple years students would learn all of the skills across the bottom, but you can see from letter names all the way up to two, three, four syllables to proficiency. But you can see blue being the first, the pre-assessment that occurred. Let's take a look back at 18% of students were just still working on their letter sounds with vowels. As we shift that, we now have 7% of students and some of those are from the previous items to the left that have now shifted up to the right. And we have students now moving from the VC and the CVC to just... I'm not sure Trudy, if your phonics knowledge is up on that one, but that's like at and cat. So consonant, vowel, consonant. So we can see that we've

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moved from that and we've shifted students over to things like silent Es and R-controlled vowel. So we've really shifted those pieces and we've started to have an impact and we monitor that and then talk about how can we revise our implementation to make sure we're not missing the nuance of implementation. Which really leads us to number 33 there, Martin, which is, the question really comes back to as a system leader, I can pull these graphs and share them like I have today.

I love sharing these kind of graphs. But the next part to consider is, to get implementation to happen across the system. We have 52 elementary schools. We go from Grand Bend to Wheatley, so Lake Huron to Lake Erie. In fact, today I was on the shores of Lake Erie in their school that's right there, and the question becomes, how do we get implementation, all the different classrooms, how do we support that implementation that aligns with the "Right to Read Report," what we know what does best and what we know will have an impact? And what we're finding is really the individual story. So do we have individual stories of student success so we're able to really encourage folks to continue the implementation process? So I think it's the multi-level piece of the evaluation and the monitoring. Are we doing it from a system level? Are we doing it from a school level, but are we doing it from the individual level? And some of our biggest, and I can tell fun and inspiring stories of we have had parents calling a principal saying, "We're really thrilled that the speech pathologist has been working with my child in JK," and the principal says, "I'm not sure what you mean. There's been no speech pathologist helping your child in JK." And then all of a sudden they have a chat with the classroom teacher. The teacher says, "The only thing that's different is I've now done Heggerty, I've done a phonemic awareness program." And so we have a student that was on a pathway toward speech therapy who has now corrected their ability to produce sound and change their trajectory. And that is a very powerful, powerful implementation focus. So really, I think that it's a complex thing. It's the kind of intricacy of multi levels of the data and evidence that we use, but I think that's really important for the implementation and that really leads us into number 34, Martin.

- [Trudy] Can I just jump in, Ben?

- [Ben] Please do.

- [Trudy] If you don't mind. I just love the direction you're describing. I think we can really get caught up in thinking about data and evaluation as an end result and as a judgment, did you do good or not? And I love the way you've described how you've used it to tell the story along the way, to show the parents what success looks like, show the teachers what success looks like and the kids. So what a really inspiring way to use those data.

- [Ben] And I'm not sure if this is like this in your field, Trudy, as you work in a different context,

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but in very much parallel, is that we had many folks who did lots of great work in our education sector and then we had the interrupted schooling that happened and it kind of disconnected by doing things online and virtually, it kind of disconnected practitioner with impact. And so many of the things that we need to do to your point of linking the stories together to the impact is we need to reestablish those connections. And I think that is some of the intentional work that we need to do as system leaders at this time.

- [Trudy] That's absolutely inspiring.

- [Ben] And it leads me to one thing. I'm like, "This seems to work my practice," but where does that work from... Is there any evidence of this concept, Trudy? And I was reminded of the study by Dr. Small at the University of Pennsylvania, and then he found that people donate more to a charity when they hear a story about an individual, they donate less when they hear about large data sets of unnamed people. It's about the emotional impact. So it led me back to that thinking, "Well, we need to have a simplicity for implementation of how this all fits together. But what's our system story? Can trustees tell that system story? Can your senior team tell that system story about what kind of impact you're having with the implementation of the recommendations from the "Right to Read Report" as well? Is there individual educator stories? Is there individual student stories? There's a well-known story in my district about a French immersion early years teacher who said, "I don't agree with what Superintendent Hazzard has said, so I'm gonna do this to prove him wrong." And in a recent presentation to other educators, she said, "Guess what? I did it to prove him wrong. But it turns out it wasn't really his idea. He took it from somewhere else. He had evidence it was gonna work." So now she is the biggest advocate for the work and for the implementation of strategies that really make a difference. So I think that's a really important thing to review when we consider next steps and what our obligations are with the Ontario Human Rights Code. Because it's not just about obligations, it's about our moral imperative to do better.

- [Martin] So, Ben, any specific next steps for the board? One thing I've been thinking about is the way systems are starting to use data now is very different than it was done years ago. You're able to show some real specific data around specific reading skills. And it must be kind of changing your thought processes and the way you're doing business as a senior team.

- [Ben] It is changing. Specific next steps is do we have the capacity, Martin, to be able to gather this information in real time and then start to work with the evidence that we're gathering. So as we're doing this, what are our systems to gather that evidence and to understand that evidence? So we're working to... So how can Acadience be engaged with other data points to see as a screener how that's impacting our implementation, and are we able to do that? It's really about systems, right? It's like we don't rise to the level of our goals, we fall to the level of our systems.

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And I think our next steps really are, are we building this into a system or are we just keeping it as a one-off? 'Cause there's been many initiatives over the years that we've implemented that had large goals, but didn't have a system to support it.

- [Martin] Thanks, Ben. Kind of brings us to our last slide here in the presentation. We just wanted to talk about some advice for district school boards as they start barking on this journey. And I think I'm gonna let Trudy have the first word on this one. Trudy, we've been talking about the need for selecting resources that have a good foundation or a good base in research and evidence. So as we start moving forward, what advice do you have for district school boards?

- [Trudy] It's a tough call and ideally if there's a lever to really encourage ministry support for some kind of information hub or centralized resource like the What Works Clearinghouse, that's a big commitment to make, but it's a commitment to good use of resources in cost savings and effectiveness in the long term. So really considering those levers. The other piece is really a platform for sharing information. And when I originally sort of thought about that, I was thinking about sharing what you learn from implementation, from ongoing evaluation of specific interventions or curricula. When, Ben, as you were just talking about using those data in real time, I was kind of thinking like, "What an opportunity for AI," as we start to see AI emerge and its ability to systematize or automate some of the processes that we've been doing manually and we just don't have enough humans to do. I don't know, that's a bit of a pipe dream, but I can see a pathway where we can use some of the straightforward administrative AI tools to start to pull in those data to platforms and dashboards that can be used on a regular basis to inform practice in real time, which yeah, big dreams, big dreams for the school boards.

- [Martin] Dream big. That's great. Ben, advice?

- [Ben] I think I asked to put this wheel back up mainly because it started with really cross department collaboration and de-siloing things because we have lots of expertise within our boards, but also finding networks like this and like others to leverage and find information. We have a wealth of information around us and also when we do that, it actually starts to challenge our bias, challenge our preexisting notions of what is appropriate and what our own thinking that we kind of stumble upon. So I'd really suggest that leveraging those networks and let's dream big as Trudy said, let's ask for things. Let's ask for in our networks, let's ask for things like, can we get a clearinghouse or a sharing that's real time provincially, or can we get that done through other collaborative measures that we can have mechanisms to do the sharing? Let's build the systems because we need to. Our students are worth it and we have an imperative to make sure that we have students that are literate, and finding success, and just changing their trajectories, Martin.

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- [Martin] Great. Thank you very much. Well, I'd like to thank both Trudy and Ben for their time today. That kind of brings us to the end of the webinar, but I'm gonna leave it for a few minutes. If there's any questions from anybody, you can type into the Q&A or into the chat and we can certainly have Ben or Trudy take on some of them. One question I'll start it off with, Trudy, is just that I was thinking, and I think we kind of talked about it as well, and I'm thinking, I just keep going back to this research piece, is saying, how do we choose these programs? Now Lambton Kent is lucky because Ben has a particular interest in there and expertise and education and not everybody has a specialist in terms of research, or someone who's a PhD or anything like that. So what do you do when you're in a situation where you're really not sure what to do next?

- [Trudy] So Martin, your question in terms of selecting resources particularly?

- [Martin] Yeah, yeah, I guess what I keep thinking about is sitting around that table and having to make decisions around resources and we have to consider the financial impact, but at the same time we have to think about you can't just get the cheapest program. And on the other hand, the most expensive one doesn't always do the trick either. So like how do you start ask... Like how do you start asking the questions that lead you down along that journey to get the resource that's going to have the best impact?

- [Trudy] And, well, knowing that I'm extrapolating from a different area, it's would be detective work. So identifying, if you're starting from an implementation principle or a modality, what is the research that supports that modality? And then if you have some conviction that modality is a good approach, what are the curricula that employ that modality and what is the evidence for that particular approach? But I think you find the person who's a good detective on your team and really as Ben mentioned, leverage your relationships to share that information. I think it's a bigger job than one person could do, and even to sort of make that recommendation, it makes me a little nervous because it puts a lot of responsibility in the hands of an individual's interpretation. So I think it really underlines the need for a more joined up approach for being able to assess and curate resources and have some agreed upon criteria on which these resources are being assessed so that we're not comparing apples to oranges. We're saying, "Okay, this is what we mean by impact and this is how we're defining cost versus value." So you do the best you can until you know better than you do better. But it makes me a bit nervous for you having to make those decisions based on the in-house capacity to be a detective.

- [Martin] Would you say it's fair? I mean, you said it's a lot of responsibility for one person but I think on the other side, it's a lot of responsibility to leave it just to a publisher who says, "This is going to meet your needs." Like it goes on two sides.

- [Trudy] Absolutely. That to say we have to ask the questions, and if we are not sure what

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questions to ask, we need to do the work to understand the kinds of questions. Ben, you look like you're ready to add something in there.

- [Ben] I'm just nodding along. I was getting nervous when all this responsibility that Trudy was adding on. I was also thinking of Dr. Kathy Hibbert from Western University, who is the recent associate dean and a literacy expert. And she has a phrase that she often says, which is, "Don't steal the struggle." So when you talk about doing the detective work, Trudy, you need to engage in that work and do it with others. And I think there's a lot of wisdom there. We can't outsource that to like a publisher because of all the different bias and piece that engages there. And I reacted probably to your wide eyes when Martin had made that statement earlier. But it's really important, I think, to find networks. I know as a member of OPSOA, the Provincial Association for Superintendents, that we've held virtual networking to link people together who have this portfolio to start sharing best practice. So I think that's a really wise item. Don't do it alone. You have to be connected to others to begin the process.

- [Trudy] Yeah, and certainly with respect to the publisher sites, I'm not besmirching publishers, just understanding where that bias may lie and what information is there, are they directing toward unbiased studies? So it could be a starting point, but perhaps not the end point.

- [Martin] Hm-hmm. Right. Well, with that, it's not very often I get the last word when I'm dealing with a superintendent or a sister, so I think I'm going to leave it there. And I'm not sure if Suzanne, if you're gonna come back on. But once again, I'd like to thank everybody for joining us today and just a reminder that the session is recorded. It will be transcribed and sent out to you in your mailboxes if you wanna have a look at it again later. And anyone who missed it will be able to find it on the website. So I wish you a great evening and good luck in wading your way through the jungle of resources and the research and all of those things. And a special thank you again to Ben and Trudy.

- [Trudy] Great.

- [Susanna] Wonderful. Thanks so much, Martin. You captured everything I needed to say there. I just wanna hit people one last time. If you do still have any questions for us at the LD@school team or for Trudy or Ben, you can email us anytime or you can find us on Twitter and we will aim to answer every question we ever receive. So with that, I just want to thank you once again for being here and taking the time outta your day and we really appreciate it and have a great evening.